

**Historical ‘Tooning:**

**Disney, Warner Brothers, the Depression and War  
1932-1945**

**Tracey Mollet**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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**List of Abbreviations**

AAA	Agricultural Adjustment Administration
AFI	American Film Institute
CIAA	Centre for Inter-American Affairs
CWA	Civil Works Administration
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDR	Franklin Delano Roosevelt
FERA	Federal Emergency Relief Administration
FHA	Federal Housing Association
FSA	Farm Security Administration
LT	Looney Tunes
MHL	Margaret Herrick Library
MM	Merrie Melodies
NRA	National Recovery Administration
OIAA	Office of Inter-American Affairs
OSS	Office of Strategic Services
OWI	Office of War Information
PCA	Production Code Administration
SA	Sturmabteilung
SNAFU	Situation Normal All F**ked Up
UCLA	University of California Los Angeles
USC	University of Southern California
WPA	Works Progress Administration



## **Abstract**

This thesis argues that the animation produced by the Disney and Warner Brothers Studios since 1932 presents a particular adaptation of the Depression and New Deal America to its audiences, leaving a heavy ideological imprint for historians to excavate. An analysis of this ideology is completely absent from current literature on animation or feature films during this period.

Using unpublished memoranda from the Walt Disney Studios, trade press reviews and qualitative analysis, this thesis draws conclusions on how animation developed into a medium fit for propaganda in 1941.

During the 1930s, animation underwent a transition from entertainment, to subjective commentary, before finally undertaking Government sponsored propaganda during the Second World War. It is this development in animation's history that this thesis will uncover.



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## Chapter One: The Storyboard So Far

### Statement of Research

In summer of 1941, Nelson Rockefeller and John Hay Whitney approached Walt Disney to make a series of animated shorts for the Office of Inter-American Affairs. The OIAA was formed in 1940 and was primarily concerned with the financial problems of Latin American countries but its role became limited to cultural relationships following the establishment of the Board of Economic Warfare.<sup>1</sup> Rockefeller and Whitney wanted Disney to tour South America as a ‘goodwill ambassador,’ believing Disney’s animation could be fundamentally important at curbing pro-Nazi feeling there. They offered to underwrite the cost of the trip and promised Disney \$50,000 for making animated shorts fostering good relations between Latin America and the United States.<sup>2</sup> Disney set off with two dozen of his best animators in August 1941, leaving his studio in the aftermath of a disruptive strike, with the remaining artists fumbling through the animation for *Dumbo* (1941, US, dir. Norm Ferguson).<sup>3</sup> Disney had accepted his first state contract to produce propaganda through the medium of animation.

While the contribution of animation to the enormous body of literature on Hollywood’s war propaganda has been recognised, the extent of this contribution has yet to be analysed in real depth. What is more, the current scholarship on animation falls short of any content analysis of animation before 1941.<sup>4</sup> The contributions of animation to the war propaganda of the

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<sup>1</sup> R. D. McCann, *The People’s Films*, (New York, Hastings House, 1973) pp. 148

<sup>2</sup> K. Jackson, *Walt Disney: A Bio-Bibliography*, (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1993) pp. 37

<sup>3</sup> For further information on the Disney shorts produced for the Office of Inter-American Affairs, see J. Burton-Carvajal, ‘Surprise Package: Looking Southward with Disney’ and L. Cartwright & B. Goldfarb, ‘Cultural Contagion: On Disney’s Health Education Films for Latin America’ in E. Smoodin (ed.) *Disney Discourse*, (New York, Routledge, 1994) pp.132-139 and pp. 174.

<sup>4</sup> See M. Shull & D. Wilt, *Doing their Bit: Wartime American Animated Short Films* (Jefferson, McFarland, 1987), S. Schneider, *That’s All Folks!: the art of Warner Brothers Animation*, (New York, H.Holt, 1988) and R. Shale, *Donald Duck Joins Up: The Disney Studio During World War Two* (Ann Arbor, UMI Research Press, 1978)

United States represent the *culmination* of animation's commentary on politics and society. This was by no means the extent of animation's contribution to cultural identity in the United States. This thesis will document this uncharted period of animation's history, from the presidential campaign of President Roosevelt in 1932 to the Japanese surrender in 1945, with aim to answer the following fundamental question: how did the animation of Walt Disney, in combination with other animation studios, provide a commentary on American society? And how, through their productions, did Disney's animation make a contribution to the formation of American ideology? This thesis will reveal that in fact, during this period, American animation underwent a significant transformation. It began as an experimental medium in the motion picture industry at the beginning of the 1930s, transmitting any ideas through symbols and music. In the mid-1930s, as the medium progressed technologically, it transformed from a vehicle for commentary on socio-political ideas in the mid-1930s, into a powerful weapon of propaganda utilised by the American Government in war. As yet, this period in animation's history is heavily under-researched and thus marks the original contribution to knowledge of this thesis.

### **The Problem with Animation**

From the outset, it would seem that animation is something of a problematic medium for analysis by film historians. Leonard Maltin has argued for the existence of a 'snob barrier' between cartoon shorts and animated features which prevented any serious consideration of the former medium.<sup>5</sup> While Lewis Jacobs' contemporary study of film in 1938 highlighted Walt Disney's animated feature films as 'the highest expression of modern picture art in America', this seemed to elevate the animated feature, leaving its short counterpart pigeon holed into an area of Hollywood not worthy of critical

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<sup>5</sup> L. Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic: a History of American Animated Cartoons*, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1980) pp. viii

attention.<sup>6</sup> Despite being shown on the same bill as feature films that have received an exhaustive level of attention from scholars, animation still remains an enormously understudied area of Hollywood filmmaking. As Joe Adamson has argued, it would appear that, 'When a man goes about writing an inclusive history of film, throwing out cartoons seems to be the first order of business, right after rolling up the sleeves and clearing the desk of rubber bands.'<sup>7</sup>

With the notable exception of the Disney Studios, many animation departments attached to the 'Big Five' during the 1930s were so far removed from the daily activities of the studios that many studio heads were unaware of their own cartoon production, or even unaware of their existence!<sup>8</sup> Until fairly recently, this exclusion has been applied to all histories of animation. However, during the 1930s and 1940s, animated shorts were shown in theatres before the screening of feature films and became almost more popular than the features themselves. In an article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, one journalist commented that the essence of Americanism was 'spending millions of dollars to make spectacular movies' and 'sticking through them to see Mickey Mouse'.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, they received widespread circulation. At the end of the 1930s, eighty-five million Americans visited the movies per week, watching with interest as Donald Duck hugged his Statue of Liberty after having a nightmare about Nazism, or even as caricatures of Hirohito and Mussolini marched comically across their screens.<sup>10</sup>

However, over the last ten years, the study of animation has started to flourish. Leonard Maltin's work *Of Mice and Magic* services as a general history of animation from its inception in the early twentieth century with Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo* (US, 1911) until the 1960s. However, there are few

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<sup>6</sup> L. Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film: A Critical History* (New York, Harcourt, 1939) pp. 496

<sup>7</sup> J. Adamson, *Tex Avery, King of Cartoons*, (New York, Da Capo Press, 1985) pp. 11

<sup>8</sup> See C. Jones, *Chuck Amuck: the life and times of an animated cartoonist* (New York, Farrar Straus Giroux, 1989) pp. 89. Animator Charles Jones states in his autobiography that Friz Freleng maintains that Harry Warner believed the Warner Brothers studio were responsible for the creation of the Walt Disney character, Mickey Mouse and when they discovered they did not, they shut the studio. See also L. Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*. Maltin has also commented when constructing his seminal history, one spokesperson for a major studio denied the existence of an animation unit.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in L. Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film*, pp. 496

<sup>10</sup> See *Der Fuehrer's Face* (US, 1943, dir. Jack Kinney) and *The Ducktators*, (US, 1943, dir. Norman McCabe)

historical interpretations of the cartoons produced by the animation studios. Maltin focuses largely on the changing technology in animation, as well as the high turnover of staff between studios. Similarly Michael Barrier's extensive history on the American animation industry focuses largely on the differing techniques of the studios and the personalities and preferences of the animators involved, particularly the continued competition between Hugh Harman and Walt Disney for animated excellence. The bulk of the body of literature on animation serve as purely 'general histories.'<sup>11</sup> These works do not focus on particular studios, or the tone of the cartoon shorts produced during certain eras and how they developed through time.

While this literature establishes the technological framework of animation and introduces the main personalities working in the field in what is now widely regarded to be its 'golden age,' an analysis of the animation itself is left untouched. Historians are now taking the next logical steps to analysing not only the studios that created the shorts but the *content* of the animation itself.

Donald Crafton was one of the first scholars to recognise the importance of the messages within 'classic' cartoons. He has contended that, 'failing to see beyond the childlike nature of animation simply perpetuates a fallacy of innocence.'<sup>12</sup> Crafton's work speaks clearly to the adult themes running throughout animation, particularly his study of caricatures in Warner Brothers' animation. Crafton also stated that many of these cartoons have a 'hidden agenda' and contain certain 'social viewpoints.'<sup>13</sup> Indeed, veteran animator, Charles Jones, famously commented that 'these cartoons were never made for children. Nor were they made for adults. They were made for me.'<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See for example, S. Cavalier, *The World History of Animation*, (London, Rotovision, 2011) G. Bendazzi, *Cartoons: One Hundred Years of Cinema Animation* (London, John Libbey, 1994), H. Beckerman, *Animation: The Whole Story*, (New York, Allworth Press, 2003) C. Soloman, *Enchanted Drawings: The History of Animation* (New York, Alfred Knopf Doubleday, 1999), J. Grant, *Masters of Animation*, (New York, Watson Guptill, 2001)

<sup>12</sup> D. Crafton, 'The View from Termite Terrace,' *Film History*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1993) pp. 204

<sup>13</sup> D. Crafton, 'Infectious Laughter: Cartoons Cure for the Depression' in D. Goldmark & Charlie Kiel (eds.) *Funny Pictures: Animation and Comedy in studio-era Hollywood* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2011)

<sup>14</sup> See P. Bogdanovich, *Who the Devil Made It: conversations with Robert Aldrich, George Cukor, Allan Dwan, Howard Hawks, Alfred Hitchcock, Chuck Jones, Fritz Lang, Joseph H. Lewis, Sidney Lumet, Leo*

Sybil DelGaudio has also made the case for animation's incorporation of adult themes. Her work charts the use of animation for the purpose of education, documentary and propaganda. In the early teens, for example, she argues, Winsor McCay's *The Sinking of the Lusitania*, 'represented McCay's own outrage, as well as a depiction of the event.' DelGaudio's contribution is illuminating in its representation of animation as a medium for a socio-political agenda, asking the fundamental question, 'If truth be told, can 'toons' tell it?'<sup>15</sup> Can animation, a medium largely associated with entertainment, be channelled for another purpose? Subsequently, the content of animation came to be considered by scholars for the first time as more than just an art form.

Michael Shull and David Wilt's work *Doing Their Bit: Wartime Animated Short Films* was ground-breaking in considering animation as an historical source. Shull argued that animation should not be cast aside as simply 'funny animals' in children's cartoons.<sup>16</sup> Cartoon shorts were shown in the same theatres as feature films, with the same audience, and therefore should be accredited the same substantial treatment by historians as valid empirical sources. They have a dual layer of interpretation. While it is true that they largely follow the antics of animals or children in a fantastical setting, for adults, animation has significant cultural implications for historians of 1930s and wartime America. While Shull and Wilt's work does focus specifically on the cartoons with politically relevant content, the analysis is mainly summative, and falls short of relating the cartoons to the period of their origin. Furthermore, the book's focus is primarily on the war years, while this project will extend the field of analysis to the 1930s, arguing that the roots of animation's contribution to propaganda lie in its earlier productions.

This work has been built upon by scholars such as Philip Nel, Michael Birdwell and David Huxley. Huxley examines the hitherto unexplored area of British World War One animation, claiming that while not technically brilliant, as many as eighty animated propaganda films were issued for release in

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McCary, Otto Preminger, Don Siegel, Josef von Sternberg, Frank Tashlin, Edgar G. Ulmer, Raoul Walsh (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1997) pp.699

<sup>15</sup> S. DelGaudio, 'If Truth Be Told, Can Toons Tell it?', *Film History*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1997)

<sup>16</sup> M. Shull & D. Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, pp. 4

cinemas.<sup>17</sup> Nel and Birdwell both examine the content of the Private Snafu films produced by the animators at Warner Brothers for the *Army Navy Screen Magazine*.<sup>18</sup> Both of these contributions reveal animation's explicit role in the production of wartime propaganda but highlight the need for further study of this medium.

### **Animation and the Cause of Propaganda**

When analysing animation in terms of its historical and political content, it would seem that many of the same concerns surrounding the relationship between motion pictures and propaganda should be raised<sup>19</sup>. Jacques Ellul's seminal work *Propaganda: the formation of men's attitudes* was ground-breaking in its discussion of the susceptibility of the movies to the cause of propaganda. He argued that, 'the movies and human contacts are the best media for sociological propaganda.'<sup>20</sup> What is perhaps more important for animation in the current research on the power of movies as propaganda, is the significance placed on the use of images to reinforce a particular ideology.<sup>21</sup> Given that animation is an overwhelmingly visual medium, the prominence given to what an audience could actually see or understand within a frame is paramount to any consideration of this field. In addition, Ellul claimed that propaganda and persuasion was more effective when it conformed to the needs of a society. In content and in tone, animation corresponded with the national feeling within America. Firstly, cartoons, with their caricatures of modern living and personality, as well as many references to the world of the

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<sup>17</sup> D. Huxley, 'Kidding the Kaiser: British Propaganda Animation 1914-1919', *Early Popular Visual Culture*, Vol. 4, No 3, (2006) pp. 307-319

<sup>18</sup> P. Nel, 'Children's Literature Goes to War', *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 40, No. 3, (2007) pp.468-487 and M. Birdwell 'Technically Fairy First Class: Is this any way to run an army?' *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol. 25, No. 2, (2005) pp. 203-212

<sup>19</sup> 'Propaganda' for the purposes of this thesis, refers only to animated shorts produced with the full active endorsement, either financially or through the activities of the OWI. Any animated shorts referenced before this shall be thereafter referred to as 'politicised' animation. It references politics and/or society, however, does not do so with the active endorsement or for the explicit purposes of the Government

<sup>20</sup> J. Ellul, *Propaganda: the formation of men's attitudes*, (New York, Knopf, 1965) pp. 10

<sup>21</sup> G. H. Jamieson, *Communication and Persuasion*, (London, Croom Helm, 1985) pp. 134

fairy tale, provided a welcome landscape of escape, entertainment and laughter for a depressed and war-torn population. Secondly, the characters within these cartoons, particularly the figure of Mickey Mouse, became embedded in the cultural fabric of society. Their hopes and dreams became akin to those of the common American man. Their values became embodied within the antics of ducks, rabbits, pigs and mice. Animation was a fundamental depiction of the hearts and minds of the American people. It did not just conform to its needs, it *reflected* them.

Jowett and O'Donnell's contribution to the discourse on the power of propaganda is also of interest here. Their argument that propaganda is also formed through the creation of myth is seminal to the study of animation. They contest that 'a myth is not merely a fantasy or a lie but rather a model for social action... a story in which meaning is embodied in recurrent symbols.'<sup>22</sup> Through the use of animated characters, the Walt Disney Studio created their own models for social action. Furthermore, animation utilised the same symbols and motifs present in Hollywood films of the 1930s and 1940s to promote the ideology and policies of Roosevelt's government.

### **Propaganda in the Movies**

The idea that movies, one of the primary beneficiaries of the free society, could be used to channel ideology and thus be used for the purposes of propaganda was deeply unsettling for Americans. Indeed, Margaret Thorp's contemporary study of the movies stated that it was 'pleasant to report that US motion pictures continue to be free from any but the highest possible entertainment purpose. The industry has resisted and must continue to resist the lure of propaganda.'<sup>23</sup> There was a significant stigma attached to the word 'propaganda' throughout the 1920s and 1930s, but most especially in America.

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<sup>22</sup> G. Jowett & V. O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion*, (London, Sage, 2006) pp. 272

<sup>23</sup> M. F. Thorp, *America at the Movies*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1939) pp. 160



The close relationship forged between propaganda and the totalitarian regimes between the two world wars led to an enforced awareness of 'propaganda' as a concept, particularly in America. Following the activities of the Creel Committee and their monopoly over the information disseminated to the American people during the war, propaganda and the institutions 'producing' it were viewed with great distrust.<sup>24</sup> Propaganda was thus labelled as something distinctly 'un-American' and undemocratic in nature. Furthermore, isolationist groups enraged by the extent of the United States' involvement in the conflict were quick to seize upon revelations regarding anti-US propaganda. The notion that America had been 'duped' into joining the war by Britain attracted a considerable following and Americans became increasingly aware of any medium that attempted to shape their values. Indeed, Anthony Rhodes has even gone as far as to argue that 'the greatest obstacle to Allied propaganda in World War Two was the propaganda that preceded American entry into World War One.'<sup>25</sup>

Scholarship by the likes of Clayton Laurie, Philip Taylor and James Chapman has made the case for democracy's deep connection with propaganda.<sup>26</sup> Due to the strategy of 'truth' promoted by such forms of government, propaganda in democracies could not look or sound like propaganda.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, both Roosevelt and Churchill rejected propaganda as a concept, failing to give much authority to those institutions responsible for its dissemination during the war.<sup>28</sup> This made movies the perfect medium through which to relay ideology to any population. Philip Taylor has argued that 'film

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<sup>24</sup> See S. H. Ross *Propaganda for War: How the United States was conditioned to fight the Great War of 1914-1918* (London, McFarland, 1996), J. R. Mock & C. Larson, *Words that Won the War: the story of the Committee on Public Information 1917-1919* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1939), H.C. Peterson, *Propaganda for War: the campaign against American neutrality* (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1939) and N. Cull, *Selling War: The British propaganda campaign against American 'neutrality' in World War One* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1995)

<sup>25</sup> A. Rhodes, *Propaganda: the art of persuasion*, (London, Angus & Robertson, 1976) pp. 139

<sup>26</sup> K. Short (ed.), *Film and Radio Propaganda during World War Two* (London, Croom Helm, 1983), C. Laurie, *The Propaganda Warriors: America's Crusade Against Nazi Germany*, (Lawrence, Kan, University Press of Kansas, 1996), J. Chapman, *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda 1939-1945* (London, IB Tauris Publishers, 1998) and M. Balfour, *Propaganda in War 1939-1945: organisations, policies and publics in Britain and Germany* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979)

<sup>27</sup> G. H. Roeder, *The Censored War: The American Visual Experience during World War Two*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993) pp. 2

<sup>28</sup> See A. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The OWI 1942-1945*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978) and R.W. Steele, *Propaganda in an Open Society: The Roosevelt Administration and the Media, 1933-1941* (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1985)

was an excellent source of propaganda. Its significance was overlooked until the 1960s when the influence of European and Northern American historians penetrated the conservatism of the British historical profession.<sup>29</sup>

Much of the stigma that has plagued the study of animation originally characterised the study of feature film. Following the foundation of the *Historical Journal for Film Radio and Television* in 1981 by Kenneth Short, the case was made for film to be utilised as an empirical source by historians.<sup>30</sup> These scholars felt that any analysis of film should be based on the contextual as opposed to the textual. According to their discourse, films produced within the 1930s and 1940s should be viewed as texts heavily influenced by the culture that created them and analysed for political or social content in the same way any historical text should be examined. Consideration of film by historians has moved steadily over the years from informational propaganda films such as newsreels and documentaries to feature films. This change has brought the paradigm surrounding film history into the realm of film theorists, desperate to separate feature production from historical scrutiny. They have made the case for each production to be analysed *internally*, with the emphasis being on factors of composition rather than circumstance.<sup>31</sup> These scholars reject historians' interest in finding historical understanding from Hollywood productions.<sup>32</sup> In an article for film journal *Screen*, Higson suggested that historical approaches place emphasis on 'representation, rather than points of view.'<sup>33</sup> He implies that focus should be on the narrative and visual perspective of the director, and not of the audience understanding of the film text. However, it would seem that to dismiss a film's relative historicity is to dismiss

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<sup>29</sup> P.M. Taylor (ed.), *Britain and the Cinema in the Second World War*, (New York, St. Martin's Press) pp. 4

<sup>30</sup> See in particular, N. Pronay and F. Thorpe *British Official Films in the Second World War. A Descriptive Catalogue* (Clio, Oxford, 1980); N. Pronay and D.W. Springs (eds.) *Propaganda, Politics and Film 1918-1945* (Macmillan, London, 1982); J. Richards and A. Aldgate *Best of British: Cinema and Society* (Blackwell, London, 1983) P.M. Taylor (ed.) *Britain and the Cinema in the Second World War* and recently J. Fox, *Film and Propaganda in Britain and Nazi Germany*, (Oxford, Berg, 2007)

<sup>31</sup> See S. Neale, *Genre & Contemporary Hollywood*, (London, BFI, 2002) A. Higson & J. Ashby (eds.) , *British Cinema: Past and Present*, (London, Routledge, 2000) A. Higson & R. Maltby, *Film Europe and Film America: Cinema, Commerce & Cultural Exchange 1920-1939*, (Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 1999)

<sup>32</sup> R. B. Toplin, *Reel History: in defense of Hollywood*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002)

<sup>33</sup> A. Higson, 'Critical Theory and "British Cinema"', *Screen*, Vol. 24, Nos. 4-5 (1983) pp. 84

not only its director's vision, but the nature of film itself.<sup>34</sup> Despite this tension, historians of film set to work at charting the intrinsic connection between history and film in the 1930s and 1940s and the ways in which film could be used as a window into that society to observe the mentalities associated with that past.

### **Roosevelt and the Ideology of Depression**

When the Wall Street Crash hit America on October 24<sup>th</sup> 1929, it brought with it an immeasurable depth of economic, social and cultural turmoil. Five thousand banks failed in 1930, taking with them seven billion dollars in deposits. One hundred thousand homeowners lost their properties in 1930, with the number escalating substantially to a quarter of a million in 1932. Thirteen million Americans were out of work by 1933.<sup>35</sup> American ideals incorporating success, wealth and prosperity that flourished in the 1920s, crumbled in the 1930s and had to be kept alive by Roosevelt in order to preserve public solidarity and prevent cultural dislocation.

The body of literature surrounding the presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his signature 'New Deal' is extensive. Historians of New Deal America tend to focus their studies around the economic or ideological transformations inherent in the 1930s. As this thesis is concerned with the ideological undertones of the 1930s, a review of the literature that characterises the New Deal is essential. Arthur Ekirch Jr. makes the case for a substantial overhaul of traditional values during the Depression. He maintains that 'more than any other comparable period in the American past, the years from 1929 to 1941 transformed the values and attitudes of the American people, conditioning them to look as never before to the national state as the basic

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<sup>34</sup> See specifically, *Birth of a Nation*, (US, 1915, dir. D.W. Griffiths)

<sup>35</sup> D. Eldridge, *American culture in the 1930s* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2008), pp. 2 & D. M. Kennedy, *Freedom from fear: The American People in Depression and War* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 163

arbiter in their lives.<sup>36</sup> Historians are mainly in agreement as to the way in which the New Deal defined the welfare state in America. While the 1920s had largely been the decade of individualism, the 1930s came to be the decade of community.<sup>37</sup>

However, others have drawn attention to the notion of balance within New Deal thinking. For example, David Eldridge's *American Culture in the 1930s* argues that 'achieving balance meant recruiting the Government as powerful broker between competing interests which involved the New Deal redefining liberalism.'<sup>38</sup> Ultimately, FDR had to define an American version of liberalism that allowed people to trust both his calls for centralisation of welfare and his decentralisation of experimental projects. The New Deal involved balancing concepts of both community and individualism in order to achieve success and security. However, by combining these two ideologies to forge a new version of liberalism, the New Deal was able to ease social conflict and create a new 'social pact' to stabilise American society. Through this new pact, the New Deal was able to 'reconcile a series of fundamental contradictions in American ideology. Thus collaboration between 'good neighbours' might be merged with dynamic individualism, antitrust with economic realism and decentralisation with centralised planning.'<sup>39</sup> Michael Parrish has made the case for the forging of a new communitarian ethic within society within the boundaries of individualism. He contends that the hard times of the decade 'forced Americans for a while to think more communally, to see themselves in one social boat, buffeted by a common storm and to consider the fate of the other person.' However, despite the fact that many private dreams had to be put aside for the decade, the desire to return to the wealth of the 1920s still remained. He claims that Americans continued to 'look longingly to the more recent prosperous past, when getting and spending and living like kings and queens of Hollywood seemed within the grasp of all. That powerful fantasy

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<sup>36</sup> A. Ekirch Jnr, *Ideologies and Utopias: The Impact of the New Deal on American Thought* (Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1969), pp. viii

<sup>37</sup> A. Brinkley, *The end of reform, New Deal Liberalism in Depression and War* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1995) pp. 7

<sup>38</sup> D. Eldridge, *American Culture in the 1930s*, pp. 15

<sup>39</sup> E.W.Hawley, *The New Deal and the problem of monopoly: a study in economic ambivalence*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press), pp. 54

too, stayed alive within the Depression.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Charles Hearn's ideological study of the American Dream during the Depression confirms that despite the fact that the journey to success had been substantially altered from an individual achievement to a shared experience, the dream itself remained very much alive. He argues that, 'In general terms it can be said that the myth of success came out of the Depression tarnished, altered and challenged but not totally rejected and displaced.'<sup>41</sup>

However, historians must investigate how this change in ideology manifested itself. Some have argued that the change was simply inherent in the legislation channelled by the FDR administration. The federal government took a responsibility for public welfare that had been unseen previously in American history, enhancing the unity of the state as a community. The Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) was charged in May 1933 with dispensing five hundred million dollars of federal relief money. Further agencies, such as the Civil Works Administration (CWA) provided jobs for the unemployed, and managed to put four million men and women back to work.<sup>42</sup> Roosevelt attempted to rationalise the economic system through the establishment of the National Recovery Administration (NRA) and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA.)

It is problematic for historians to argue that such substantial ideological changes were substantiated by policy alone. Firstly, the New Deal as a policy is often characterised by contradiction. As Muscio has argued, 'the New Deal was a coalition of opposing – even contradictory – views, in which there was no linear movement.'<sup>43</sup> Anthony Badger has also made the case that the New Deal lacked consistency. He confirms, 'Roosevelt was not an intellectual and his knowledge of economics was sketchy at best. But he surrounded himself with intellectuals. His New Deal gave service intellectuals their chance to shape and implement policy. As such, there was little ideological coherence to the New

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<sup>40</sup> M. E. Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in prosperity and depression*, (New York, W.W. Norton, 1992) pp. 420

<sup>41</sup> C. Hearn, *The American Dream in the Great Depression*, (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1977), pp. 201

<sup>42</sup> See A. Brinkley, 'The New deal and the State' in G. Gerstle & S. Fraser, *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order 1930-1980* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989)

<sup>43</sup> G. Muscio, *Hollywood's New Deal*, (Philadelphia, Temple University Press) pp. 7

Deal.<sup>44</sup> Historians must thus look not solely to policy when pursuing the reasons for the ideological overhaul inherent in the 1930s.

William E. Leuchtenburg's *FDR and the New Deal* remains at the forefront of the literature for providing a concise but accurate overview of the essence of 1930s America. However, notably, the work makes the case for the intrinsic link between the personality of FDR and his primary policy: 'How could the New Deal develop a character of its own, one independent of past and future? Who could doubt that it did, and who can doubt that the explanation is to be found very largely in the character of FDR?'<sup>45</sup> The history of the relationship between communications and politics so integral to this thesis in the New Deal period is almost completely identified with Roosevelt.

FDR utilised the media to his advantage when conveying himself and his ideas to his public. Roosevelt had demonstrated his control over media since he broadcasted his speech to the Democratic National Convention of 1928.<sup>46</sup> He brought himself into the homes of the American people, forging a presence in their lives even before his election to the presidency, minimising the psychological and political differences between government and the public. As soon as Roosevelt entered the presidency, NBC and CBS put themselves at his disposal. As such, Roosevelt was able to utilise the radio to his full political advantage throughout the length of his administration. He gave an average of seven radio speeches per year between 1933 and 1938, with only a small number of these characterised as the more impersonal 'fireside chats.' Roosevelt often explained he was directing himself towards the 'average citizen,' greeting his audience as 'My friends.'<sup>47</sup> Richard Steele has also made the case for Roosevelt's utilisation of the press.<sup>48</sup> Steele speaks of a 'honeymoon period' in which FDR held informative press conferences and was able to use the press as a channel for his ideas. FDR has often been described as a 'newspapermen's president' because of the freedom of access he

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<sup>44</sup> A. Badger, *The New Deal: The Depression Years 1933-1940*, (Houndmills, Macmillan, 1989) pp. 6

<sup>45</sup> W.E. Leuchtenburg, *FDR and the New Deal*, pp. xi

<sup>46</sup> R.S. Fine, 'Roosevelt's Radio Chatting', PhD thesis, New York University, 1977, pp. 64

<sup>47</sup> S. E. Schoenherr, 'Selling the New Deal: Stephen T. Early's role as press secretary to Franklin D. Roosevelt', PhD Thesis, University of Delaware, 1976, pp. 179

<sup>48</sup> See R. W. Steele, *Propaganda in an Open Society*

allowed to the press.<sup>49</sup> However, when Roosevelt's policies came under attack, he often preferred to use radio as a forum for his political ideology. Warren Susman has also made the case for the importance of FDR to American ideology in the 1930s, but argues that the President's popularity was largely to do with the way in which the New Deal 'commanded the set of images, symbols and myths with most meaning for the bulk of the American people.'<sup>50</sup> Nowhere was this apparent than in the movies.

### **Movies in Depression America**

In the 1930s, Arthur Schlesinger commented that 'movies in the 1930s were near to the operative centre of the nation's consciousness.' They provided a mirage into the complex layers of American society. As such, the content of movies in this decade has been the subject of intense scrutiny by film historians, hoping to tap into the political and social landscape of Depression America. The 1930s represented something of a breakthrough for Hollywood and are viewed by historians and film theorists alike as the 'golden age.' Despite the aggressive hold of the Depression over most Americans, cinema flourished and audience attendance remained high. It is in this decade that it seems almost impossible to separate film from its history and indeed, to exclude any political or cultural significance in the content of these productions. In Richard Steele's work *Propaganda in an Open Society*, the case is made for the separation of the movies from ideological messages. Steele argues that 'Until the late 1930s, Hollywood's producers had been largely indifferent to political issues.'<sup>51</sup> On the surface, it would appear that Hollywood's movies during the 1930s were nothing more than escapist fantasy with the primary role of entertainment, having little to do with the complexities of everyday life. However, as Andrew Bergman has argued, 'People do not escape into

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<sup>49</sup> B. Winfield, *FDR and the News Media*, (Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1980) pp. 1

<sup>50</sup> W. Susman, *Culture as History; the transformation of American society in the twentieth century* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1984), pp. 179

<sup>51</sup> R.W. Steele, *Propaganda in an Open Society*, pp. 152

something they cannot identify with. Movies were meaningful because they depicted something lost or desired.<sup>52</sup>

Films were inexplicably used as a forum for directors to communicate political, social and cultural commentary to their audiences. Giuliana Muscio's recent work *Hollywood's New Deal* characterises the intrinsic connection between Hollywood and politics during the 1930s. Muscio states that 'both the New Deal and cinema had a stabilising effect on society that was strengthened and sustained by a reinterpretation of the idea of Americanism, such that the thirties have been identified with the desire for a 'new national vision of popular culture and the country.'<sup>53</sup> The movies in the 1930s had an intrinsic connection with political culture that cannot be underestimated. This even escalated to the level that many of the studios actively promoted the administration of FDR. During Roosevelt's presidential campaign of 1932, Jack Warner staged a Motion Picture Electrical Parade and Sports Pageant at the Los Angeles Olympic Stadium on the 4th of September 1932. Universal, too, actively promoted the President's policies.<sup>54</sup> While Roosevelt's Press Secretary, Stephen Early was keen to underline that the White House would not actively endorse any 'promotional' movie made on the subject of Roosevelt and his policies, Hollywood rose to the challenge regardless. Their campaigning reached a political climax with the 'Hollywood for Roosevelt' campaign.<sup>55</sup> In 1940, it was estimated that more than eighty five per cent of the industry supported Roosevelt.<sup>56</sup>

Due to the inherent connection between politics and film in this decade, many historians have scrutinised the content of movies of the 1930s, analysing their underlying political messages. Allen Woll has made much of the role of musicals in the era at promoting community spirit and unity within

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<sup>52</sup> A. Bergman, *We're in the Money: Depression America and its Films*, (New York, New York University Press, 1971) pp. xiii

<sup>53</sup> G. Muscio, *Hollywood's New Deal*, pp.2.

<sup>54</sup> Universal asked McIntyre for permission to use a photo of Roosevelt in *Moonlight and Pretzels* (US, 1933, dir. Karl Freund)

<sup>55</sup> L. Rosten, *Hollywood: the movie colony, the movie makers* (New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co. 1941), pp. 160

<sup>56</sup> R. Brownstein, *The Power and the Glitter*, (New York, Pantheon, 1990), pp. 79



society<sup>57</sup>. Indeed, musicals emphasised the importance of synchronicity and togetherness within a populace. *Gold Diggers of '33* (US, 1933, dir. Mervyn LeRoy) *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* (US, 1933, dir. Lloyd Bacon) and *Footlight Parade* (US, 1933, dir. Lloyd Bacon), all Warner Brothers features, speak to the resilience and optimism of the American people in a time of Depression and how these traits can lead to material success. James Cagney as the lead in *Footlight Parade* is an avid 'New Dealer' and even states the phrase, 'We're giving you a new deal,' in the film's dialogue.

Andrew Bergman's scholarship *We're in the money: Depression America and its Films* makes a strong case for the ways in which movies championed the work of the federal government in 'cleaning up' the town. He argues that films such as *I Am a Fugitive from a Chain Gang* (US, 1932, dir. Mervyn LeRoy) and *Wild Boys of the Road* (US, 1933, dir. William Wellman) reflect Jack Warner's 'unwavering faith in the work and policies of FDR.'<sup>58</sup> *Wild Boys of the Road* even features a judge that resembles FDR who sends the film's benevolent youths back to the safety of their homes while standing beneath the NRA eagle. Warner Brothers defined the social consciousness film in the 1930s and continued to make films surrounding the ethos of the 'common American man,' and painted FDR in the role of an unsung hero, working to better the lives of the working class.

The realm of fantasy has also been recognised within current film scholarship as having a pivotal part to play in America's struggle with Depression. The idea that escapist and fantastical entertainment is of cultural importance for historians is particularly prominent for a study of animation, where narrative is based wholly in an imagined, exaggerated and fanciful universe. More specifically, Metro Goldwyn Mayer's *The Wizard of Oz* (US, 1939, dir. Victor Fleming) has been argued to have a particular significance to the culture of the 1930s. Dorothy dreams of her 'somewhere over the rainbow' but soon realises that all she wanted and needed was in her own back yard. The success of the film is a true testament to its popularity and heart-warming message. It won two Academy Awards, including Best Song and was

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<sup>57</sup> See A. L. Woll, *The Hollywood Musical Goes to War*, (Chicago, Nelson-Hall, 1983)

<sup>58</sup> A. Bergman, *We're in the Money*, pp. 93

nominated for the Award of Best Picture. The film also seems to underline one of the primary arguments of propaganda historian Nicholas Cull, that ‘movies made a cultural contribution towards educating Americans in the fact that wrongs could be set right within the existing constitutions.’<sup>59</sup>

Cultural historians such as Robert Sklar, Warren Susman and Lawrence W. Levine have identified that the classical narrative of 1930s’ movies also reflect the fundamental shift in values facilitated by the New Deal and the presidency of FDR.<sup>60</sup> For example, the resolution of a series of psychologically rooted moral and social conflicts, the satisfaction of an aspiration for material success through hard work and the importance of community spirit in securing the eventual triumph of the individual were common undertones in many of the films produced during the presidency of FDR. Such a shift was a testament to the success of Frank Capra’s productions of the 1930s such as *Mr Deeds Goes to Town* (US, 1936, dir. Frank Capra), a treatise to the importance of honesty and good character judgement in securing success and social mobility.

Thus despite the fact that the inter-war period has clearly been recognised for its intrinsic importance to the history of cinema, in terms of both its style and for the formation of Hollywood as an influential political institution, an in depth analysis of the animation of this era remains absent. The animated shorts of Walt Disney and of other animation studios were shown on the same film bill as the live action features that have received so much attention from film historians of this decade. Most historians mention only the Silly Symphony *The Three Little Pigs* (US, 1933, dir. Burt Gillett) as having a cultural significance to the national mood due to the tone of its title song, ‘Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf’, however, this remains the only short subject animation to have received attention.

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<sup>59</sup> N. Cull, *Selling War*, pp. 167

<sup>60</sup> See Lawrence W. Levin, ‘American Culture and the Great Depression.’ *Yale Review*, Vol. 74, No. 2 (1985) pp. 196, Sklar, *Movie Made America*, pp. 196 and W. Susman, *Culture as History*, pp. 155

## The Feature Film and the Propaganda Cause

The contribution of animation to the cause of propaganda during the Second World War has generated a little more interest. Works such as Clayton Koppes and Gregory Black's *Hollywood Goes to War* and Bernard F. Dick's *The Star Spangled Screen* are seminal in painting an overall picture of the extent and nature of Hollywood's contribution to the war effort. Indeed, animation is mentioned in these works as having taken up the cause of nationalism as avidly as other studios.<sup>61</sup> The contribution of the American motion picture industry to the United States war propaganda effort was considerable. Clayton Koppes and Gregory Black's work in particular paints a picture of unwavering loyalty to the United States participation in the war: 'Blatant morale building propaganda was a staple of its plot, speeches, and visual images.'<sup>62</sup>

Despite the extensive role played by Hollywood in keeping morale high and sustaining unity at home and abroad in the face of enemies, much has been made of the turbulent relationship between Hollywood and the United States Government.<sup>63</sup> It has been argued that despite his enthusiasm for United States participation in the war, Roosevelt did not set much store by propaganda itself. He created three conflicting departments, including the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), Office of War Information (OWI) and the Centre for Inter-American Affairs (CIAA), all with their own crossed aims, purposes and authorities, all of which desired the production of films to support their motives and objectives. Lowell Mellett, the head of the OWI's Bureau of Motion Pictures, and Nelson Poynter, the go-between of OWI and the Studios, attempted to ensure smooth relationships between the Hollywood moguls and the federal government.

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<sup>61</sup> P. M. Taylor, *Munitions of the Mind*, pp. 230

<sup>62</sup> C. R. Koppes & G.D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: patriotism, movies and the Second World War from Ninotchka to Mrs. Miniver* (London, Tauris Parke, 2000) pp. 2

<sup>63</sup> See A. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The OWI 1942-1945* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1978) & D. Culbert (ed.), *Film and Propaganda in America: A documentary history*, (New York, Greenwood Press, 1990-1991)

Objectives were issued to ensure that films were produced that ran in line with the government's most prominent policies. Films had to be related to the cause of fighting, the enemy, the United Nations, the solidarity of the Home Front and the fighting forces. By 1943, all studios except for Paramount, allowed the OWI to read all scripts before production.<sup>64</sup> This level of control was extended to all studios, including even the Walt Disney Studios, for their production of cartoon shorts. No production exhibited in theatres throughout the Second World War went without the approval of the United States Government, although as Colonel K.B. Lawton, chief of the Army Pictorial Division has stated, 'I have never found such a group of whole hearted willing patriotic people trying to do something for their Government.'<sup>65</sup> Using the framework laid out by the OWI, Hollywood's studios 'went to war with gusto.'<sup>66</sup> Determined to pick up the slack from where they had fallen behind Germany and Japan, whose propaganda agencies had been churning out material since its inception, Hollywood used the Government's endorsement of its work to its full potential.<sup>67</sup>

Unlike the other nations fighting, whose homelands had been directly affected by the outbreak of war, America perceived no direct threat to their safety. While the bombing of Pearl Harbor by the Japanese on the 7th December 1941 was undoubtedly carried out on American soil, the attack was in the middle of the Pacific, miles away from their homeland. Therefore, Americans, unlike other nations, required the movies to highlight this danger in order to fully endorse United States interventionist policy and most specifically Roosevelt's 'Europe First' policy. Films such as *Hitler's Children* (US, 1943, dir. Edward Dymtryk) and *This Land is Mine* (US, 1943, dir. Jean Renoir) brought the perceived danger from the Nazi regime closer to home by threatening the values that the United States held most dear. However, Roosevelt's concentration on defeating Hitler's armies did not exempt the Japanese from treatment in Hollywood's propaganda machine.

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<sup>64</sup> C.R. Koppes & G.D.Black, 'What to show the World: The Office of War Information and Hollywood, 1942-1945,' *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 64, No. 1 (1977) pp. 103.

<sup>65</sup> R. Sklar, *Movie Made America*, pp. 213

<sup>66</sup> C.R. Koppes and G.D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, pp. 1

<sup>67</sup> D. Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema*, pp. 1-2

After Pearl Harbor, the Japanese were portrayed as a cruel, remorseless race in productions such as *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* (US, 1944, dir. Mervyn LeRoy), *Bataan* (US, 1943, dir. Tay Garnett) and *Purple Heart* (US, 1944, dir. Lewis Milestone). On the other hand, the Allies were venerated for their strength and courage in productions such as MGM's *Mrs Miniver* (US, 1942, dir. William Wyler) and *Journey for Margaret*, (US, 1942, dir. W.S. Van Dyke). Warner Bros led the way in telling the story of the common man, the most famous of which was the endearing Rick Blaine in Michael Curtiz's *Casablanca* (US, 1943). *Casablanca* subtly promoted the isolationist cause by showing the conversion of the hero to interventionism as Rick is persuaded into the line of duty. It also hangs the promise of refuge in the United States through its narrative, allowing the American audience to take pride in the freedoms of their country and strengths in a time of crisis.<sup>68</sup> When the population developed a desire for more escapist entertainment, Warner Brothers amalgamated American pride and musical optimism in *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (US, 1942, dir. Michael Curtiz) and even sold first night tickets for war bonds.<sup>69</sup>

The full extent of Hollywood's contribution to the war is well documented, but what is most clear from the literature is the simplistic nature of the narratives in features. Those Germans who worked for the Nazi Government were incurably bad and Germans who supported Hitler were misled. The Japanese were sinister and monstrous and their antithesis was exemplified in the American ideal of democracy and freedom. Furthermore, the characters used to personify this ideal often changed form. While actors such as James Cagney, Humphrey Bogart, Fred Astaire and Errol Flynn were often cast in the role, Hollywood also enlisted the help of the fantastical to wage war on the enemy and sustain morale and unity on the home front. Among the conscripted were Captain America, Superman, Tarzan and Sherlock Holmes. These characters operated within the exaggerated frameworks of a land of make-believe. Nonetheless, the productions including

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<sup>68</sup> C. Shindler, *Hollywood Goes to War: films and American society 1939-1952*, (London, Routledge & K. Paul, 1979), pp. 70

<sup>69</sup> See *Life Magazine*, 15 June 1942, pp. 65

these characters have been given attention in current scholarship on political film production during the Second World War. They contain much the same narrative threads and dehumanisation of the enemy as other war films of the decade. It is here, within the realm of fantasy, that animation was used most ardently by the United States Government as a weapon of propaganda and that the case for animation should be made.

As film and synchronised sound reached their technological fruition at the beginning of the 1930s, so too, did the medium of animation. When animation began to appear on the bill for feature films at the beginning of the 1930s, there was only one name that began to attract significant attention. As such, any study of animation in the Depression must revolve largely around the activities of one particular studio.

### **The Walt Disney Studio**

The Walt Disney Studio has arguably produced some of the best animation in motion picture history, earning twenty-nine Oscars before Disney's death in 1966 for both feature films and cartoon shorts and considerably more since, most recently with Disney Pixar's *Toy Story 3* (US, 2010, dir. John Lasseter).<sup>70</sup> The Walt Disney Company itself is nothing short of a global phenomenon, with theme parks, retail outlets, several motion picture production companies, cruise lines and holiday resorts. The company also merged with ABC Television Studios in 1996, acquired Pixar Studios in 2006 and Marvel Entertainment in 2009, further asserting its hold over global entertainment culture.<sup>71</sup>

Disney's unquestionable dominance in pop culture, both in the period under study and in the present day has led to considerable problems with its scholarly treatment. In their analytical work *From Mouse to Mermaid*, Elizabeth

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<sup>70</sup> Academy Awards won for Best Animated Film and Best Original Song. *Toy Story 3* was also nominated for the considerable accolade of Best Film.

<sup>71</sup> 'Disney Completes Marvel Acquisition', available at [http://corporate.disney.go.com/news/corporate/2009/2009\\_0831\\_disney\\_and\\_marvel\\_entertainment.html](http://corporate.disney.go.com/news/corporate/2009/2009_0831_disney_and_marvel_entertainment.html) (accessed 21 Jan 2013)

Bell, Lynda Haas and Laura Sells highlighted the challenges faced by those wishing to engage in a consideration of any Disney film. They have argued that 'legal institutions, film theorists, cultural critics and loyal audiences all guard the borders of Disney film as "off limits" to critical enterprise.'<sup>72</sup>

Disney's elevated position within the paradigm of global culture has also led to exclusion of any serious consideration of their animation. Steven Watts has identified this tension as a conflict between popularity and critical reception. He has argued that, 'Disney's (sic) enormous popularity has contributed to dismissal in critical circles. Commercial success has been viewed in inverse proportion to cultural significance.'<sup>73</sup> The problem with Disney seems to be the paradoxical underlying notion that populist sentiment cannot be viewed in unison with cultural importance. The common content of Disney animation is the creation of a fantastical world in which mice talk, carpets fly and princes and princesses live happily ever after. It is thus viewed as nothing more than escapist fantasy.

Among the first to criticise Disney animation was Francis Clark Sayers. Sayers accused Disney of creating nothing more than a 'soap opera', that was in no way related to everyday life. Jack Zipes has laid many charges at the door of the Disney Company, particularly regarding its Americanisation of the fairy tale. He contends that Disney 'cast a spell' over the classical fairy tale, infusing viewers with false hope, losing its original value system and replacing it with his own escapist world view.<sup>74</sup> Both of these scholars seem to adhere to the notion that Disney is worthy of special treatment due to its *distance* from the culture of its origins. To an extent, this is true. The animated world of Disney is as fantastical and escapist as its creator. Disney himself detracted from the underlying meanings of his own pictures, famously stating, 'We just make the

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<sup>72</sup> E. Bell, L. Haas & L. Sells, *From Mouse to Mermaid: the politics of film, gender and culture* (Bloomington, Indiana Press, 1995) pp. 3

<sup>73</sup> S. Watts, 'Walt Disney: Art and Politics in the American Century,' *Journal of American History*, Vol. 82, No. 1 (1995) pp. 84-109 and S. Watts, *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American way of life* (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1997)

<sup>74</sup> J. Zipes, *Fairy Tale as Myth, Myth as Fairy Tale*, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1994)

pictures and then let the professors tell us what they mean.<sup>75</sup> However, despite Disney's own ideological indifference towards his films, scholars have since been unable to ignore the messages within Disney animation. Indeed, in Lewis Jacobs' contemporary analysis of Disney film, it is argued that 'it is impossible to regard them as unrelated to contemporary society.'<sup>76</sup> Marc Eliot's early damning biography of the studio head *Walt Disney: Hollywood's Dark Prince*, uncovered Disney's apparent links to the FBI and his extensive work for the Committee on Un American Activities to uncover Communists within Hollywood.<sup>77</sup> This work then set the precedent for a wave of critical literature on Disney and his studio. Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart's *How to Read Donald Duck* characterises Disney animation as dangerous in its transmission of an aggressive American imperialism.<sup>78</sup> Richard Schickel's biography of Walt Disney, *The Disney Version: the Life, Times, Art and Commerce of Walt Disney* was one of the first to acknowledge the value system inherent in Disney film. He has argued that Disney transmitted ideology 'appealing to the worst aspects of middle class conservative values.'<sup>79</sup> However, Schickel's work stands out as one of the first works of Disney scholarship to acknowledge the relevance of Disney to considerations of culture. Henry Giroux's *The Mouse that Roared: Disney and the end of innocence* received a hostile popular reception for arguing that Disney's cultural power was somewhat dangerous, given the company had built their reputation on 'wholesome entertainment, largely free of power, politics and ideology,' when the opposite seemed to apply.<sup>80</sup>

Janet Wasko has made the case for a new serious scholarly treatment of Disney. She claims that 'There is a general sense that its product is only entertainment. There is also some hesitancy to discuss Disney as a business despite the overwhelming emphasis on stockholder value and corporate goals.

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<sup>75</sup> Quoted in L. Rollin, 'Uncle Walt Unmasked', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Vol. 20, No. 2, (1996) pp. 296

<sup>76</sup> L. Jacobs, *The Rise of the Contemporary Film*, pp. 500

<sup>77</sup> M. Eliot, *Walt Disney: Hollywood's Dark Prince: a biography*, (Secaucus, Carol Publishing Group, 1993)

<sup>78</sup> A. Dorfman & A. Matterlart, *How to Read Donald Duck: Imperialist ideology in the Disney comic*, (New York, International General, 1975)

<sup>79</sup> R. Schickel, *The Disney Version: the life, times, art and commerce of Walt Disney* (New York, Simon and Schuster, 1968), pp.41

<sup>80</sup> H. Giroux, *The Mouse That Roared: Disney and the end of innocence* (Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield, 1999)



However, it is important to consider Disney seriously and to insist it is a legitimate focal point for cultural and social analysis.<sup>81</sup> Despite Wasko's claims for a serious consideration of animation, the conclusions reached are very similar to those laid out by critics such as Watts, Zipes and Schickel. 'Disney values,' she maintains, 'are to be associated with 'conservatism, homophobia, ethnocentricity, cultural insensitivity and superficiality.'<sup>82</sup> While there is no denying the radical conservatism of many of the productions, much of the early literature on Disney focuses on little else. As such, these works are deductive in nature, analysing any Disney animated production in exclusive, not inclusive terms.

However, the tide is beginning to turn in favour of the productions of Disney as a way to tap into a seminal part of American popular culture. Mickey Mouse was a global phenomenon by the mid-1930s and he became as much a part of Depression culture as musicals, bread lines and James Cagney. There emerged a new constructive body of literature on Disney that did not limit itself to the critical framework laid out by Eliot. Bryne and McQuillan's recent analysis of the later animated productions of Disney introduces a new notion for animation scholars to consider. The levels of interpretation of Disney texts are constantly evolving due to the rapidly changing ideological fabric of society. As such, they argue that the terms of critical engagement with these texts must change. They contend that scholars 'must not just ask questions about Disney,' they 'must ask questions about the questions we ask about Disney.'<sup>83</sup> They called for a revision of the current work on the popular animated studio. Scholars must now consider the wider cultural, social and political frameworks of the Disney productions and combine this with the ideology of the productions themselves.

Douglas Brode was one of the first Disney scholars to examine Disney animation in a somewhat positive light and to take these frameworks into real consideration. In his work *From Walt to Woodstock: How Disney created the Counterculture*, Brode highlights an illuminating truth. The evolution of ideology

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<sup>81</sup> J. Wasko, *Understanding Disney: the manufacture of fantasy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001) pp. 3

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. pp. 224

<sup>83</sup> E. Bryne and M. McQuillan, *Deconstructing Disney* (London, Pluto Press, 1999) pp. 7

in Disney animation during the 1930s and 1940s was crucial to the formation of a radicalised value system that played a key part in the youth revolution of the 1960s.<sup>84</sup> The importance of Brode's scholarship lies in recognising the underlying importance of the values transmitted through Disney animation and their far reaching consequences. Brode's later contribution, *Multiculturalism and the Mouse: Race and Sex in Disney Entertainment* puts the live action and animated films of Disney under analysis and argues how these features and shorts actually helped to foster tolerance of diversity within American society. Brode underscores the social consequences of the ideologies relayed within Disney's narrative frameworks. Brode's scholarship also highlights that a content analysis of Disney productions is one of the most effective methodologies. In previous literature, too much attention has been drawn to biographical studies and the conclusions drawn from these have subsequently coloured scholars' judgements on the animation itself before any detailed analysis had been carried out. However, where Brode's scholarship falls short is from his *exclusion* of animated shorts. Brode's focus mainly lies with the live action feature films released after the Second World War and with the representations of race and sex. Similarly, Amy Davis' recent scholarship *Good Girls and Wicked Witches: Women in Disney's Feature Animation* makes an astonishing case for Disney as a liberator of the female form, painting his features in a positive light distant from the original criticisms of Zipes and Sayers.<sup>85</sup> However, political ideology and historical culture are all but excluded from these works, leaving a significant gap in the current body of literature.

Some ideological analyses of Disney shorts have been carried out. For example, Russell Merritt has carried out an intense ideological examination of the Disney 'Silly Symphonies' but his analysis is based around the shorts' exploration of childhood.<sup>86</sup> However, Merritt's analysis does highlight Disney's resonance with the cultural myth. Eric Smoodin also taps into the cultural

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<sup>84</sup> D. Brode, *From Walt to Woodstock: How Disney created the Counterculture* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 2004) & D. Brode, *Multiculturalism and the Mouse: Race and Sex in Disney Entertainment* (Austin, University of Texas Press, 2005)

<sup>85</sup> A. M. Davis, *Good Girls and Wicked Witches: Women in Disney's Feature Animation* (Eastleigh, John Libbey, 2006)

<sup>86</sup> R. Merritt, 'Lost in Pleasure Island: Storytelling in Disney's Silly Symphonies', *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (2005)

context of early Disney animation in his work *Animating Culture: Hollywood Cartoons from the sound era*. Smoodin carries out an analysis of the Disney shorts as a part of 1930s culture but avoids any real references to historical processes. However, Smoodin's work does underscore that Disney has an intrinsic connection to Depression culture: 'Mickey Mouse became part of the Depression era narrative of afternoons at the movies and thus became a national monument of transnational capitalism.'<sup>87</sup> Smoodin's later editorial on Disney gives weight to the conclusion that Disney is now being seen as fundamental to the undercurrents of American society. He argues that 'As film studies came to the fore with the developing branch of cultural studies which linked it to the social sciences, Disney's sense of importance has increased once more in terms of the construction of national character.'<sup>88</sup>

Robert Sklar also mentions the Disney shorts in his seminal work *Movie Made America*. While Sklar's analysis is ideological in tone, the shorts are not foregrounded in the study. Sklar's largest contribution to the current discourse on Disney is his argument that Walt Disney had the power to formulate the countries 'myths and dreams.'<sup>89</sup> Walter Wanger's article 'Mickey Icarus 1943: Fusing ideas with the art of the animated cartoon' also makes the case for animation to be considered as ideological.<sup>90</sup> However, Wanger uses the propaganda film *Victory Through Air Power* (US, 1943, dir. Perce Pearce) as his case study. While the analysis is sound, this feature film has been heavily over researched as a source of US propaganda. Steven Watts has identified the importance of the ideology of Disney films as having a connection to the New Deal, however, this analysis seems more of an afterthought and does not form a substantial part of his scholarship. He argues that 'His films symbolised the new American NRA Spirit in some way – the American power to defy disaster,

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<sup>87</sup> E. Smoodin, *Animating Culture: Hollywood Cartoons from the sound era*, (London, Rutgers University Press, 1993) pp. 65

<sup>88</sup> E. Smoodin, 'Introduction: how to read Walt Disney' in E. Smoodin (ed.), *Disney Discourse: producing the Magic Kingdom*, (New York Routledge, 1994) pp. 5

<sup>89</sup> R. Sklar, *Movie Made America*, (London, Chappell, 1978) pp. 189. See also S. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America*, (Boulder, Westview Press, 1992) pp. 400.

<sup>90</sup> W. Wanger, 'Mickey Icarus, 1943: Fusing ideas with the art of the animated cartoon' in E. Smoodin (ed.) *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom* (New York, Routledge, 1994)

to laugh and sing in the face of danger and trouble' but unfortunately does not consider any individual productions to enhance these claims.<sup>91</sup>

There has been one further extensive political consideration of the animated shorts of Disney. Michael Shull and David Wilt's pioneering scholarship *Doing Their Bit: Wartime American Animated Short Films* was among the first to suggest that animation, much like film, could be used as a historical source. The work brings to light the relationship of animation to the period from whence it came, with a specific focus on the wartime animated shorts produced from 1941 to 1945 when Hollywood mobilised for the war effort. While this scholarship is illuminating, drawing links between animation and its historical context, no real analysis of the content of the shorts is carried out. Nor are any common ideological threads in the narrative of the animation suggested. Shull and Wilt mainly focus on the awareness of the animation and underline that animation did contribute to the wartime propaganda effort, without really considering what the extent of that contribution was. Richard Shale's *Donald Duck Joins Up* remains the only work to specifically highlight the contribution of the Disney Studios to the war. While the shorts are put into the economic context of the studio, only a surface analysis of the shorts is provided and the literature itself serves as an extensive economic history of the company.<sup>92</sup> Disney is also mentioned in Sybil DelGaudio's argument regarding animation and documentary work during the war and the Cold War period. While a sound content analysis of many of the shorts is carried out, DelGaudio holds by the widely held assumption that the ideological drive in cartoons began during the war.<sup>93</sup>

Nicholas Sammond's recent work on the connection of Disney to American childhood has done a great deal to call attention to Disney's contribution to the formation of national character. He has argued that 'Disney was represented as an interceding between an ideal past and an unrealized ideal future, distilling the best impulses of that past into a digestible form that would

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<sup>91</sup> S. Watts, 'Walt Disney: Art and Politics in the American Century', *Journal of American History*, Vol 82, No. 1 (1995) pp. 102

<sup>92</sup> See R. Shale, *Donald Duck Joins Up: The Walt Disney Studio during World War Two*

<sup>93</sup> See S. DelGaudio, 'If Truth Be Told, Can Toons Tell it?: Documentary and Animation,' pp.189-199

reappear as the present corrected in that future.<sup>94</sup> Indeed, Sammond draws links between Disney animation and its inherent ideology and hence draws conclusions about Disney's influence on society today. Kevin Shortsleeve's article 'The Wonderful World of Depression: Disney, despotism and the 1930s' is also of interest here. While Shortsleeve's analysis is fundamentally negative, his argument helps to underline a simple truth. Disney achieved his success in much the same way as FDR's New Deal appealed to the American people. He 'associated his products with American iconography,' situating them in and among images, myths and symbols of popular American heritage.<sup>95</sup> However, it would seem that despite the favourable emphasis of the current paradigm, an ideological analysis of the 1930s and 1940s shorts is still yet to be undertaken, and these shorts are yet to be put into their proper historical context.

### **Other Animation Studios**

While the Disney Studio dominated the field of animation during the 1930s, its biggest rival, the Warner Brothers Animation Studio increased in its output and importance to the medium. While this thesis will focus primarily on the animation produced by the Disney Studios, a secondary analysis of Warner Brothers animated shorts will be brought into the study if considered heavily relevant to the topic under examination by way of comparison.

The Warner Brothers Animation Studio headed by Leon Schlesinger has not attracted the same amount of criticism as the Disney Studios, nor has the studio generated as substantial a consideration by academics. While this may seem surprising, considering the extensive scholarship surrounding Jack and Harry Warner's contribution to the politicisation of Hollywood, the two brothers paid little attention to their animation unit. The studio that gave birth to household names such as Bugs Bunny and Porky Pig was not actually under the direct control of the politically active Warner brothers, Harry and Jack,

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<sup>94</sup> N. Sammond, *Babes in Tomorrowland: Walt Disney and the Making of the American Child 1930-1960* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2005), pp. 366

<sup>95</sup> K. Shortsleeve, 'The Wonderful World of Depression: Disney, despotism and the 1930s. Or, why Disney scares us', *The Lion and the Unicorn*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (2004) pp. 18

until Schlesinger sold his assets in 1944. They merely served as distributors for the productions. Indeed, the only real explicit connection between the Warner Brothers and Schlesinger's animation studio was their stipulation that each cartoon should include one full chorus of a song from a Warners' feature film.<sup>96</sup> Despite the fact that Warner Brothers' theatrical shorts won six Academy Awards and created more cartoon stars than any other studio, the literature surrounding their productions is far from adequate. Unlike Disney, Warners' animation has not come to dominate the paradigm of popular culture. The brand does not carry the same weight of social expectations or ideological implications, nor have the animators themselves attracted the attention of scholars.

Due to the long standing ignorance surrounding the cultural importance of animation, for many years, there was no literature on Warner Brothers' animation. Steve Schneider's work, *That's All Folks: The Art of Warner Brothers Animation* serves as the only substantial history of WB animation. Schneider has argued that, 'The problem [with WB animation] was, no-one ever really paid much mind. In all the encyclopaedias of film history, in all the vivisections of pop culture, non-Disney animation was either ignored, scorned or given the shortest of thrift.'<sup>97</sup> The works in which Warner Brothers' cartoon production have been considered always draw a comparison with Disney, and as such, these studies become deductive in nature, examining the shorts in terms of what they are not, as opposed to what they are.<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, research into the cultural significance of Warner Brothers' animation often transforms into a bitter discourse surrounding the Walt Disney Company, highlighting the bias of the analysis, detracting from the validity of the scholar's argument. Kevin Sandler's recent work *Reading the Rabbit: Explorations in Warner Bros animation* is one such charge.<sup>99</sup> However, it has also been argued that despite constant comparison with Disney, Warner Brothers developed a socially conscious interpretation of the animated cartoon, displaying a certain

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<sup>96</sup> L. Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, pp. 220

<sup>97</sup> S. Schneider, *That's All Folks*, pp. 17

<sup>98</sup> M. Barrier, *Hollywood Cartoons: American animation in its golden age*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1999)

<sup>99</sup> K. Sandler, *Reading the Rabbit: Explorations in Warner Bros. animation*, (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1998) pp 4-12.

self-awareness missing completely from their rivals' productions. Paul Wells has identified the difference as a contestation of what was considered conventional in the medium:

'In insisting upon subjecting the unities of the cartoon to interrogation and revision, the Warner Bros animators proved that parameters of the form could address aesthetic principles and socio-cultural conditions in a way that offered a fresh insight and pertinency, challenging any notion of a 'mainstream' orthodoxy.'<sup>100</sup>

While Disney pushed for further realism in his cartoons through constant technical innovation, the animators at the Schlesinger studio were restricted both in time and in budget. Leonard Maltin's *Of Mice and Magic* paints a picture of the Warner Brothers studio as a hive for creativity and imagination, but with strict constraints in terms of product quality. The animators constantly 'battled for higher budgets with Leon Schlesinger, who resolutely refused to cut his profit margin by spending more on the product.'<sup>101</sup> Peter Bogdanovich's *Who the Devil Made It* also provides some insight into the creative 'think tank' of the studios. In an interview with famous animator, Charles Jones, the importance of the animation conducted in a studio fondly nicknamed 'Termite Terrace' is underlined: 'We had freewheeling sessions [there] with all of us together and that's where the experimental stuff came from; all the series themselves came from those sessions.'<sup>102</sup> The core of the Warner Brothers' staff was physically separated from the rest of the unit by Schlesinger. Avery later told his biographer, 'I guess Schlesinger saw the light; he said, 'Well I'll take you boys away from the main plant. He put us up in our own little shack over on the Sunset lot, completely separated from the Schlesinger studio, in some old dressing room or toilet or something, a little cottage sort of thing. We called it Termite Terrace. And he was smart, he didn't disturb us. We were all alone out there and he knew nothing of what went on.'<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> P. Wells, *Animation and America* (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 2002), pp. 51

<sup>101</sup> L. Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, pp. 224

<sup>102</sup> P. Bogdanovich, *Who the Devil Made It*, pp. 706

<sup>103</sup> L. Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, pp. 226

These general histories of animation reveal that unlike Walt Disney, who exercised a heavily controlling influence on the work of his animators, the animators at the Schlesinger studios were given substantially more freedom. As Tom Sito has argued, ‘what made Leon Schlesinger ideal was that as an executive, he understood the separation needed between the creative and financial aspects of animation. He focused on budgets and schedules and otherwise, left the artists alone.’<sup>104</sup> As a result of this, the literature shifted to focus on specific personalities within the studio to uncover the production processes involved in Warner Brothers animation. The personalities of well-known animators such as Charles Jones, Tex Avery, Frank Tashlin and Bob Clampett took on the responsibility of directing the animation and as such had control over every element of the finished product. As Jones has confirmed, ‘The director not only tries to explain to the animators what he wants in terms of bodily action, but he creates and gives them the key drawings. At least the directors did at Warner Brothers. At Disney, for instance, the directors did very little drawing but at Warners, we did a lot.’<sup>105</sup>

Joe Adamson’s biography of Tex Avery is illuminating in providing an insight into the way in which the animation unit operated at Warner Brothers. He confirms the autonomy of Warner Brothers animation, ‘The action in an animated cartoon is so completely under the director’s control that it becomes a medium in which the filmmaker’s imagination not only can run absolutely riot, but genuinely has to.’<sup>106</sup> Adamson’s analysis confirms that the animated shorts at Warner Brothers were the epitome of their creators’ imaginations. In the case of Tex Avery, Adamson argues that ‘the biggest clue you will find to the origin of the state of Tex Avery’s humour is the humour of the state of Tex Avery’s origin.’<sup>107</sup> This paints the animators as the channelling ideological force behind the cartoons themselves. While Adamson’s work does include some background on Avery’s work for Warner Brothers, due to the heavy turnover of staff between the animation studios in the 1930s, the study does not give

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<sup>104</sup> T. Sito, *Drawing the Line the untold story of the animation unions from Bosko to Bart Simpson* (Kentucky, University of Kentucky Press, 2006) pp. 41

<sup>105</sup> P. Bogdanovich, *Who the Devil Made It* pp. 705

<sup>106</sup> J. Adamson, *Tex Avery: King of Cartoons*, pp. 27

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 40



any consideration to the tone of the individual shorts that Avery directed. Half of the work is also transcripts of interviews with Avery himself and with prominent story liner Michael Maltese, so does not give historians any real insight into the day to day production of the animation. Similarly, Charles Jones' self-titled autobiography is disappointing in terms of what it offers to historians on the background of Warners' animation production. Jones' work offers no historical guidelines and the work is structured thematically as he tells his story through heavy use of anecdotes.

As the scholarship on animation began to flourish, it seems historians are now awakening to the cultural significance of Warner Brothers' animation and are seeking to right the omissions of the past. Mitchell Cohen's recent analysis is ground-breaking as for the first time, the tone and content of the animation is explored in real depth. He argues that 'They [The WB cartoons] were the more consciously contemporary cartoons, utilising up to date pop tunes, events and cultural references to make their satire particularly pointed.'<sup>108</sup> Cohen draws the link between the content of the animation and their cultural references, building upon Shull and Wilt's argument for using animation as a historical source. Cohen also points to the heavily adult themes inherent in Warners' animation, through their use as propaganda during the war; 'The LT (Looney Tunes)/MM (Merrie Melodies) conviction that the aggressor will eventually be destroyed was translated into patriotic propaganda during the first half of the Forties.'<sup>109</sup>

Cohen's scholarship also highlights a key feature of the Warner Brothers cartoons that merits further analysis. He argues 'One characteristic common to most Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies is the relationship set up between the world of the screen and that of the audience. At one point or another in a huge percentage of the cartoons, there is a stated acknowledgement by somebody on the screen that our presence is recognised.'<sup>110</sup> The characters in Warner Brothers' animation make a physical and noticeable effort to connect with their audiences. They reached out to their

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<sup>108</sup> M. Cohen, 'Warners Revisited: Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies,' *The Velvet Light Trap*, Vol. 15 (1985) pp. 34

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. pp. 36

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

viewers and as such created a shared forum of experience with the population of 1930s and 1940s America. The characters imply that their audience is a part of their universe and as such makes connections between the world of the real and the world of the animated. This relationship further underlines the case for the tone and content of this animation to be analysed in depth as part of the ideology of Depression America.

Donald Crafton's article 'The View from Termite Terrace: Caricature and parody in Warner Brothers animation' is also of interest, as he looks for the first time, to the tone of the cartoons, highlighting their use of adult satire. He argues that 'Animation mocked movie stars and the movie industry bosses under the guise of fun. But the humour revealed glitches in the Hollywood system.'<sup>111</sup> The value of Crafton's scholarship lies in its revelation that animation provided a commentary on the society of its origin. Warner Brothers were well known for producing spoofs of the Warner Brothers' films and caricatures of well-known movie stars such as Clark Gable.<sup>112</sup> However, in caricaturing the pillars of the Hollywood star system, the animators were providing a commentary on a heavily influential part of American life. Historians now need to look not to the caricatures of stars in animation, but to its caricatures of society and politics.

Michael Birdwell's recent article on the Private Snafu cartoons is certainly of note to historians of Warner Brothers' animation, as again, the physical content of the animation is analysed. He charts the creation of the unit headed by Theodore Geisel, better known by the name Dr. Seuss which produced twenty-six instalments in the Private Snafu saga. These cartoons, he notes, 'gave Hollywood animators the opportunity to experiment with political and topical humour, allowing them to chart new territory and play a role in the eventual destruction of the production code.'<sup>113</sup> What is interesting about Birdwell's scholarship is the way in which he underlines these cartoons as doing something different than other animation. While it is true that these

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<sup>111</sup>D. Crafton, 'The View from Termite Terrace', pp. 227

<sup>112</sup> See for example, *Hollywood Steps Out* (US, 1941, dir. Tex Avery) & *Porky's Road Race* (US, 1937, dir. Frank Tashlin)

<sup>113</sup> M. Birdwell, 'Technically Fairy First Class: Is this any way to run an army?: Private Snafu and World War Two', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, Vol.25, No. 2 (2005) pp. 206

productions were different in terms of their intended audience, they cannot be separated so distinctly from other animation produced by the studios. They were created by the animators in Termite Terrace who were responsible for the production of all Warner Brothers' animation.

While it is natural to be more aware of the content of animation produced specifically for the military as propaganda, historians must now apply this awareness to animation produced outside the confines of the government constraints. Animation was recognised by the government as having the power to be able to carry heavy ideological messages; historians must now chart where this power came from and how it was wielded before and during the war. It is hoped that the contribution of this study will prove that animation can be used as a historical window into the society from whence it came.

### **Methodology**

This thesis endorses two key methodologies. Firstly, those concepts of the 'New Film History' put forward by British film historian James Chapman in the recent SAGE handbook for Visual Research Methods. Secondly, the qualitative content analysis endorsed by Gillian Rose in *Visual Methodologies*.

Chapman argues that the debate between film theorists and film historians is beginning to settle and a new methodology for the study of visual materials has now evolved. He states that there are three characteristics central to this new concept.

'It understands films neither as a straightforward reflection of social trends, nor as texts waiting to be decoded through the application of theory, but rather as complex cultural artefacts whose components and style is determined by a wide range of historical processes...the second.. the central importance of primary sources. These include both the films themselves and text sources such as company records, personal papers, scripts, diaries, letters, publicity materials, reviews and box office receipts. The third characteristic of the New Film History is its cultural competence in reading film through both their narrative content and their visual style.'<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> J. Chapman, 'Researching Film & History: Sources, Methods, Approaches', in E. Margolis & L. Pauwels (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods* (Sage, London, 2011)

For the first element, a sound historical background will be referenced throughout this thesis, in order to devise a context for the production background for each of the shorts. This thesis considers the social and cultural context of production to be of paramount importance when investigating the content of the animation itself<sup>115</sup>. The historical background for the production of the shorts will mainly be referenced through the use of secondary source material.

Chapman highlights the necessity of using reviews, company records and personal papers to formulate a complete picture of the society into which the films were released. However referencing primary source material for Disney and Warner Brothers animation is problematic for several reasons. Firstly, access to the Disney Archives, and thus company records and production materials, is incredibly difficult to obtain. The Archives are cited to be 'for the company's own internal use' and thus are off limits to many film scholars wishing to engage in analysis of Disney productions. Despite this obstacle, this thesis has utilised the vast resources of the Margaret Herrick Library in Beverly Hills for its primary source production material on Disney. The library contains many internal unpublished memoranda from the studio in its war years, which can be used as an analytical framework for the shorts themselves not only for the war time propaganda but also for the 1930s productions as many of the same techniques are used and are explicitly identified within this thesis. The techniques referred to in these memoranda have never been analysed before with reference to the productions themselves, thus marking an original contribution to the field of animation history.

To deduce a contemporary view of the shorts, the thesis also, on occasion and where relevant, utilises the popular trade press, including the *Motion Picture Herald*, the *Hollywood Reporter* and others. The content of the trade press has been analysed in its entirety for any reference or review of Disney

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<sup>115</sup> A. Bock, H. Isermann & T. Knieper, 'Quantitative Content Analysis of the Visual' in E. Margolis & L. Prawels, *The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods*, pp. 278-279

animation, or reference to its studio's productions. This allows historians to gauge contemporary views of Disney and indeed, how the Disney Studio put itself across to the general public and to the film industry as a whole. To provide further insight into the production background of the animation, interviews with key figures from the Disney Studio have also been utilised. These are primarily from Michael Barrier's *Funnyworld* Magazine, published in the 1970s, and from the American Film Institute Archives. The interviews were conducted by historians to deduce information about the processes involved in animation and can also be used as sources on the figureheads of Walt Disney and Leon Schlesinger.

Due to the lack of substantial primary source material on animation, the thesis largely takes the form of a content analysis of the animated shorts produced by Disney and Warner Brothers between 1932 and 1945 as per the criteria listed below. In her seminal work on methodologies, Gillian Rose cites content analysis as a 'methodologically explicit' way to analyse visual texts.<sup>116</sup> As has been stated throughout the literature review, such a content analysis has not yet been carried out. These shorts have not been put into their historical context, nor have they been analysed specifically for their historical and ideological content.

While this focuses solely on the site of the image itself, taking into account its narrative, use of colour and *mise en scene*, the approach endorsed by this thesis will also focus on the importance of diegetic and non-diegetic sound in offering meaning. Music, particularly in the field of animation which relied on its sound to set mood and tone, is critical in providing an understanding of a particular frame. As Michael Shapiro has argued, 'music offers us the opportunity to reach a broader understanding of the emergence, meaning and significance of key political challenges.'<sup>117</sup> While referring to contemporary historical events, Shapiro's argument holds. The importance of music in the movies in presenting and often altering national mood has been referenced by scholars such as Bergman and Woll. They highlighted the unity forged by

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<sup>116</sup> G. Rose, *Visual Methodologies: an introduction to researching with visual materials* (London, Thousand Oaks, 2012) pp. 54

<sup>117</sup> M. Shapiro, *Methods and Nations: Cultural Governance and the Indigeneous Subject*, (New York, Routledge, 2004) pp. 194

musical numbers of the 1930s and 1940s. However, due to its connection to the world of the fairy tale, animation relies more upon its musical soundtrack than the feature film.

The presence of content analysis in combination with a solid contextual background will provide a clearer picture for historians of the importance of these animated shorts to the ideology of the decade from whence they came. However, content analysis must also formulate a sampling procedure of sorts. This is most commonly articulated by the formulation of a set of objective criteria.<sup>118</sup> While all of the animated shorts produced by Disney and Warner Brothers have been examined in depth for this study, only a certain number are of relevance.

### **Criteria for Analysis**

The primary criterion set for the selection of the animation for analysis is thus:

The central dramatic conflict revolves around the interaction of the animated character/characters with an institution of society (eg. Civil servants, media, politicians, businessmen, political movements, agriculture, cityscape).

Any animated short that does not contain any reference to any institution of American society will be disregarded and will not be included in detailed analysis or used as an example of a particular trend within animation.

The thesis itself is organised into the following chapters, based on the various themes developed within animation during the 1930s, solidifying the study's commitment to proving animation's contribution towards the formation of political and social ideology before the War.

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<sup>118</sup> A. Bock, H. Isermann & T. Knieper, 'Quantitative Content Analysis of the Visual' in E. Margolis & L. Prawels, *The SAGE Handbook of Visual Research Methods*, pp. 266-267

Chapter two concerns itself with the so-called ‘honeymoon period’ experienced within the United States during the Presidential campaign of 1932 and after the inauguration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1933. It argues that animation endorsed the new president’s campaign and policies through its narrative and music through a content analysis of several animated shorts of the period from 1932 until 1934, and combined with an investigation into animation’s role in the trade press. Further selection criteria have been formulated for a short’s inclusion for analysis in chapter two. These are as follows:

- The short evokes a sense of optimism through characters / music/ setting and colour.
- The short includes a caricature of Roosevelt
- The short cites ‘Rooseveltian’ ideas or New Deal rhetoric within its narrative or through the script of its animated characters.
- The short evokes a feeling of a new age or break with the past.
- The short cites a battle against a common enemy in the hope of a new age.

Chapter three is centred on animation’s depiction of Depression America and its awareness of the New Deal. It focuses specifically on the animation produced by Disney from 1934 until 1937. 1937 is the year during which many historians argue that the New Deal came to an end due to the cutbacks imposed upon the President by Congress in a need to balance the budget. 1937 also saw the appearance of a second recession for the United States, evidence used by many historians for the ultimate failure of Roosevelt’s New Deal. 1937 also witnessed Roosevelt taking a more active role in foreign affairs through the infamous ‘quarantine’ speech in Chicago in October 1937<sup>119</sup>. Thus the focus of Roosevelt’s administration from 1937 onwards was directed more towards international affairs than the internal problems of the United States. There are several areas that will be investigated in this chapter. Firstly, the main focus will be on the portrayal of life in the animated world amidst a

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<sup>119</sup> R. Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy 1932-1945*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1979) pp. 148

Depression. The chapter will evidence the New Deal in action in animation, the changing responses of the animated characters towards authority, and the re-ignition of the American Dream. For inclusion in this chapter of analysis, the shorts will be selected according to the following criteria:

- The animation shows awareness of the Depression and/or New Deal economic policy in the foreground of the narrative.
- An animated character has direct contact with a federal institution and there is evidence/no evidence of responsibility for public welfare.
- The characters comment or act upon the Depression either directly or indirectly.
- The characters comment on the New Deal/New Deal rhetoric directly or indirectly.
- There is evidence/no evidence of technical innovation.

Both chapters four and five epitomise the ‘transitional’ stage of animation from its simple commentary on everyday life and politics in chapters two and three, to the formulation of a specific ideological message about America, its history and its politics.

Chapter four, in combination with chapter five, puts forward a message about America’s position in the world, specifically in relation to the international stage. It focuses largely on animation’s depiction of other nations through use of caricature and through the position of these nations within the narrative of animations. For example, how a particular nation and its peoples are depicted in animated shorts. This chapter focuses on the years 1936 up until the attack on Pearl Harbour and America’s declaration of war against Germany on December 13<sup>th</sup> 1941. 1936 constitutes the year in which Hitler’s invasion of the Rhineland against the Treaty of Versailles caused significant political upheaval within Europe. It also marks the beginning of the Spanish Civil War and constituted the height of Mussolini’s military action against Abyssinia in North Africa. America remained ‘neutral’ to a point during these years, however animation was able to comment on the international arena without being subject to the amount of censorship imposed upon the feature films of Hollywood during this period. For inclusion in this chapter, the animated shorts are subject to only one criterion:



- The short references a country outside of the United States in a manner that demonstrates awareness of the international situation.

Chapter five focuses largely on the new sense of nationalism created in America through the policies of FD Roosevelt. This is reflected heavily within the animation of the period from the period 1937 up until America's direct involvement in the Second World War. This was achieved through the consistent use of national phrases, music, history and the animation of well-known American figures or landmarks. The shorts to be included in this chapter will be subject to the following criteria:

- The location within the animation is easily identifiable as America, either through use of location, use of classic American symbols or motifs such as the flag.
- Reference is made to American history/heritage or national symbolism.
- The animated characters identify themselves as American.

Chapters six and seven constitute the epitome of animation's involvement in putting forward an ideology through their narrative. Using unpublished internal documents from the Disney studios, these chapters demonstrate the techniques at work during the production of 1930s animation and their formalisation for use in propaganda at war. Chapter six focuses solely on shorts produced by the Disney studios sponsored by the United States Treasury, *The New Spirit* (US, 1942, dir. Wilfred Jackson & Ben Sharpsteen) and *Spirit of '43* (US, 1943, dir. Jack King) and the productions sponsored by the CIAA and thus, required no specific criteria for analysis. It includes a primary documentation of the production background of these shorts and the techniques used to convey ideology. The chapter utilises the framework laid out in internal Disney documents to draw conclusions about the techniques used by the Disney studio to contribute towards the formation of ideology and how their origins can be traced in the 1930s productions.

Chapter seven focuses specifically on the war time productions of the Disney and Warner Brothers' Studios outside of the confines of the Treasury.

The chapter also deals with productions referencing the war and the international situation, conveying the argument that these animated shorts constitute the epitome of Disney's contribution to the formation of a national and international ideology. The criteria for selection of shorts for analysis in this chapter are as follows:

- The short references the international situation, either via depiction or caricature of any of the Axis powers or Allies.
- The short references the United States contribution to the war effort either directly or indirectly.
- The animated character involved in the short is involved in the war effort, either via direct contact with the arena of conflict or shown to be contributing to the home front.

### **Original Contribution to Knowledge**

The techniques used by Disney and Warner Brothers animation to formulate its interpretations of politics and society within this period will be devised throughout the thesis, through the use of qualitative content analysis by the criteria stated above and the inclusion of primary source material. Through the combination of unpublished internal documents from within the Disney Studios during the War and an original content analysis of the animation from 1932 to 1945, this thesis finds the techniques used in the 1930s to convey ideological and political meaning were formalised and documented for use within war propaganda.

Contrary to the current arguments of animation scholars that Disney's cartoons did not present any historical or politically relevant ideological contributions until the War, the animation produced by the studio since 1932 presents a particular adaptation of the Depression and New Deal America to its audiences, leaving a heavy ideological imprint for historians to excavate. An analysis of this ideological imprint is completely absent from current literature on animation or feature films during this period. It is this transition from entertainment, to subjective commentary, to government sponsored propaganda that this thesis will uncover.

## **Chapter Two: The Roosevelt Honeymoon 1932-1934**

The way in which the majority of Americans rallied to the support of Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the 1932 election campaign is well documented. The President elect managed to secure an absolute majority, which had not happened since the election of Franklin Pierce in 1852.<sup>120</sup> Nearly twenty-three million voters chose the prophet of the New Deal in the greatest vote ever cast for a presidential candidate.<sup>121</sup> What is less well documented is the extent to which FDR and his new administration received an astonishing backing from the film industry in Hollywood. Furthermore, there has been little or no examination of the ways in which this support materialised in the world of animation. Using examples from the popular trade press the *Motion Picture Herald* and the *Motion Picture Daily*, this chapter charts the way animation found an outlet through which to support FDR and his policies, which filtered through from the political forum of the industry periodicals into the narratives of many of its productions in the first two years of the new president's term.

Following the results of the 1932 election in FDR's favour, the Hollywood press were quick to congratulate the new President on his victory. As Dennis Brogan has argued, 'the Roosevelt name was magic' and the industry was quick to capitalise on its appeal.<sup>122</sup> The first edition of *Motion Picture Herald* in 1933 welcomes its readers optimistically into the New Year:

'Happy 1933! Sure it's the same as 1929 because Good times are here again thanks to the Laughing Lion!'<sup>123</sup>

Hollywood movies even used the New Deal to advertise their pictures. Many historians have commented upon the 'Rooseveltian' elements within movies such as Warner Brothers' *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* (US, 1933, dir. Lloyd Bacon) and this is certainly reflected in the way they were advertised during the first year of his presidency. The advertising line for *42<sup>nd</sup> Street* was cited as 'The

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<sup>120</sup> R. Edsforth, *The New Deal-America's Response to the Great Depression*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 2000) pp. 71

<sup>121</sup> D. Brogan, *The Era of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, (New Haven, Yale University Press) pp. 38

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. pp. 20

<sup>123</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol 110, No. 1, 18 February 1933

Inauguration of a New Deal in Entertainment'.<sup>124</sup> The film even held a special showing in Washington on the inauguration weekend, advertising itself alongside FDR's ascendancy to the presidency.<sup>125</sup> The Warner brothers actively supported FDR during his campaign in 1932, and MGM's Globe Trotter Travelling Studio 'proudly' took its place in the Inaugural Parade in March of 1933.<sup>126</sup> In July, when Roosevelt appealed to American industry to adopt a uniform policy of higher wages under the National Industrial Recovery Act, he received an instant telegram from Will Hays of the Production Code Administration, pledging support of the agreement by all major producers, effective of the end of July 1933.<sup>127</sup> Hollywood, in these years, was proud to be associated with the new administration and used the President's new policies to promote its new films and programmes.

However, fuelling passion for the New Deal into advertising was not simply confined to the live action feature films and the big studios. Disney animation, too, used the New Deal and the appeal of Roosevelt to the American public to promote itself within the industry. Disney's early distributor, Columbia, used the rhetoric of Roosevelt's new presidency in its advertisements. An advertisement in the 25 March 1933 edition of the *Motion Picture Herald*, featuring Mickey Mouse, advertised the slogan 'Keep 'Em Happy with Columbia Short Subjects!' then, indicative of speech from the character of Mickey Mouse, stated 'Banks are open, market's shooting up – beer will soon flow freely. USA will balance the budget. Farm and unemployment relief are on their way – a grand new deal all around!'<sup>128</sup> The animated world considered itself a part of the promise of the New Deal and through advertising, allowed itself to endorse the policies of the new administration. Mickey Mouse was even invited to be a special guest star at the New England Prosperity Festival in May 1933 and had a specially constructed street, 'Mickey Mouse Mall' named after him. *Motion Picture Herald* overtly recognised the connection the animated star had with the new thread of hope pulsating throughout society:

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<sup>124</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol 110, No. 9, 25 February 1933

<sup>125</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 110, No. 10, 4 March 1933

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>127</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 112, No. 5, 29 July 1933

<sup>128</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 110, No. 12, 25 March 1933

‘School children, merchants, police and unemployed rallied about a mythical pencil line which somehow has become vitally symbolical the country over for children, young and old.’<sup>129</sup>

What is perhaps most striking in the trade press of this period, is that the character of Mickey Mouse was even allowed his own editorial slot in the popular film periodical *Motion Picture Daily*. The author, stated as ‘Icklemy ‘Ousemay’, is accompanied by a large print of the cartoon character and written in the unmistakable intonations of Mickey Mouse, containing references to Minnie Mouse, Walt Disney and his fellow cartoon colleagues Horace Horsecollar and Clarabel Cow. What is most interesting for historians of the period, are the striking endorsements of the new administration put forward by the ‘character’ himself, drawing a direct link between Disney animation, its characters and support for the New Deal.

In the editorial, Mickey calls attention to the widespread support his studio had received from the presidential family. He states that ‘the biggest thrill of my life’ was when he ‘read all the lovely things Mrs. Roosevelt said about my pictures.’<sup>130</sup> Mickey is likely referring to the well documented comment made by the First Lady who stated that her husband ‘loved Mickey Mouse and he always had to have that cartoon in the White House.’<sup>131</sup> Mickey establishes a relationship between himself and by extension the Disney Studio, and the New Deal by reaching out to the presidential household as he reached out to the audiences of America. While ‘Mickey’ is flattered by the attention he has received from the household, he seems unphased and even harbours his own political ambitions. Later in the editorial, he states that as ‘eight thousand managers lobby for a mouse’, that ought to get him somewhere in Washington and contemplates whether there will be a place for him in the ‘Mouse of Representatives.’<sup>132</sup> Mickey further underlines his support for the President by stating that someday, ‘I want to meet Mr. Roosevelt and shake his hand and tell him that he is our mouse beloved president.’<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 111, No. 8, 20 May 1933

<sup>130</sup> *Motion Picture Daily*, Vol. 33, No. 135, 10 June 1933

<sup>131</sup> N. Gabler, *Walt Disney*, (London, Aurum, 2007) pp. 195

<sup>132</sup> *Motion Picture Daily*, Vol 33, No. 135, 10 June 1933

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*

Even outside of the realms of the cinema screen, animation was actively engaging itself within the political atmosphere found in the trade press within the years 1932 to 1934. Donald Crafton has argued that there is little overtly political content in Hollywood cartoons.<sup>134</sup> However, when animation was actively involving itself within the political culture of Hollywood in these years and playing its own role within the so-called Roosevelt honeymoon through editorials, parades and advertising, perhaps it is worth historians taking another look at the content of the animation itself. While it has been argued that the early Disney cartoons are deeply committed to the 'old American tradition of individual initiative and enterprise,'<sup>135</sup> through analysis of the characters, personalities and music from within the cartoons released by Disney and indeed, a few other animation studios, it is clear that the force of the animated world was behind the administration of Roosevelt. However, it would take some time for the techniques used within these animated shorts to be refined over the course of the 1930s.

### ***Mickey's Nightmare* (US, 1932, dir. Burt Gillett)**

*Mickey's Nightmare* was released in August of 1932. While this cartoon was in production, the nation had seen the collapse of four hundred private charities in New York and an estimated sixty million out of a total population of one hundred and twenty six million people living 'hand to mouth.'<sup>136</sup> Moreover, unemployment was estimated to be upwards of thirteen million.<sup>137</sup> Financial pressures were increasingly taking their toll on the average American family, with thousands of men leaving their wives and children in an attempt to find work. Many families had to turn to private charities in order to make ends meet. The central institution of the family became a burden unto itself. This study argues that this cartoon, released well before the promise of the New Deal and at a time when America's economy was at its lowest ebb,

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<sup>134</sup> D. Crafton, 'Infectious Laughter: Cartoons Cure the Depression' in D. Goldmark & C. Keil (eds.) *Funny Pictures*, pp. 71

<sup>135</sup> R. Sklar, 'The Making of Cultural Myths – Walt Disney' in G. Peary & D. Peary (eds.) *The American Animated Cartoon – A Critical Anthology*, (New York, Dutton, 1980) pp. 63

<sup>136</sup> R. Edsforth, *The New Deal: America's Response to the Great Depression* (Malden, Blackwell Publishers, 2000) pp. 77

<sup>137</sup> W.E. Leuchtenberg, *FDR Roosevelt and the New Deal 1932-1940*, pp. 2

encapsulates the spirit of these times directly, simply through the troubling character of Mickey's dream. It stands in stark contrast to a later cartoon which centralises the same social issues, but portrays an inherently different ideology.



Fig. 1 From *Mickey's Nightmare* (US, 1932, dir. Burt Gillett

*Mickey's Nightmare* opens with Mickey dutifully saying his prayers before bed time. His bedroom is modest but comfortable. Mickey then begins to dream. His vision opens as the epitome of the typical American Dream. He proposes to Minnie and they quickly get married and settle down together. (See Fig. 1) They have their own home and

garden in the suburbs and are living in the throes of the idyllic 1920s, where America's economy is booming and home ownership was increasing by the day.<sup>138</sup> A stork soon delivers a baby to the house and Mickey is congratulated by Pluto on becoming a father. However, one manageable child soon turns into fifty children. Mickey's idyllic life is transformed into the epitome of the Depression burden – a house full of mouths to feed. The children gradually destroy every element of Mickey and Minnie's American Dream. The car is destroyed, as are the various commodities owned by the newlyweds. Mickey's carefree life is suddenly filled with a responsibility not associated with 1920s America. Furthermore, the absence of Minnie within this cartoon places the emphasis even further on the father figure as the sole breadwinner of the household during the Depression.

The dream ends with Mickey literally trapped by his responsibilities with no sign of rescue. His children have tied him up and surround him, so he is unable to escape. Mickey wakes up, smashes the Cupid statue next to the picture of Minnie by his bedside, and cheers the reality of his life. Mickey's experience within this cartoon channels the burden of family associated with a pre-New Deal America. It emphasises the responsibility of a wife and children

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<sup>138</sup> G. Masnick, 'Home Ownership and Social Equality in the United States,' in K. Kurz & H. Blossfeld, *Home Ownership and Social Inequality in Comparative Perspective*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2004) pp. 307

to the average male, here portrayed as Mickey. The fact that this short was released in 1932, at the height of America's struggle with the Depression situates this animated short directly within the forum of economic and political debate. The techniques used by animation in this cartoon to implicate an ideology are symbolic. Animation uses symbols well known to the American people in order to generate a political meaning. Mickey and Minnie are home owners and sport many commodities in their comfortable house. These are gradually destroyed throughout the animation, signifying the destruction of the materialistic culture of the 1920s.

Far from being the American 'Dream' experienced by a middle class figure of Mickey's background, due to the current economic climate within this 1932 cartoon, Mickey's wife, house and children are a 'nightmare' he is only too happy to escape from. The world created by Disney's animation engages itself with real social issues which, at the time of release, were central to the heated political debate cutting through the fabric of a previously prosperous society.

### ***The Three Little Pigs* (US, 1933, dir. Burt Gillett)**

Few cartoons of this era have attracted as much attention from historians as *The Three Little Pigs*. Widely regarded as one of Walt Disney's most successful cartoons of the *Silly Symphony* series, the animated tale of the pigs' battle with the Big Bad Wolf has been highlighted as culturally and socially significant. Richard Schickel has drawn attention to the cartoon as being 'more Hoover than Roosevelt... stressing self-reliance, conservative building and keeping one's house in order.'<sup>139</sup> However, Robert Sklar has linked the animated short with the euphoria inherent in society after the election of Roosevelt. He argues that 'the film's popularity likely stemmed from its expression of New Deal spirit.'<sup>140</sup> Michael Shull and David Wilt have also linked the wolf in *The Three Little Pigs* with 'the Depression and .....fascism.'<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>139</sup>R. Schickel, *The Disney Version*, pp. 154

<sup>140</sup>R. Sklar, *Movie Made America*, pp. 204

<sup>141</sup>M. Shull & David Wilt, *Doing Their Bit*, pp. 23



Both the popular press and the trade press expressed the importance and popularity of this cartoon and its underlying ideology. A *Motion Picture Herald* review of the picture from October 1933 cites the animation as being ‘the best colored short in many a day. Have had patrons come back to see it a second time and numerous phone calls.’<sup>142</sup> The Pigs were even associated with New Deal philanthropy as they were used to distribute prizes in a contest awarded by W.C. Ricord Junior in December 1934.<sup>143</sup> A reference to the New Deal spirit within the cartoon is also made within the British periodical *Nash’s Pall Mall Magazine* in April 1934. The tag line for the article cites Walt Disney as the ‘man who welcomed the wolf and put him to work!’<sup>144</sup> This demonstrates not only the undertones detected within the cartoon, but the true impact of the cartoon on an international scale. Contemporary observer on the movies, Lewis Jacobs, made the case that *The Three Little Pigs* ‘has a message of striving together which was emphatic after the election of Roosevelt’s famous appeal to the Americans. The film became a heartening call to the people of the troubled country.’<sup>145</sup>

This thesis embraces the idea that *The Three Little Pigs* message is overtly democratic and embraces the values of the new administration. However, what the current literature on this cartoon has failed to investigate is the techniques Disney uses in order to put across this message within the framework of the animated world.

Our attention within this animation is first drawn to the characters of the pigs themselves. *The Three Little Pigs* set the benchmark in what animation historian, Leonard Maltin has characterised as ‘personality animation.’<sup>146</sup> We are introduced to the three pigs, two of which have very similar carefree personalities. They put little effort into the construction of their houses, find the time to play their musical instruments and sing in celebration of their lot. These two pigs represent the epitome of the ideology inherent within 1920s

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<sup>142</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 113, No. 4, 21 October 1933

<sup>143</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 117, No. 9, 1 December 1934

<sup>144</sup> S. Skolsky, ‘Mickey Mouse’s Maker’ in *Nash’s Pall Mall Magazine*, Vol. 93, No. 491, April 1934

<sup>145</sup> L. Jacobs, *The Rise of the American Film*, pp. 505

<sup>146</sup> L. Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, pp. 41

America. They are living the American Dream, embracing their lives filled with wealth and fortune. Both are dressed in smart uniforms. The pictures on the walls of their houses reinforce this carefree attitude. The pig in the straw house is shown dancing in a Hawaiian grass skirt, the second indulging himself within the sport of boxing. Each of these are leisurely pursuits, indicative of an egotistical ideology and suggest that these pigs care little for the joy of family or community. These pigs are put into direct contrast with the third 'hard working' pig.

The 'practical pig' is dressed in worker's overalls, indicative of the fact that he does not take much pride in his appearance. He does not adhere to the carefree attitude of his peers, working long and hard constructing his house with 'wolf proof paint.' The 'practical pig' is resourceful. He does not accept his fortune, he works to maintain and strengthen his personal defence against the world. He finds happiness 'not in the mere possession of money; it lies in the joy of achievement, in the thrill of creative effort.'<sup>147</sup> On the walls of his brick house, the 'practical pig'

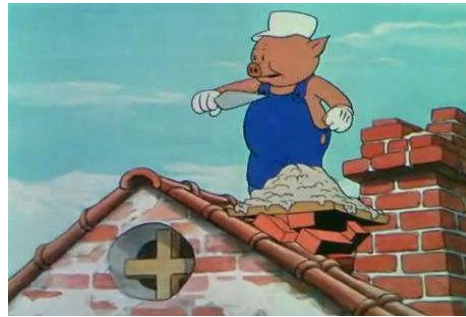


Fig. 2 From *The Three Little Pigs* (US, 1933, dir. Burt Gillett)

celebrates family, with a picture of 'Mother' placed on the wall. Simply through the personality of these three characters, the animation presents a clash of alternative ideologies: one consistent with a pre-Roosevelt America, the other, consistent with the philosophies inherent in the New Deal. Secondly, one must pay attention to the music within this animated short. The ideology of the cartoon is relayed through Frank Churchill's lyrics. The practical pig sings 'I'll be safe and you'll be sorry when the wolf comes through your door.' The pig infers that through his hard work and graft, he will be immune to any outside threat, while the other two pigs simply laugh off the danger posed by the wolf and continue to dance and sing. When the carefree pigs have their houses

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<sup>147</sup> From FDR's inauguration speech, 4 March 1933. Available at <http://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5057/> (accessed 21 Dec 2012)

destroyed by the wolf, the error in their ideology is highlighted by the lyrics of the practical pig. He sings that ‘only bricks and stones are wolf proof.’

As the audience is made to witness the practical pig putting endless effort into building his house, the attention is drawn to the effort and not to the pigs’ ownership of the house. This places emphasis on the work ethics of the pig and not his possessions. Furthermore, as many historians have signified, this thesis embraces the idea of the wolf representing the Depression, we can uncover further meaning behind the refrain ‘Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf?’ Throughout, the carefree pigs laugh off the Depression and its clutches. However, instead of fighting the menace, they run away and do little to change their current situation. The practical pig, however, is motivated and takes direct action to combat the danger. He hits the wolf over the head with a brush and eventually burns the Wolf’s rear end with boiling turpentine. Again, the personality of the practical pig demonstrates the direct consequence of Roosevelt’s plea to the American people to take action and work to combat the Depression.

The ideology in this cartoon is thus submitted through its musical narration and through the individual personalities of the three little pigs. The overall narrative of the story is not yet in sync with the ideology of Roosevelt’s government, however, the administration was, at this point, in its infancy. However, we can see the transmission of values simply through the music and personalities of the main protagonists in the story.

### ***The Wise Little Hen* (US, 1934, dir. Wilfred Jackson)**

*The Wise Little Hen* was released on the 9th June 1934 into a somewhat different historical and economic background. FDR had alleviated the banking crisis, set the American currency to the gold standard and launched the New Deal officially with the establishment of the National Recovery Administration. Most importantly for the context of this animated short, FDR had set to work on stabilising the agricultural sector with the establishment of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration. Accompanying the NRA bill through Congress, the AAA was aimed at tackling the desperation of the situation in the

countryside by providing government subsidies for farmers.<sup>148</sup> FDR also passed the Farm Mortgage Act, which enabled the government to readjust farmers' mortgages.<sup>149</sup> The mentality that accompanied this agricultural policy was, as Albert Romasco has argued, not far removed from the German economic concept of autarky.<sup>150</sup> The idea of economic self-sufficiency in the countryside is well demonstrated by the personality of the *Wise Little Hen*. This animated short has largely been made famous due to the debut of the famous Disney character, Donald Duck. Such attention has left the short under-researched in terms of its socio-political content. This analysis suggests that not only does the animation adhere to the early New Deal policy of self-sufficiency in the countryside, it also constitutes a further rejection of the 1920s ideology found within the two carefree pigs in *The Three Little Pigs*. This is accomplished through criticism of the personalities of Donald Duck and Peter Pig.

The short opens into the agricultural world of the hen and her chicks. The hen seeks help to plant her corn to provide food for her family. The hen has multiple dependents, however unlike the nightmare world experienced by Mickey in 1932, these chicks only enhance her work ethic. She calls upon Peter Pig, a single 'man', with no dependents, to help her plant her corn. Peter is



Fig. 3 From *The Wise Little Hen* (US, 1934, dir. Wilfred Jackson)

unproductive in his day to day life. Much like the carefree pigs, he is simply dancing around in his back yard, protecting his lot. When asked to help, the pig states that he has belly ache and groans, shirking off any responsibility and demonstrating his rejection of the community work ethic found within the

New Deal.

Donald repeats Peter's falsified plight and also complains of a belly ache, leaving him unable to help the hen. The hen, undeterred, simply works

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<sup>148</sup> D.M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, pp. 702

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> A. U. Romasco, *The Politics of Recovery*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1983) pp. 241

together with her chicks and they plant the corn together. Once the corn has grown, the hen once again seeks help from Donald and Peter in order to harvest the corn. The pair has now formed an 'Idle Hours Club' and again, complain that they have belly ache and cannot help her. The hen harvests the corn herself with her chicks and cooks plenty of food for herself and her children. When the time comes to reap the true benefits of all her hard work by eating the corn, Donald and Peter are only too happy to help but are faced with Castor Oil for their supposed belly ache, leaving the hen and her chicks to eat the corn themselves.

Again, through personality animation, the cartoon is able to relay its underlying ideology. The hen is from a humble background and throughout the story only wears a shawl to cover her shoulders and head. Her chicks have no clothes, emphasising their vulnerability in the animated world. She provides a stark contrast to both Donald and Peter who are fully clothed. They are reminiscent of the carefree pigs and the 1920s spirit of material culture as they both take pride in their appearance by wearing smart clothes. The hen is not afraid to ask for help from her neighbours and more importantly, is undeterred when Donald and Peter refuse her request for help. The hen thus becomes completely self-sufficient, making enough food for herself and her children. This perfectly exemplifies Roosevelt's early intentions for the agricultural sector. Donald and Peter, however, represent the antithesis of what Roosevelt wished to inject into society – apathy. Midway through the cartoon, Donald and Peter have established an Idle Hours Club. Much like the second carefree pig, they associate themselves with leisure pursuits. We can see a boxing poster pinned up on the side of Peter's house and there is also a tennis racket lying nearby. Both ignore the decent living exemplified by the hen. Much like the practical pig, she values family and hard work above all else, evidenced by the family pictures hung on the walls in her house. However, as the hen reaps the rewards of her hard work, Donald and Peter's laziness is punished as they are left hungry.

*The Wise Little Hen* also uses music to enhance this ideology. At the opening of the animation, the lyrics of the narrative speak to the hen's need to

plant her corn so she is ‘not left short when winter comes again.’ The winter of 1933 leading into 1934 has been described by many historians as ‘the worst in its history.’<sup>151</sup> The winter had antagonised the crises in the rural sector and spurred Roosevelt to call for the formation of the CWA (Civil Works Administration). While historians can only debate over the inference in this cartoon, it is possible that the reference made here in the lyrical narrative is trying to prevent a devastating repetition of the previous winter. At the close of the cartoon, the lyrical narrative states that ‘although her friends [Donald and Peter] have seen the light, they’ve nothing but a plight as with all her might, she’ll eat the corn herself.’ The lyrics highlight the wise self sufficiency of the hen as the ‘light’ in the story, however no solution is offered to Donald or Peter, showing that they will not receive any reward unless they are willing to work hard.

While the Disney cartoons maintained a level of subtlety in their references to Roosevelt and the New Deal, the same cannot be said of other animation produced during this period. The most remarkable feature of non-Disney animation is the use of caricature and explicit references to Roosevelt’s policies. These are analysed below by way of a comparison with the Disney productions and also as a note on techniques that Disney later employs in its more ideologically based animation.

### ***Bosko in Person* (US, 1933, dir. Hugh Harman & Isadore Freleng)**

*Bosko in Person* was released to audiences on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1933. While this was before the official inauguration of President Roosevelt, emergency meetings with Congress had already been held in order to address the various banking crises.<sup>152</sup> During the election campaign, culminating in November 1932, FDR ‘radiated confidence’ in public. While he was well aware of the deteriorating economy and the gravity of the task entrusted to him, while in public, he always avoided the appearance of alarm or worry. This

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<sup>151</sup> K. Louchheim (ed.) *The Making of the New Deal: the insiders speak*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1983) pp. 188

<sup>152</sup> R. Edsforth, *The New Deal*, pp. 99

inspired the American people to vote for him and resulted in the construction of a striking caricature of Roosevelt in many of the animated productions of 1933. The first of these was in the Looney Tunes cartoon *Bosko in Person*.

The tone of *Bosko in Person* is noticeably different than other Looney Tunes animation. Far from being set in the comfort of the farmyard or on the agricultural plains prevalent within Disney animation, Bosko separates himself from his audience, performing a show that the audience of the cartoon must watch. At the beginning of the cartoon, Bosko and his girlfriend Honey dance in sync together with optimism reminiscent of Warner Brothers' musicals such as *We're in the Money* and *Footlight Parade*. For the first time, the animation is set on the stage, instead of set within the confines of everyday life. This adds a sense of urgency and importance to what the audience are made to witness and emphasises



Fig. 4 From *Bosko in Person* (US, 1933, dir. Hugh Harman & Isadore Freleng)

throughout that Bosko and Honey are building up to the main attraction of the show. Furthermore, there are no problems in the animation that could be identified with the complexities of everyday life. Within the production, Bosko sings, that 'Everything's okay, you see.' The emphasis in the music drawn to these words seems to suggest the presence of some previous crisis that has been resolved. Bosko and Honey are now able to celebrate. *Bosko in Person* also aligns itself with the support of Hollywood by allowing Bosko and his girlfriend Honey to impersonate stars such as Jimmy Durante and Maurice Chevalier, avid supporters of the new administration.

However, the most interesting premise of this cartoon is undoubtedly at its end, when we realise the reason for the change in attitude of Bosko, Honey and seemingly, the tone of American society. Bosko starts to beat on a drum that features a lively caricature of the President elect. This in itself, is striking. Rules were instituted prohibiting the use of images or of the voice of the President in any audio visual message for commercial or promotional

use.<sup>153</sup> Bosko asks, 'Is everybody happy now?' while the audience cheers for their new President. FDR comes to life from within the drum and toasts his future and his audience with a beer in hand while Bosko and Honey dance off stage.

There are several things that can be deduced from this cartoon's endorsement of the new administration. Roosevelt was seen as a man of the public and was sensitive to the way he was presented to the American people. As Muscio has argued 'he maintained close contact with public opinion by travelling widely and reading mail sent to the White House.'<sup>154</sup> In this sketch, FDR drinks a beer and dances with the star of the animation, Bosko, on the stage. Honey follows them off stage, waving her American flag, while the national anthem plays majestically in the background. In this sketch, Roosevelt is not only linked to the audience through his toast, but he is linked to American nationalism and American greatness. The optimism with which Honey waves her flag and the happy tones of the music and the dancing of Bosko and FDR draws us into a new era, with Bosko dancing side by side with the President, hence signifying the union of the animated world and the politics of the 'real' world.

In this animation, several techniques are used to put across a specific ideology where the President is concerned. Firstly, the animation uses caricature. The Disney cartoons did not use caricature until the mid-1930s, when the medium begins to develop further in its use of ideology. The caricature of Roosevelt used here tells us a great deal about the intended portrayal of the new President. The cartoon omits any reference to FDR's paralysis and avoids the issue by allowing the figure to 'sit' inside Bosko's drum, making him a very part of the music pulsating throughout the cartoon. We must also draw attention to what FDR is doing within the cartoon. The President elect is seen as accessible to the public as he is physically present within the show put on for the American people by Bosko and Honey. He also toasts the American public with a beer, showing that he is a part of their struggle and is willing to work together with them to solve their problems. One

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<sup>153</sup> G. Muscio, *Hollywood's New Deal*, pp. 56

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.



must also bear in mind the ban on prohibition in the United States was not repealed until the 5<sup>th</sup> December 1933, after Roosevelt had been inaugurated as President. Through this reference, the cartoon shows not only the promise of better things to come but also an awareness of one of the ways Roosevelt would change things for the American people.

This cartoon also uses music to evoke nationalistic feeling within its audience. When Roosevelt and Bosko leave the stage, the national anthem is heard. In this way, animation uses music to unite its audience behind its characters. Due to the presence of Roosevelt and Bosko on stage, these characters are hence associated with American nationalism. This is further enhanced by the use of the flag. Honey waves it wildly as the characters leave the stage at the end of the act. Use of the flag and of the national anthem were two of the most primitive techniques used by animation to convey ideology in this early period.

### ***Bosko the Musketeer* (US, 1933, dir. Hugh Harman)**

*Bosko the Musketeer* was released in September of 1933. The Hundred Days has passed, the NRA was in operation and the New Deal was in full swing. In this short, Bosko is walking through a meadow, picking a daisy to the romantic refrain 'She loves me, she loves me not.' He goes to see Honey, who quickly points out that she is impressed by strong soldiers. Bosko dreams of impressing Honey and so, in a daydream, he walks into a retelling of the Three Musketeers and does battle. Determined to become the musketeer Honey yearns for, he arrives at a bar and becomes the fourth Musketeer. He is determined to find something that will make he and his Musketeer friends unbeatable as they come up against some local thugs. He soon finds the cure. In the middle of battle with a common enemy, Bosko uncorks and glugs down a bottle of 'New Deal '32' and with its magical curing powers, he and his musketeer friends are able to defeat their foes, he is able to impress Honey and live happily ever after.

There are several things of interest to animation historians in this cartoon in the way it puts across a very clear political ideology. Firstly, Bosko's

problems are solvable through only one cure. He cannot achieve his goal of becoming a soldier or gain the confidence to defeat his foes without his bottle of New Deal '32. Bosko drinks the policies of the New Deal as a physical



Fig. 5 From *Bosko the Musketeer* (US, 1933, dir. Hugh Harman)

liquid. Much like the Big Bad Wolf in *The Three Little Pigs*, the enemy in this cartoon is given physical form, instigating the need for a physical battle between the common man, here portrayed as Bosko, and the enemy.

Given that no physical reference to the enemy's identity is made within this cartoon, we can only assume that as the cure is cited as the New Deal, the enemy is the Depression. This would suggest that the animation is identifying the New Deal as the cure to the 'sick' American society. Or perhaps the fact that Bosko's ability as a musketeer is increased significantly by the ingestion of 'New Deal '32 would infer that the enemy is a lack of confidence or lack of belief in one's own abilities or Roosevelt's 'fear of fear itself.'

While the true identity of the enemy in this short is unknown, the use of metaphor within this cartoon allows historians to deduce another technique utilised by animation in this period in order to put across an ideology – in this case – political. Animation, within the confines of hyperbole, is able to give physical form to complex concepts. Here, while the audience cannot see the intricacies of 'New Deal '32' and what it entails, they can see the effect on the common American, Bosko. The effect on Bosko is positive and enables him to defeat his foes in battle. Animation is thus able to put forward an overriding endorsement for Roosevelt's policy utilising the simplest of techniques – metaphor. There are no political references within the narrative of this cartoon. On the contrary, *Bosko the Musketeer* is a daydream in which Bosko dreams of impressing Honey through his fighting prowess. However, through use of metaphor, a political inference is made in an otherwise simplistic children's cartoon.

***Confidence* (US, 1933, dir. Walter Lantz & Bill Nolan)**

*Confidence* is a Universal cartoon, starring the Disney creation, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit. Walt Disney lost the rights to the Oswald character in 1927, which sparked the creation of the rival character, Mickey Mouse. The two are noticeably similar in both character and appearance. While outside the confines of the analytical parameters of this study, *Confidence* is nonetheless a highly significant cartoon which encapsulates all of the techniques used by Disney and Warner Brothers to relay ideology in this 'honeymoon' period.

In this cartoon, much like in *Mickey's Nightmare*, we are able to see the physical and emotional impact of the Depression upon the animated world. Before the Depression, Oswald's chicken farm is reasonably productive, although notably some of the chickens do have trouble laying their eggs. Overnight, a grim black figure rises from the Dump, with the word 'Depression' emblazoned on his chest. This figure haunts the world over, demonstrated by the use of a circling globe within the animation and eventually reaches Oswald's farm. The lively cockerel who announces the morning to the farm animals has been infected with the Depression. It spreads throughout Oswald's farm, as the chickens and hens become gloomy and are unable to lay eggs, bringing production to a standstill. Oswald screams for help throughout the town and goes to see the doctor to find a cure for Depression. The doctor informs him that the real doctor is Franklin D. Roosevelt. Oswald visits the President in Washington and retrieves an injection of 'Confidence' which successfully restores production on his farm.

There are several points of interest in this cartoon that convey an intensely powerful political ideology. While the animation is still set in a traditional farmyard setting, we are taken quite literally into the world of politics that lies beyond the simplistic narrative of early animation. This shows that the medium, far from shying away from politics, was not afraid to present Roosevelt's government to the audience. It actively engages with the political world. While animation does become more involved with politics throughout

the 1930s, *Confidence* was ahead of its time in the amount of political engagement shown by its characters.

In this animated short, the country's depressed economy is intrinsically linked to a depressed attitude. The wider problems of society are condensed and transported into a smaller more manageable setting. Depression is also recognised within the animated world to be an emotional and psychological problem, when in reality, the fundamental cause of the Depression was economic. However, yet unable to display the intricacies of the United States' economic problems within animation, the animators transform these problems into something that is *experienced* by the characters. This also makes the problem relatable to the audience, as all Americans, in some way, were affected by the reaches of the Wall Street Crash.

The portrayal of the President is striking. FDR is portrayed as the 'doctor' to cure society. He is suggested to be a greater cure than an actual medical doctor, who a misguided Oswald first approaches to solve his problems. He is also easily reachable. Far from there being an insurmountable barrier between an ordinary man (here portrayed as Oswald) and someone as important as the President, Oswald is able to march straight into the White House without an appointment and is easily able to seek advice from the elected leader of the country. This further enhances the public view of Roosevelt as a man of the people who is on the same level both intellectually and physically as the American public. Roosevelt greeted his public as 'friends'



Fig. 6 From *Confidence* (US, 1933, dir. Walter Lantz & Bill Nolan)

within his fireside chats and his response to Oswald underlines this image. Notably, there is also a picture of Theodore Roosevelt on the wall of Roosevelt's office, signifying a continuation of greatness and a realisation of America's former glory within the present day. Furthermore, FDR dances. The press were very sensitive to FDR's mobility and he was often seen sitting down

during fireside chat broadcast newsreels, or leaning against his son or a podium. Far from being paralysed by his condition, FDR is shown as the type of President who dances and sings along with ordinary people. Animation was able to take an impossible situation and make it possible through the limitless parameters of the medium.

The medical doctor was right and FDR did hold the 'cure' to society. He had the vat of 'Confidence.' A complex cure is transformed into something physical that the audience can see and that Oswald is able to literally inject (much like Bosko's beer) into the depressed animals at his farm. The cure, FDR sings to our audience, is confidence. There is no hesitation in FDR's answer to Bosko's question. He states that what this 'great nation' needs is 'Confidence.'

In the same way that *Bosko in Person* used the national anthem, and *The Three Little Pigs* sang away their worries about the approach of the wolf with their song *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf*, *Confidence* also utilises one of animation's most important ideological weapons: music. At the close of the cartoon, Oswald sings that 'A new day is dawning for worker and all,' acknowledging Roosevelt's promise that the New Deal will affect everyone in society. Furthermore, the cartoon references the idle spirit endorsed by Donald Duck and Peter Pig in *The Wise Little Hen* by Oswald's further lyrics, 'No more bumming, we'll all get to work.' *Confidence* portrays its ideological message through its original music, created with the specific purpose of embracing the new presidency and its policies.

## Conclusion

From its infancy, animation actively involved itself within the political discourse of Hollywood and of society. Both on and off screen, the characters within animation contributed towards the widespread endorsement of the new administration, engaging its characters with the concept of the 'Roosevelt honeymoon' that took hold in the United States from Roosevelt's election until 1934.

In 1933, Disney animation had not yet developed enough as a medium to enable ideology to be channelled from within the narrative of its productions. Ideas are put across through the actions of the characters themselves and their personalities. Through the Disney technique of personality animation, historians can chart the development of politically aware attributes within the characters themselves. The 'practical pig' is the embodiment of the spirit of Roosevelt's New Deal, taking pride in his work and reaping the benefits when crisis loomed in the shape of the wolf's attack. He is able to take care of himself and his two kin through his continued diligence and dedication. His personality is enhanced when put into contrast with the two carefree pigs in the cartoon. These characters embody the 1920s value system, putting their own interest and leisure time before that of hard work. They do not work for their entitlement and they are quick to seek shelter in the new ideology brought to life by the pig. Disney was hence able to give physical form and consequence to concepts using nothing but the distinguishing features of his characters. The same technique is used through the personality traits of the hen in *The Wise Little Hen*. The hen epitomises the self-sufficiency inherent in Roosevelt's agricultural policy. Her children are not the burden evident for Mickey in *Mickey's Nightmare*. Far from it, they actively contribute towards the life of the farm and are able to share in her success. Disney also uses contrasting personalities in this animation in order to emphasise the positive aspects of the hen's outlook over the negative aspects of Donald and Peter's way of life. Both of these characters engage themselves in leisure pursuits and do nothing to actively improve their lives or the area they live in. When the hen asks for help, on both occasions, the pair shirk their responsibilities, staying true to the individualistic attitudes inherent within 1920s ideology. These characters reject the shared experience promoted within the political rhetoric of Roosevelt's New Deal and feign illness rather than help the hen. However, by 1934, Disney animation begins to infuse the narrative of its productions with a particular ideology. At the end of the *Wise Little Hen*, Donald and Peter are not left with a happy ending. They are left hungry and wanting.

This personality animation is not yet developed enough within the Warner Brothers cartoons and they are hence unable to channel a particular ideology through their characters. As stated by Warner Brothers animator, Charles ‘Chuck’ Jones, ‘The biggest thing Disney contributed was that he established the idea of individual personality.... The breakthrough really was *Three Little Pigs* – that’s where personality was developed. All of us who followed were obviously keyed off by that – and it’s just bad history to ignore it.’<sup>155</sup> Jones admits that the Warner Brothers animation team were not yet at the stage where they were able to create individual personalities for their characters. Thus, their animated productions were held back in their ideological progression through their lack of technological development. However, Warner Brothers used different means in order to put across its message and connect itself with the political discussion. Instead, their animators used symbols and caricature. In the production *Bosko in Person*, the animators combined the two to infuse a new liberal ideology within its cartoons. Roosevelt holds a beer and toasts the future of his new administration and the American people, situated within the audience of this cartoon. The beer, holding connotations of the intended repeal of prohibition, was heavily symbolic of a new era for the country. Honey holds an American flag as she dances off stage with Roosevelt, infusing a national pride within the audience of the cartoon. It also gives the impression that Roosevelt, leading the way off stage, will be the one to restore this pride to the American people after such a period of distress. Bosko even refers to this by stating, ‘Is everybody happy now?’

These symbols evoke powerful emotions within the American people, and infer an endorsement of the new era. Furthermore, the use of symbolism is particularly pertinent in their later production *Bosko the Musketeer*. Instead of attempting to relay the ideology within the New Deal through a personality trait of a character, or even through narrative, Warner Brothers animation simplifies the complicated nature of the New Deal through evoking a transformation of its state. It is converted from an abstract concept into a

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<sup>155</sup> P. Bogdanovich, *Who the Devil Made It*, pp. 711

physical liquid. When Bosko drinks the liquid, he is able to defeat his enemy. Thus without directly engaging into a political debate over the validity of New Deal policy, Warner Brothers animation simply shows that the liquid is successful by allowing Bosko success in his endeavours after drinking it. The consequences of the complexities of New Deal policy are thus simplified.

While this was a 1933 development for Warner Brothers, Disney uses the concept of symbolism in the 1932 production of *Mickey's Nightmare*. Engagement, marriage, home and commodity ownership in the suburbs are all concepts associated with 1920s America through the economic 'boom' experienced by most of the country. Mickey lives this life and is happy. However, the change is activated through the birth of many children. Mickey is now exposed to a climate in which his life is filled with responsibility which he no longer has the personal facility to take on. Minnie does not help him mind the children, emphasising the challenges faced by a father in this period to support his family. The children gradually destroy the idyllic life shared by Mickey and Minnie by wreaking havoc and mayhem throughout the house. They break much of Mickey and Minnie's furniture and gadgets, change the colour of their house by painting the walls and literally strip Mickey down to his skin by pulling at his clothes and tying him up in the garden so he is unable to do anything to improve his situation.

This is perhaps an indication of the helplessness within society throughout 1932. This use of symbolism is powerful. Douglas Brode has argued the short constitutes an attack on the Right, however, it could be argued that the short uses symbolism to channel not just an attack on the old conservative order, it highlights the inability of the current economic system to support fathers such as Mickey. Through this failure, children are no longer a blessing to a family, as seems to be the case in the *Wise Little Hen*, they are a burden on the household economy. The Disney cartoons also transmit ideology through simple additions to their characters' homes. We can see that family values are central to the ethics of the hen and to the 'practical pig' through the pictures hung on the walls of their homes. They value community and not the individual. Donald, Peter, and the carefree pigs value only their



own leisure pursuits, harbouring pictures of holidays and boxing. While these are very simple additions, their connotations for the ideology of the home owners are particularly striking.

What these animated productions do have in common is their utilisation of the medium of music. At this stage, animation had only just mastered the art of synchronised sound, with Disney leading the way through the production of *Steamboat Willie* in 1928 (US, dir. Walt Disney & Ub Iwerks). With this breakthrough, Disney continued to be more advanced in their utilisation of sound within animation to impart a particular effect. Frank Churchill's song 'Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf' is a particular charge. As many have argued, regardless of the fact that the effect of *The Three Little Pigs* was unintentional, it did, however, have a rallying effect on society.<sup>156</sup> The animation, by portraying the Wolf as the eternal enemy for the innocent pigs, had the effect of 'laughing away' the Depression for the American public. However, this was not its only achievement. In the *Silly Symphony* series, music directed the movements and dialogue of the characters. In such productions, music acts in replacement of dialogue. It is through music that we learn the characters' true thoughts and feelings, or in this case, their ideology. The 'practical pig' values safety above all and desires to keep a barrier between himself and the wolf. The lyrical narrative within *The Wise Little Hen* has a similar effect, by asking a rhetorical question of the audience, 'Who will help her plant her corn?' This urges the audience to take responsibility and to disapprove when Donald and Peter refuse to come to her aid. It also references the reason why the hen must work so hard, thus providing the motivation behind her ideology and demonstrates the 'plight' of Donald and Peter when they do not embrace it. In *Bosko in Person*, Warners' also utilise music to put across their ideology. Bosko sings that 'Everything's okay, you see' reassuring the audience of a change in society.

*Confidence* is a remarkable cartoon and the techniques used within the animated production are advanced both technologically and in terms of the ideology put forward. Not only does *Confidence* use symbolism, personality

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<sup>156</sup> J. Zipes, 'Breaking the Disney Spell' in E. Bell, L. Haas & L. Sells (eds.), *From Mouse to Mermaid*, pp. 35

animation, caricature and music, it also engages the animated world with the political world in a way that is not seen within animation until the 1940s and the onset of war. *Confidence* turns animation into political commentary, using all of the resources at its disposal. We see the concept of confidence turned into a physical object, administered through Oswald's injection, which is easy to compare with Warner Brothers' use of the 'New Deal '32' tankard. Personality animation is also of importance here.

Disney's staff were responsible for the personality of Oswald. He runs a productive farm, but when crisis hits, he actively engages himself with the political world in order to change his current situation. *Confidence* also uses personality animation to display the physical and emotional effects of the economic Depression. We can see the impact of the Depression upon the emotional state of the hens, which also cleverly transforms into a negative economic effect for Oswald's farm when the hens are no longer able to produce eggs. The caricature used for Roosevelt demonstrates animation's ability to use hyperbole to enhance a particular characteristic. It enables situations that would be impossible within the real world and even within live action feature films. Roosevelt, paralysed through his battle with polio, dances through the cartoon with Oswald showing not only the character he displayed to the American public, but his friendly relationship with the common man. A caricature of Teddy Roosevelt on the wall is used symbolically to link the new administration with an old President associated with American greatness and nationalism. The national anthem evokes patriotic spirit as Oswald enters the capital and the lyrical reaches of the song encapsulate all those who have been affected by the Depression and so will be helped by Roosevelt's cure of confidence. The chorus of the song also signifies the break with the past by referencing the dawning of a new day.

However, where *Confidence* is ahead of its time is through its direct engagement with the political world. The animated protagonist physically leaves the comfort of the common animated setting of the barnyard and journeys into the gritty realism of the world of politics. He hears directly from the President as to what action should be taken. This interaction between the

animated world and the political world is not utilised by Disney until the late 1930s and is used recurrently during the war. At this stage, with the exception of *Confidence*, it should be stated that this animation remains within the boundaries of the cartoon world. There are no explicitly political exchanges within the productions at this stage, nor does the content of this animation, excepting *Confidence*, explicitly charge itself with political agenda. However, the techniques animation later uses during the war to channel ideology are seen in their primitive stages in the cartoons produced during this 'Roosevelt honeymoon.'



### **Chapter three – Animating Depression America 1934-1938**

Following the ‘Roosevelt honeymoon’ of the early 1930s, the heart of animation began to move from a voracious political fervour towards a thoughtful social commentary on American life. What is most important regarding this phase in 1930s animation is the way in which these productions entered a transitional stage in terms of commentary upon contemporary society.

During the early years of the 1930s, animation had been swept away with the popular tide in favour of Roosevelt’s New Deal policies. It had sought fit to comment upon the transformation of the nation’s mood and to reflect and uphold this mood within the content of the animated productions itself, using patriotic symbolism and FDR as a popular figurehead to which this change could be attributed to. However, having proved itself in the ability to reflect upon the changes in society’s mood, animation now found itself in a position to comment upon the economic and social changes in the United States and the consequential effect that these transformations then had on the national mind-set. How did people regard their new society, changed barely beyond recognition by Roosevelt’s New Deal? How did these changes affect their aspirations, hopes and dreams of success? Animation, through the vivacious personification of ideals and the unification of its poignant lyrics with narrative, came to portray not only the upheaval of traditional American values but the ways in which these values were overturned and replaced. The fairytale world of Mickey Mouse and his friends masks a sensitive realism and portrayal of Depression America. What is also striking about these cartoons is their continued embrace of New Deal liberalism until the time at which FDR began to start losing his hold on popularity in 1937. This seems a far reach from the heavily publicised far right political views of their producer: Walt Disney. This lends further attrition to the argument that it is to the historical and social context of the film production that emphasis should fall.

The trade press of the time was aware of this careful commentary as portrayed by the animated world. In an article written in the *Motion Picture*

*Herald* in July 1935, regarding colour in animation, the author speaks of the ‘timeliness of subject matter’ within the productions<sup>157</sup>. A review of several of Disney’s Silly Symphonies by an exhibitor in May 1935 also refers to the ways in which the animation provides a ‘novelty burlesque on the present conditions.’<sup>158</sup>

Animation was recognised as being capable of passing commentary on current issues within society, current events and towards the latter years of the 1930s, begins to comment not on society, but on those in charge, making an overtly political statement within the narrative of its cartoons and through the personalities of its characters. Within these years of the 1930s, animation embraced four key ideological precepts that historians have traditionally associated with the Depression, the New Deal and 1930s society.

The first was a Jeffersonian rural idealism echoed in many Hollywood films of the era. This precept acknowledges the opportunity offered by the cityscape but fears the technological advancement that accompanies such urbanisation. The second sought to underscore the changes taking place within the national mind-set. Steadily, with the replacement of 1920s individualism by 1930s communitarianism, traditional values were overhauled and their protégés found within the personalities of Disney characters. The third centred entirely on the social drama associated with a land of poverty. Animation was able to portray the day to day angst of those wanting relief from their present situation, mostly through an obsession with becoming rich, hence alleviating the stresses of every day hardship. The fourth is indicative of a political trend within society, and is most reflective of this transitional stage within animation. Though merely only an extension of its careful commentary on everyday life, the two animated productions within this category are able to transcend to a new level of ideological awareness, the foundations for which are built upon during the late 1930s and in the Second World War.

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<sup>157</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol.120, No. 3, 13 July 1935

<sup>158</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 120, No. 3, 15 July 1935

## Rural Idealism

The first of these precepts constituted a Jeffersonian rural idealism and fear of technological advancement.<sup>159</sup> Historians have long documented Roosevelt's underlying belief that the cure for the nation's ills was a return to a simplistic life on the land. His biographer, Frank Freidel has stated that 'country life to Roosevelt was a way out of the Depression and a guarantee of permanent comfort.'<sup>160</sup> Throughout the campaign trail in 1932, he had accused the Republicans of misunderstanding the real problems of farmers and spoke of 'national planning for farmers' and a 'reordering of economic life' based upon the idea of balance.<sup>161</sup> Romasco has also highlighted the resonance of the agrarian myth within society during the Great Depression.<sup>162</sup> Thus pivotal to this re-imagining of American economic thinking was a new policy for agriculture in the shape of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

Passed into law in May of 1933, the AAA included such measures as production control, self-financing through processing taxes, participation encouraged by benefits payments and the purchase of surplus crops by the Government to control the price of wheat. Most importantly, however, the Farm Credit Act was put into place, allowing for struggling farmers to avoid foreclosures by taking out short and long term loans.<sup>163</sup> David M. Kennedy has even gone as far as to argue that no area of society was so 'tenderly coddled' by the New Deal as the agricultural sector.<sup>164</sup> While the success of the AAA does not concern us here, it is the ideological foundations upon which the AAA and its preceding organisation, the Farm Security Administration (FSA) were built that filtered through into the animated world of Walt Disney's cartoons. These ideas were current within the New Deal's political and economic thinking and were transformed into policy. As Kevin Shortleeve has argued, many of the

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<sup>159</sup> See A. Bergman, *We're in the Money*, pp. 70; C. Hearn, *The American Dream in the Great Depression*, pp. 84; and D. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, pp. 200

<sup>160</sup> F. Friedel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt* (Boston, Little Brown, 1973) pp. 79

<sup>161</sup> See K. Louchheim & J. Dembo (eds.) *The Making of the New Deal*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1983) pp. 6, and D. Eldridge, *American Culture in the 1930s*, pp. 15

<sup>162</sup> A. Romasco, *The Politics of Recovery: Roosevelt's New Deal* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1983) pp. 186

<sup>163</sup> See R. S. Kirkendall, 'The New Deal and Agriculture' in A. L. Hamby's *The New Deal: analysis and interpretation* (New York, Weybright & Talley, 1983), pp. 66

<sup>164</sup> D. M. Kennedy, *Freedom From Fear*, pp. 202

Disney productions ‘reject the cityscape’, preferring to embed themselves within the agricultural sector.<sup>165</sup> This embrace is coupled with a fear of technological advancement. Many historians have attested to the immense investment in machinery to jumpstart agricultural growth. Indeed, Michael Bernstein has argued that such investment actually prohibited economic growth in this sector.<sup>166</sup> Paul Bonnifield has made claims for a ‘revolution’ in the farming sector during the Depression years. He contends that; ‘The revolution in farming, resulting from tractors, combines, trucks and one way plows and other technological improvements, meant that many hired men were no longer needed.’<sup>167</sup> In an employment marketplace such as existed in the 1930s, this created genuine fears for the future of skilled work in the countryside and worries over the prospects for society in a world where men were being rapidly replaced by machinery.<sup>168</sup> Indeed, Walter Stein has claimed that technology was one of the primary causes of the dilemmas faced by the dust bowl farmers in the 1930s.<sup>169</sup> These ideas are carefully depicted within the paradigm of the animated world.

### ***The Country Cousin* (US, 1936, dir. Wilfred Jackson)**

This short handles the elevation of country life principles when pitted against the wild throes of the urban landscape. The opening shot of the animation features the tiny shadow of Abner Country Mouse against the towering urban landscape of the big city, emphasising the daunting and



Fig. 1 From *The Country Cousin* (US, 1936, dir. Wilfred Jackson)

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<sup>165</sup> K. Shortleeve, ‘The Wonderful World of Depression,’ pp. 93

<sup>166</sup> M. Bernstein, *The Great Depression: delayed recovery and economic change in America, 1929-1939*, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1987) pp. 36

<sup>167</sup> P. Bonnifield, *The Dust Bowl: Men, Dirt and Depression*, (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1979) pp. 106

<sup>168</sup> W. J. Stein, *California and the Dust Bowl Migration* (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1973) pp. 6

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. pp. 117



frightening challenges the city poses to the traditional way of life. Monty City Mouse sends a telegram to Abner Country Mouse, demanding that he ‘stop being a hick and come to the city and live in splendour.’ However, when Abner arrives in the city, full of hope and optimism for his new life with his cousin, he is soon out of place with the high standards of city life. Abner is frowned upon when he gives in to his hunger pangs and begins to eat the feast laid before him. When he eats some tangy mustard, he accidentally drinks a glass of champagne to take away the spice and ends up drunk and rowdy, much to the horror of his wealthy cousin Monty City Mouse. Abner causes mayhem and after being chased out of the house by a cat, nearly gets killed by the flurry of cars and crowds of people, before running as fast as he can out of the city.

Through the personification of the two conflicting ideologies of ruralism and urbanisation, this animation is able to clearly state its purpose. Abner Country Mouse is a common American farmer, visiting the city with optimism and fervour. Much like many of the farmers of the ‘dust bowl’ during the 1930s, he was forced to the city for work. Monty, however, represents the promise of this new cityscape. He is a wealthy man, dressed in a smart suit and top hat and enjoys the luxuries of food and imported alcohol. However, when these two are placed together, through the clash of their personalities, the animation is able to state that these two ideologies are ultimately conflicted. Abner is portrayed as the fun loving and innocent mouse, who wants to live life to the full, however, Monty is portrayed as strict and selfish, constantly putting restrictions on Abner’s time in the city and at the close of the animation, he deserts Abner when he is placed in danger through his encounter with a cat. Monty is self-serving and rejects the communitarian ideal to be found within the countryside.

Furthermore, once Abner is chased out of Monty’s house by a vicious cat, Abner is nearly killed by several cars, trampled by the crowds of people walking the street and is sent dizzy by the endless noise and bustle of the urban landscape. The city is portrayed as a dangerous place and Abner’s visit to Monty ultimately ends in him rushing towards the city limits back home to the countryside. Animation, through the personification of the urban city in the

character of Monty City Mouse, is able to elevate the ideals of the simple life in the countryside over the luxuries of life in the city. Abner faces death in the city as it fails to live up to the promises of Monty's telegram. He is able to indulge in luxury, but is ultimately rejected and put into danger because of this indulgence. Abner's eventual retreat home to the countryside to live 'as a hick' seems to suggest a preference for the simple life as opposed to the dangers apparent through life in the city.

### ***Modern Inventions* (US, 1937, dir. Jack King)**

*Modern Inventions* constitutes a complete rejection of the conveniences of the 'modern age'. The issue of the complete replacement of human labour by machinery was already a fear amongst many in society, particularly in the farming profession. Donald Duck enters the 'Museum of Modern Marvels' full of excitement for the discoveries he will make, however is soon disturbed and frightened by the changes offered by the uncompromising technology. After terrifying encounters with a robot butler, who continues to take Donald's hat, a bundle wrapper, a robot nurse maid and a robot groomer, Donald is angry with the inventions he sought out and rejects their work.

There are several components of interest within this cartoon. Firstly, we must make note of the character of Donald. Donald is at first excited by his trip to the museum. We hear him marvelling over the technology during the first half of the animation. He seems to be open to the idea of new inventions, although notably, he does not like the idea of having to pay for them. This could suggest reluctance for the tax payer to bear the cost of technological advancement in society. During the New Deal, Roosevelt invested heavily in new farming machinery for the agricultural sector, the cost of which was heavily resented by the American public, and eventually rejected by Congress as unconstitutional. However, by the end of the animation, Donald completely rejects the technology after his negative experiences, seemingly dismissing the need for new inventions within society.

We must also pay attention to the inventions themselves. Each are given a 'character' which Donald interacts with. This gives disturbing light to the idea of human replacement inherent in the fear of technology within 1930s society. Each of the inventions Donald comes across are a 'person' of sorts and their inefficiency is highlighted by their inability to act 'human.' The robot butler continues to take off Donald's hat, when he clearly wants to keep it on, showing the lack of sensitivity to individual wishes shown by machinery. The robot nurse maid, while able to rock 'baby' Donald to sleep, ends up squirting

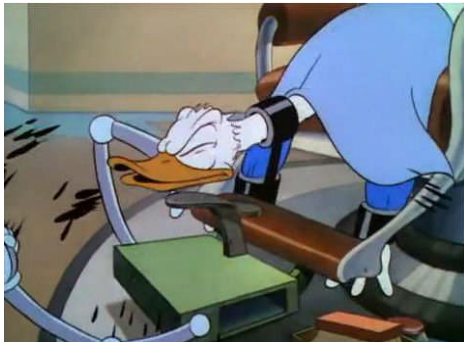


Fig. 2 From *Modern Inventions* (US, 1937, dir. Jack King)

milk in his eye and restrains him with an iron bar, showing the dangers inherent in any machinery or inventions dealing with children. Lastly, Donald's encounter with the robot groomer is disastrous. While inspecting the machinery, he is strapped into the chair the wrong way round. The groomer, unable to recognise this fact, continues to groom Donald's behind as though it were his hair, chat to him as though he were a person. It polishes his face with black shoe polish, a mistake that clearly, a human would not have made. By giving life and character to each of the machines and showing Donald's inability to interact with them as 'human,' highlights the ability of these machinery to replace human labour. Donald is increasingly frustrated with each of the inventions and their lack of understanding of his human needs, solidifying the message of this animated short as a complete rejection of technological advancement in the interests of replacing human labour. (See Fig. 2)

### ***Porky's Garden* (US, 1937, dir. Tex Avery)**

Similar to the Walt Disney productions, the Warner Brothers productions also cling to the simplicity of a life upon the land. However, freed from the emphasis on entertainment and quality the Disney productions held to, the Warner Brothers productions could be more explicit with their

insinuations for a better life. *Porky's Garden* opens with a scene of stunning farm landscape, headed by the year 1927. While representing an incorrect interpretation of farm life prior to the Wall Street Crash by portraying the idealism of rural life, the short nonetheless idolises the purity of life on the land. A prize is offered for the best home grown produce. Porky vows to win with his garden and lovingly sprinkles seeds on his vegetable patch. His Italian rival proceeds to let his chickens loose on Porky's beautiful garden, allowing them to eat his fruit and vegetables, becoming strong and nourished. After

having his vegetable patch destroyed Porky spots one final pumpkin and proceeds to nurture it. When the fair comes, Porky is awarded first prize for his pumpkin, while the cheating Italian loses out.

This animated production embraces the honesty in growing one's own vegetables, idolising the concept of self-sufficiency and that superiority in such a task was worthy of merit. Many compete for the prize and for the honour that accompanies it, perhaps signifying the art of agriculture was highly thought of within society. Such an evaluation and the way in which this takes central stage within the narrative of this cartoon is a testament to its importance.

The cartoon also shares an acknowledgement of the advances within technology. Whereas Donald's encounter with the robots is somewhat negative, both Porky and his Italian rival use growth aids to help in their endeavour. The Italian uses a combination of vitamin supplements to enhance the growth of his chickens (which they swiftly reject in favour of fruit and vegetables) and Porky sprays a 'Quik Grow Hair Tonic' on his vegetables which advances their growth significantly. However, it is the Italian who suffers at the hands of new technology. When his chickens march on to the fair, the ring leader is showcasing a 'reduction' pill, demonstrating with the transformation of an elephant into a mouse. The chickens take the pill and



Fig. 3 From *Porky's Garden* (US, 1937, dir. Tex Avery)

quickly shrink down in size, allowing Porky to win the prize with his pumpkin. This suggests the damaging effects of any appearance enhancing medications within society, again promoting the idea that fruit and vegetables, the product of the simple life, is the way to gaining success.

### ***Porky's Building* (US, 1937, dir. Frank Tashlin)**

*Porky's Building* is another Warners' production, favoured with the same honesty that permeates *Porky's Garden*. From the outset, the Warner Brothers animators demonstrated frankness in the ways in which they satirised everyday life. A title card at the beginning of the picture states, 'Any similarity of characters or happenings in this picture to actual people or events is definitely intended... if you think we're going to sit around for days thinking up new ideas, you're pixilated!' This message demonstrates that the animators took their inspiration from their historical context to formulate characters and stories, placing the content of the cartoon directly within the sphere of relevance for historical study.

*Porky's Building* is set within a nameless city within America, although due to the impressive skyline and the reference to 'actual events', it is likely the urban landscape is Los Angeles. Porky and a rival contractor are put into a bidding war to build City Hall for



Fig. 4 From *Porky's Building* (US, 1937, dir. Frank Tashlin)

the Government. The fact that these two contractors are put into employment to construct a civil works building is indicative of the New Deal at work, showing the promise and opportunity lent by the urbanisation of America.<sup>170</sup> Both parties come up with the same price for the job and are pitted against each other to build the building, with the fastest builder winning the contract. Despite being within the realms of the city, Porky's building site uses 'rural'

<sup>170</sup> B. Blumberg, *The New Deal and the Unemployed: the view from New York City* (Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 1979) pp. 126-128

tools, getting the animals to help in mixing cement for his construction. Rejecting community enterprise and the simplicity of agricultural labour principles used in the city, Porky's rival states that he does not need labourers for his site anymore and emerges onto the screen with a 'Brick laying machine.' (See Fig. 4) While the obvious concern for labour replacement here is not quite as animated as Donald's encounter with the robots, the message is still clear. Animation, while endorsing the fact that the urban landscape could hold opportunity, it held concern for the idea that man may soon be replaced by machine. While his rival Dirty Diggs steams into the lead with his new machine, Porky takes on the help of an enthusiastic rabbit sporting the title 'Super Colossal Brick Layer.' Porky is sceptical, but the rabbit soon proves the value of labour over machinery. Dirty Diggs' machine malfunctions and gets stuck in reverse, resulting in an explosion and a 'reversal' of all the work the machine had done. Porky rejoices in having won the contract through hard graft and through using labour, hence providing employment at the service of the City Commissioner.

### ***The Old Mill* (US, 1937, dir. Wilfred Jackson)**

*The Old Mill* was released in October of 1937 and is noted within the animation world as being a so-called 'test case' for the use of the multi-plane camera which Walt Disney used to great effect in the feature length animation *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. As such, attention drawn to this short has been centred on its technical accomplishment in achieving a natural landscape with considerable depth absent from any preceding animation. Little attention has been paid to the overriding message of the short itself. The narrative of the production centres around the lives of numerous woodland animal families who live in and round the old mill and during a particularly veracious storm, take shelter within its walls.

Emphasis should be drawn to the situation of the mill. It is within an idyllic rural landscape, surrounded by natural beauty, flowers, a stream and trees. (See Fig. 5) The mill untouched by urbanisation and by the corrupting influences of modern technology found within *Modern Inventions*. The mill even

seems apart from the stresses of human life, as the short is dominated by animals in their natural habitats, elevating the purity of rural life against the false and protruding nature of the city.

Such a life also seems to bring families together. Each animal family



Fig. 5 From *The Old Mill* (US, 1937, dir. Wilfred Jackson)

encountered within the narrative of the short is idyllic. No conflict disrupts any of their day to day lives. There is enough food and shelter for all within the confines of the mill. This underlines the somewhat passive nature of a life on

the land. It also suggests that the way to overcome crisis is to bind together within the safety of ruralism and to wait out a

storm. Indeed, this is certainly the case as the crisis faced by the animals in *The Old Mill* is a thunder storm. Despite the fact that the mill is nearly brought down by the storm and catches on fire from a strike of lightning, the rural structure is as resilient to crisis as its inhabitants. As the centre of an idyllic rural lifestyle, the mill could be argued to be a metaphor for ruralism in the middle of a national crisis. It is attacked from many angles, and its animal inhabitants endangered through the storm but it remains intact, emerging after the storm as beautiful as ever. This is emphasised by the way in which the opening shot of the cartoon is mirrored at the animation's close. The mill was able to ride out the storm and has come full circle.

### **Conflicting Mindsets – The Challenge of Community Living**

Historians have long commented on the sense of cultural dislocation experienced by Americans following the Wall Street Crash. Ideals of individualism, materialism and wealth in forming the basis for success and upward mobility had crumbled with the onset of Depression, leading to the

displacement of the American Dream.<sup>171</sup> What had once seemed certain became nothing but a myth. However, the New Deal, through its public work programs and by making the state the basic arbiter of people's lives, a sense of community developed within American society. In the motion picture industry,



Fig. 6 From *The Dognapper* (US, 1934, dir. David Hand)

this was forged first through the implementation of the National Recovery Administration. Many key figures within the industry had to take a fifty per cent pay cut for eight weeks. This recognition and support of the Government also took the physical form of the NRA Blue Eagle. Animation recognised this change, both politically and culturally. In the 1934 Walt Disney short *The Dognapper*, (US, dir. David Hand), the NRA Eagle is even visible on the front page of the newspaper featured at the beginning of the story. (See Fig. 6) Culturally, the ideology of community underlay the narrative of much of the animation of these years. Prosperity was possible, but only through society working together in pursuit of a common goal.<sup>172</sup> As Andrew Bergman has argued, 'Success, law, social unity and federal benevolence and social 'concern' – these would be the ingredients of the fantasy America depicted for the rest of the decade.'<sup>173</sup>

Such were the ideological foundations for what would become the re-imagining of American society. As Ekirch has argued, the question was when the Great Society would transform into 'The Great Community.'<sup>174</sup> Such ideas were undoubtedly present within Hollywood and as such, were translated into an animated interpretation of this new America.<sup>175</sup> Not only was community at the heart of the push for upward mobility but emphasis was also put upon

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<sup>171</sup>M. Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity & Depression 1920-1941* (New York, W.W. Norton, 1992) pp. 409, C. Hearn, *The American Dream in the Great Depression*, pp. 3 & A. Ekirch, *Ideologies and Utopias*, pp. viii

<sup>172</sup> C. Hearn, *The American Dream in the Great Depression*, pp. 4

<sup>173</sup> A. Bergman, *We're in the Money*, pp. 61

<sup>174</sup> A. Ekirch, *Ideologies and Utopias*, pp. 22

<sup>175</sup> A. Bergman, *We're in the Money*, pp. 79, Bergman speaks of the presence of responsibility in Vidor's films of the 1930s.



character to be the fundamental factor that would ensure success. The bestselling nonfiction book of the 1930s, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie, highlighted the significance of values, behaviour and lifestyles within the culture of the 1930s. No longer was importance placed on material goods and wealth; success had to come from the inside out.

The following cartoons embrace this communitarian interpretation of the American Dream. Success is forthcoming to those who work together to achieve their goals in life. Material wealth is achieved only through these ideas and even on its fruition, character takes precedence over substance.

### ***The Grasshopper and the Ants* (US, 1934, dir. Wilfred Jackson)**

*The Grasshopper and the Ants* was released in cinemas nearly a year after FDR was inaugurated as President of the United States. One of Aesop's Fables, the animated short is a treatise to the importance of the community work ethic. Disney uses personification to advertise the ideals at work within this animated narrative. The Grasshopper seems reminiscent of 1920s individualism. He is a carefree spirit, who plays his fiddle, singing that 'the world owes us a living' and will provide for everyone. He laughs at the ant colonies around him, who are working together to save food for the winter. The Grasshopper sneers that winter is far away so he does not need to prepare for it just yet. However, winter soon arrives. The Grasshopper is left out in the cold and hungry. He is eventually taken in by the ants and is let into the colony. He quickly rejects his previous ideology and endorses the community spirit of the New Deal and of the ants. He thus changes his song to 'I owe the world a living.'

Personification is at work as a technique in this cartoon in order to channel communitarian ideology. The Grasshopper rejects the work ethic of the ants, preferring instead to indulge his musical hobby as opposed to work. He is even dressed in business attire, linking him to the bankers partly responsible for the Wall Street Crash. However, as he is exposed to the elements and left cold and hungry, he is forced to repent his ideology in order to survive the winter. In opposition to the Grasshopper, we have the direction

of the Queen Ant, who takes responsibility for the other ants. They show her a great respect and are unwilling to be seen shirking their responsibility to the rest of the colony by relinquishing their work duties. This can be shown through the example of the ant, who, once spotted by the queen ant to be chatting to the Grasshopper and not working, goes straight back to his duties.

Music also acts as an ideological unifier within this cartoon, as it does in the Silly Symphony *The Three Little Pigs* and the lyrical narrative of *The Wise Little Hen*. Common across the ant colony, the Grasshopper tries to convert one of the ants to his way of thinking through his music, singing that ‘The



Fig. 7 From *The Grasshopper and the Ants* (US, 1934, dir. Wilfred Jackson)

world owes us a living.; He believes he does not have to contribute to the world in order to get what he feels is owed to him. This is directly reminiscent of the 1920s interpretation of the American Dream. Due to the

expanding nature of the economy, it became commonplace for Americans to expect a minimum standard of living. He tries to persuade the ant to ‘play and sing and dance.’ This is akin to the behaviour exhibited by Percy Pig and Donald in *The Wise Little Hen* who elevate entertainment over work. The music signifies to isolate him from the ants around him. However, when the Grasshopper is finally accepted by the ants, it serves to unify him to their community. The queen ant invites him to play his music and the ants dance with him to his changed tune, and consequently, ideology. He sings, ‘I owe the world a living. I’ve been a fool the whole year long and now I’m singing a different song.’ This seems to dispel any initial fears society may have had regarding the change in Government in the United States, as Roosevelt managed to get many through the winter.

There is one further point of interest in *The Grasshopper and the Ants* and this concerns the symbolism utilised by the animators. The ant colony is hard working and motivated, and led by their queen ant. When the queen appears in shot with her chariot, however, she is led by a purple flag sporting a spade and

a pickaxe. (See Fig. 7) While the flag is not an exact replica of the communist symbol, its inclusion is certainly suggestive. This short, associates the New Deal with a positive re-imagining of the ideal of Communism. The queen ant, while shown to be kind and accommodating in her behaviour towards the Grasshopper, is nonetheless, a strict and respected leader, giving an impression that while the ideal of Communism here is sound, due to the productive nature of the ants, good leadership is essential to success in this endeavour. Animation still uses the symbolism of the early 1930s cartoons in order to dispel its ideology. It could also be argued that it makes reference to the success of the Soviet Union in achieving economic growth during a time of Depression.

***Mickey's Pal Pluto* (US, 1934, dir. Burt Gillett)**

Pluto, in this early short, shows some glimmers of a self-serving attitude the Disney cartoons will later bestow upon Donald Duck. As Donald is, at this point, not fully developed as an animated character, the tension within attitudes is given instead to another friend of Mickey's. It is interesting however, when we consider the association Mickey has with communitarianism, that this ideological conflict is never presented to him, even though he is meant to represent the common American man.

In this animated short, Mickey, Minnie and Pluto are wandering by a nearby stream and come across a bundle, floating on the river. They retrieve the bundle and discover it is full of abandoned kittens. However, once Mickey and Minnie take the kittens home and start to care for them, they begin to neglect Pluto. Pluto is thus faced with an ideological conflict, which is given life in the form of a devilish Pluto and an angelic Pluto. The Angel embraces the New Deal communitarian ideology, telling Pluto to share his food and drink with the kittens, whereas the Devil tells him to chase the kittens out of the house. This conflict repeats itself later in the cartoon when the kittens fall down a well in the garden and the Devil tells Pluto to leave the kittens down there, whereas the Angel tells him to save them. There is a very clear

ideological message within this cartoon and it is simply displayed through the actions of the character of Pluto himself.

At first, embracing his selfish side, Pluto is unwilling to share his lot with the needy and homeless. It is made clear that Mickey and Minnie have little problem with sharing their home with those less fortunate, as they display no wariness in taking in the kittens. This again, provides a stark contrast to *Mickey's Nightmare* in which any additions to the family were thought of as a burden. Pluto, however, is scornful of the kittens when they try to drink out of his bowl. When he follows the Devil's advice of running the kittens out of the house so he does not have to share his subsistence, he is sent outside by Mickey and has to do without. However, when Pluto follows the advice of the Angel later in the cartoon and saves the kittens, embracing the community spirit of the New Deal, he is rewarded with a juicy turkey by Mickey.

Animation uses personification here to address an ideological conflict. (See Fig. 8) The opposing ideals of community and individualism are given physical form, much as the idea of 'confidence' is given physical form in *Confidence*



Fig. 8 From *Mickey's Pal Pluto* (US, 1934, dir. Burt Gillett)

through the injection. These characters are able to state their purpose and their consequences for Pluto's life to the audience. In this instance, Pluto's embrace of the 'every man for himself' mantra leaves him out in the cold, without family and food. However, once he embraces the idea of a shared experience by rescuing the kittens, he is rewarded with a home, returned to his family, and most importantly, has more than enough subsistence for himself and for others.

### ***Orphan's Benefit (US, 1934, dir. Burt Gillett)***

Released under a similar time frame to *Mickey's Pal Pluto*, *Orphan's Benefit* is the first time Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck appear in an animated short together. This allows the animation to pit Mickey Mouse, the upholder of

community values and charity, (the foundations of the New Deal ideology) against Donald Duck, whose antics with Percy Pig in *The Wise Little Hen* allow the audience to associate Donald as self-centred and self-serving. Here, both of these characters are involved in a free concert for orphans, held in Mickey's theatre. The show is advertised as 'Mickey's Big Show', hence we can deduce that Mickey is the organiser of the event and as such, the one who is embracing philanthropy towards his fellow, less fortunate, Americans.

Mickey introduces Donald to the orphans and he recites the nursery rhyme 'Mary Had A Little Lamb.' The orphans enjoy his performance and applaud him. Donald loves the attention he receives from his audience and begins to dance to receive more applause. We see that Donald's motives for being involved in the concert are self-serving. He is not interested in giving any happiness to the orphans, only receiving praise for his performance. This becomes clear when as he tries to perform the nursery rhyme 'Little Boy Blue' the orphans try to collaborate with him by providing sound effects for his performance. Donald gets frustrated and much to Mickey's dismay, throws a temper tantrum on stage.

At various stages within the show, Donald tries to perform the rhyme, but each time, is interrupted by the audience of orphans. The rest of the performers, Mickey included, manage to finish their performance despite the contributions of the orphans. Donald, however, ends the performance buried beneath a pile of balloons. While Donald does want to perform in the concert so has good intentions, his selfish motives are pitted against those of Mickey and his animated counterparts, shown by his reaction to the unruly but playful orphans. Donald is not interested in charity; he simply wants an audience to perform in front of and hence is portrayed as self-seeking. Notably, Donald also performs alone in Mickey's show, whereas the other characters work together in their performance; Horace and Clarabel dance with Goofy and Mickey plays the piano while Cluck the Hen sings. Donald works and performs alone and is thus unsuccessful and ultimately rejected from the show. Thus, from this cartoon, we can see again that Disney is channelling ideology through the actions of its characters, namely by the conflicting personalities

and actions of Donald and Mickey. We can also deduce a little involvement of the narrative within this ideological direction. The idea of charity and philanthropy is central to this cartoon and ultimately, Donald is ridiculed for his selfish motives within the show, demonstrating that charity and community spirit needs to be carried out selflessly. There is no place for the selfish within this new American society.

### ***The Golden Touch* (US, 1935, dir. Walt Disney)**

*The Golden Touch* is a retelling of the story of King Midas. Midas wishes for everything he touches to turn to gold, however, soon finds he is not able to eat, drink or have social contact with anyone, leaving him saddened and alone. Symbolism is used throughout this cartoon in order to put an ideological message across. In a pun on the dollar bill phrase 'In God We Trust,' Midas has an 'In Gold I Trust' sign on the wall. (See Fig. 9) Instead of placing himself as part of a community,



Fig. 9 From *The Golden Touch* (US, 1935, dir. Walt Disney)

and putting his faith in faith, Midas chooses the material substance of gold. He isolates himself from a community of believers, instead trusting only himself and his material wealth. Midas embodies the culmination of 1920s values. Consumed by his status, Midas is only concerned with his wealth of possessions and wants more of them, not satisfied with his lot. Goldie, the leprechaun who grants Midas his wish and who ultimately teaches him a lesson, is reminiscent of rural Middle America. He dresses as a commoner and rejects the importance Midas places on material wealth. What is interesting about this animated short is the way in which money is interchanged with food and drink. Many were both starving and homeless during the 1930s. A basic diet was seen as far more important than the status of wealth. Ultimately, this is the point of view eventually endorsed by Midas as he asks for a simple hamburger and onions in exchange for his curse to be taken from him.

What is also of interest in this cartoon is the way in which Midas is shown to regret his individualist attitude. Much like the Wicked Queen in Disney's later animated feature, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (US, 1937, dir. Wilfred Jackson) it would seem that because Midas was unable to comprehend the communitarian interpretation of the American Dream, he has only himself to confide in about his ideological conflict. This is demonstrated by the way in which Midas talks to a skeleton version of himself in the mirror.

### ***Donald's Better Self* (US, 1938, dir. Jack King)**

The narrative within this Donald Duck animated short echoes the conflict experienced by Pluto in *Mickey's Pal Pluto*. Both a Devilish and Angelic Donald fight for his attention and endorsement. He is distracted from a day of school by the Devil, who suggests that he go fishing and smoke a cigar. The Angel however, tells him to get up and go to school.

Much as is the case in *Mickey's Pal Pluto*, personification of ideals is the technique used within this animated short to give life and direction to the conflicting 1930s ideologies. Donald usually adheres to the latter; however, we can see his ideological progression within this short. He no longer craves the attention that comes with the wealth of 1920s individualism as he does in *Orphan's Benefit*, but allows himself to be guided to school by the Angel. By the end of the short, the Angel even merges with him, showing his complete transformation in ideological grounding to the communitarian interpretation of the American Dream.



Fig. 10 From *Donald's Better Self* (US, 1938, dir. Jack King)

The Devil character, while linked to individualism, is also linked to the life of truancy and crime chosen by many in the 1930s. Donald skips school and is forced into smoke a cigar by the Devil. Donald is easily led astray and his foray into the 'dark side' of society is ultimately proven foolish by the

Angel. Donald confides how awful the cigar tasted and eventually feels ill as a result of his truancy. This conveys the message that choosing this path will have a negative impact on your life, morals and health. However, this illness completely disappears once Donald chooses the 'right' path indicated by the Angel and goes to school to work hard.

### **Not in the Money – the Struggles of Economic Hardship**

The current historiography of the social and economic impact of the Great Depression across America consists of endless social studies. For example, Blumberg's investigation of the impact of the WPA on the millions of unemployed in New York City<sup>176</sup> and Starr's study of the way in which the Depression hit California.<sup>177</sup> Others consist of general works on the impact of the economic crisis on America as a whole.<sup>178</sup> What historians can deduce is that the Great Depression hit all American families, whether as a direct impact through a loss of earnings or employment, as was the case in one in four families in 1934<sup>179</sup> or through the heavy taxation of those with income, in order to fund Roosevelt's extensive alphabet agencies. What little money people had was spent on the daily bread, not on luxury goods, as was the case in the 1920s. This feeling of scarcity was an integral feature of 1930s culture. As Frederick Allen has argued, the Depression actually liberated most people from the shame of feeling poor; 'They felt no shame now in being short of money. Everybody seemed to be. They were all in the same boat.'<sup>180</sup> Desperation became a natural part of everyday life as people struggled to afford rent and subsistence. This desperation manifested itself in animation in two ways. The first was some recognition of the fact that many in the United States were living in a state of poverty, the second, in its continued hope for better times. The idea of making money quickly in order to alleviate those in a state of

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<sup>176</sup> B. Blumberg, *The New Deal and the Unemployed*

<sup>177</sup> K. Starr, *Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1996)

<sup>178</sup> D. M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear*, R. Edsforth, *The New Deal: America's Response to the Great Depression*

<sup>179</sup> A. Bernstein, *The Great Depression*, pp. 48

<sup>180</sup> F. Allen, *Since Yesterday: the nineteen thirties in America*, (New York, Harper & Bros, 1940) pp. 109



poverty was an integral part of 1930s animation. Many Disney cartoons and to a larger extent, the Warner Brothers cartoons, concern themselves with a desire for a life of affluence.

Disney was no stranger to handling poverty. Far from the charge that Disney cartoons concerned themselves with a life of a fantasy, one particular cartoon released in 1932 demonstrates quite the opposite. In *Mickey's Good Deed* (US, 1932, dir. Burt Gillett) Mickey is shown, for the first time, as being homeless. The number of homeless people between 1930 and 1934 in New York State more than doubled.<sup>181</sup> Mickey plays his cello out in the cold with Pluto at Christmas time and ends up having to sell his beloved dog in order to pay for food. Disney animation did not shy away from these difficult issues; it embraced them as part of its narrative.

### ***Moving Day (US, 1936, dir. Ben Sharpsteen)***

*Moving Day* was released months before Roosevelt was re-elected as President of the United States. It seems to represent a further transition towards political commentary as it directly handles the significant money worries experienced by many within society and could be read as recognition that even though many structural changes had taken place within society to deal with the widespread poverty and unemployment, many still remained unable to pay rent and faced homelessness.

The short begins with a close up of a calendar, on which we discover that Mickey and Donald are one month overdue with their rent payments. Mickey and Donald pace the house, trying to think of a solution to their financial plight and suddenly receive a visit from the sheriff, Pegleg Pete. Pete serves them with a notice to dispossess their home and demands that he will sell their furniture in order to pay off their debt (See Fig. 11). Mickey and Donald quickly pack up their belongings and Goofy moves their grand piano. However, moving their things proves rather difficult, and through numerous troublesome encounters with animated objects, much of Mickey and Donald's

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<sup>181</sup> J.M. Crouse, *The Homeless Transient in the Great Depression: New York State 1929-1941*, (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1986) pp. 58

furniture is destroyed. Pete returns, angry at the damage being done to 'his' property, but upsets a gas leak and the house itself explodes. Mickey, Donald and Goofy manage to escape with their things, leaving Pete alone with the empty shell of the house.

Throughout the short, Donald and Mickey are terrified by the threat of the 'knock at the door,' and its meaning for their financial state. When Pete appears at the door, they plead that they will get the money he needs, although it is clear at the outset that they do not have the means to pay the rent on time. This shows a direct engagement with a genuine social problem of the 1930s



Fig. 11 From *Moving Day* (US, 1936, dir. Ben Sharpsteen)

and the characters of Donald and Mickey are empathising with the financial worries of many of its audiences. The short also highlights the futility of many luxuries purchased in the 1920s. Mickey and Donald have

many household appliances which prove useless in their current situation; they

serve only as fuel to enable Pete to get the money he is owed. These possessions also slow them down considerably in their endeavour to leave the house as quickly as possible before Pete returns. Goofy struggles with the grand piano, Mickey finds he has too many clothes that will not fit into his suitcase and Donald gets stuck inside a fish bowl.

*Moving Day* constitutes a direct commentary on financial worries and Mickey and Donald are shown to be vulnerable to such troubles. They share the same hatred of debt collectors and the same concern over selling their possessions and having to leave their home due to foreclosure. The release of this cartoon before the re-election of President Roosevelt and after what many consider to be Roosevelt's most successful years in the presidency is also of note. Animation is taking into account the changes in society but stating that however much things have changed; they perhaps have not gone far enough. The financial status of the majority has not been substantially altered. Steven Watts has commented that Disney cartoons in this era do not directly address

the Depression; however, *Moving Day* is an example to the contrary.<sup>182</sup> Disney weaves this potent social issue directly into the narrative of his short, showing that Mickey and Donald are far from immune to the harsh realities of Depression America.

### ***Milk and Money* (US, 1936, dir. Tex Avery)**

Much like *Moving Day*, *Milk and Money* deals with financial troubles for homeowners during the Depression but relates this trouble to the agricultural sector more closely than the Disney short. Despite the Farm Credit Act and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, the agricultural sector remained badly affected by the Depression, leading to the establishment of the FSA in February of 1937.<sup>183</sup> This short highlights the main threat to farm owners within this period – mortgage foreclosure. Thirty nine farm mortgages out of every thousand in 1933 entered foreclosure.<sup>184</sup>

The short opens with Porky's Father working the farm. He introduces his son to the audience, using empathy from the outset to ensure that those watching are identifying with his situation. The pair are shown to be hard at work during the opening scenes of the short. However, they are soon visited by a debt collector introduced through credits as 'Mr. Viper', the snake. The man holds a mortgage notice to Porky and his Father and announces that if they do not have the money by the following day, he would take the farm (See. Fig. 12)



Fig. 12 From *Milk and Money* (US, 1936, dir. Tex Avery)

Noticeably, Mr. Viper interacts with the audience throughout the animation, vowing that 'He'll never make it,' allowing those watching to

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<sup>182</sup> S. Watts, *The Magic Kingdom*, pp. 63

<sup>183</sup> R. Edsforth, *The New Deal*, pp. 219

<sup>184</sup> L. Alston, 'Farm Foreclosures in the United States during the Interwar Period', *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 43, No. 2, pp. 887

support Porky and his Father. Values are further conveyed through the characterisation of Porky and his Father in comparison to Viper, the former dressed in farming overalls, the latter in a smart coat and hat. Porky and his Father are shown to be humble and likeable; Viper is rich, cold and superficial. His villainous nature is further enhanced by the way he slithers away back to his horse and cart after speaking with Porky and his Father. Animation uses theriomorphism to attach negative attributes to Viper and thus all those who were making the Depression worse for farming families such as Porky's. Porky goes to the city and finds work as a milk delivery man. While he is browsing the advertisements, we are also given a further insight into the financial worries of the animated world. In the Personals section of Porky's paper, an advert states, 'Not responsible for any debts other than my own. R Wolfe.' This further enhances animation's awareness of debt throughout society in both the country and the urban landscape. While Porky is unsuccessful in his job as he accidentally smashes some of the milk bottles, he manages to win a horse race and a ten thousand dollar cash prize. At home, Viper is waiting on the doorstep of the farm, while Porky's Father paces, worried for his financial future. However, Porky arrives, money in tow and pays off his Father's debt. An idyllic solution to a very real problem for many farming families is thus intricately woven into the narrative of this short. Porky and his Father are in a very desperate situation and yet Porky is resilient and never gives up hope and thus is financially rewarded by the end of the cartoon. Again, this seems to be in line with the ideology of the Great Depression. Many simply hoped to 'wait it out' and be rewarded with better times in the future.<sup>185</sup>

There is one further element of note within this cartoon. At the animation's close, after receiving his payoff, Viper is physically ejected from the animated world and lands in the credits screen, separate from Porky and his Father. This seems to suggest that there is no place in the animated world, indicative of society, for debt collectors such as Viper. He is quite apart in values and temperament from the rest of the American public and thus should be kept out of everyday life whenever possible. *Milk and Money* hence sits quite

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<sup>185</sup>A Ekirch, *Ideologies and Utopias*, pp. 7

comfortably as an animation providing a subtle commentary on the financial status of rural homes, the dangers open to this area of the economy and the spirit of hope found within this sector for better times and a return to prosperity. While the ending to this cartoon is undoubtedly idealist, the problems experienced by Porky and his Father were unquestionably real to many watching this production.

### ***Get Rich Quick, Porky* (US, 1937, dir. Robert Clampett)**

*Get Rich Quick Porky* deals directly with a social issue and yet steers clear of placing any explicit blame on an institution, which later animation tends to address, making it a primary example of what this thesis terms ‘transitional animation.’ Porky Pig has some money he wishes to save within the bank and approaches its entrance. (Fig. 13) Gabby the Goat tells him to buy a soda with his money, however, Porky wishes to get his ‘two per cent’ and is intent on



Fig. 13 From *Get Rich Quick Porky* (US, 1937, dir. Bob Clampett)

putting the money in the bank. He is stopped at the door by a dishonest entrepreneur, who we are introduced to at the beginning of the short. The entrepreneur, named John Gutter, wishes to make some money from vulnerable investors and pumps the nearby ground with oil. Porky signs the deed for the land, believing he will get rich from his quick investment. However, Gutter pulls the oil away, leaving Porky and Gabby working at dry land. Porky demands his money back and hands back the deed, however, Gutter only gives him a dollar, leaving Porky with a substantial loss on investment. However, Gabby the goat ends up drilling into a real oil pocket and Porky vows he will be a billionaire.

This short deals with several economic issues within its narrative. Porky is portrayed as naïve. He has the best of intentions for his money, but is quickly thrown off course by the lure of millions promised to him by Gutter. This is indicative of the frustration experienced by many in society at the slow

nature of the economic recovery. Released in 1937, as the United States economy had slipped back into recession, undoing much of the work accomplished by Roosevelt between 1933 and 1935, the short acknowledges that while putting money into the banks for two per cent interest was the safer option, many were lured by the opportunity for fast cash. The short ultimately proves Porky's economic risk was profitable; however, he ends up having to share his profits with a by standing beaver who finds the deed to his land.

### ***Porky's Poppa* (US, 1938, dir. Robert Clampett)**

In many ways, *Porky's Poppa* constitutes a combination of a commentary on economic crisis as well as providing a positive outlook on rural life. Again, much like in *Milk and Money*, the audience is introduced to Porky's farm through the children's song, 'Old Macdonald Had a Farm', however, at the end

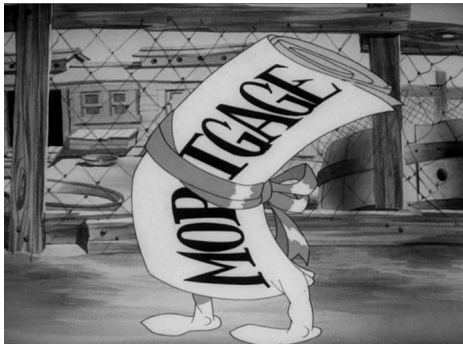


Fig. 14 From *Porky's Poppa* (US, 1938, dir. Bob Clampett)

of the cheerful refrain, lyrics are changed to include the line, 'And on that farm, he had a mortgage.' Like many of the Disney cartoons of this era, music plays a role here. The children's song is transformed to have an adult meaning, again discarding the playful values many attach to the animation of this period. The narrator also references popular culture of the time by stating 'And today, as it must to all men, debt came to Porky's Poppa.' This is a direct reference to the popular radio show, *The March of Time*, which often headlined the death of a famous person with the exact same phrasing, with the simple substitution of 'debt' for 'death.' Animation personifies the mortgage, giving it arms and feet, allowing it to be a physical presence within the animation. (Fig.14) Indeed, the mortgage is shown to be a heavy weight on Porky's Father's back, a literally heavy burden for a working Father. This is a technique used considerably by the Disney studios during the war, demonstrating with some certainty that Disney did find inspiration within many of the Warners' cartoons for its propaganda. This

suggests animation was reaching a highly developed stage in its ideological development as it proves able to take a largely abstract concept of mortgage debt and give it a physical effect on the characters within the animation's narrative.

Porky's Father is having financial problems largely due to the fact that one of his cows has been quarantined due to hoof and mouth trouble. Porky decides to buy a 'creamlined' mechanical cow from a mail order service to improve production on the farm. Porky's Father is most impressed with the mechanical cow, which is able to make cheese and ice cream. However, Porky nurses their real cow, Bessie, back to health, and the two go into competition. After a fierce battle, the mechanical cow is rejected by Porky and his Father as it is magically transformed into a vacuum and ends up sucking up all the hay on the farm. They declare Bessie the cow as the winner of the competition and are able to make money from her victory. Similar to *Modern Inventions* and *Porky's Building*, this animated production rejects the replacement of human or in this case, animal labour, over any new inventions. While the achievements of the 'creamlined' cow are impressive, the technology involved is not reliable, as proven by the fact that the cow manages to produce useless invisible cream and transforms into a vacuum, which sucks up more than it produces for the farm.

### **Political Tantrums**

Historians are generally in agreement that the New Deal reached the end of its active and effective stage by the end of 1937.<sup>186</sup> Riding high on his victories of 1936, the President took on the Supreme Court in an attempt to secure more power through which to implement further social security measures. However, cracks were beginning to appear in the well-crafted New Deal construction project and the Court proceeded to 'knock out one after another of the key New Deal statutes.'<sup>187</sup> In fact, they passed only one major administration bill within 1937: authorisation for the FSA. There was also

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<sup>186</sup> A. Brinkley, *The End of Reform: New Deal liberalism in recession and war* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1995) pp. 3, A. Badger, *The New Deal: the Depression Years, 1933-1940*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1989) pp. 6 and D. Eldridge, *American Culture in the 1930s*, pp. 18

<sup>187</sup> M. Katz, 'From Hoover to Roosevelt,' in K. Louchheim & J. Dembo (eds.) *The Making of the New Deal*, pp. 127

some real concern within the Treasury over how much these social security measures were costing. As Romasco as argued, 'By 1936, they [officials of the Federal Reserve and the Treasury Department] had become increasingly concerned with the danger of uncontrolled inflation.'<sup>188</sup> This concern was justified. The American economy went into a further recession between September 1937 and June 1938, reversing many of the gains made since 1933.<sup>189</sup> The level of industrial production fell farther and faster between 1937 and 1938 than it had since the years 1929 to 1930.<sup>190</sup> Roosevelt also faced serious unrest in the labour sector, with a series of large scale sit down strikes in 1937.<sup>191</sup> This feeling of unrest, distrust and impatience with the Government finds its way into the animation of the late 1930s, reaching a near propagandistic stage in terms of its negative messages towards the Government. Interestingly despite the heavy criticisms of propaganda in the movies in this period, no rejections or adjustments to these animated productions were requested by the Hays Office.<sup>192</sup> Whereas in the sphere of the live action feature film, the leading studios were taken to court over the propagandistic content of their movies. This further emphasises the importance of historians' need to look to the narrative of animation to uncover ways in which Hollywood contributed towards the formation of propaganda within society.

### ***Porky's Road Race* (US, 1937, dir. Frank Tashlin)**

*Porky's Road Race* is an extraordinary cartoon, in many respects. Released in 1937, amidst a politic scarred by labour conflict and recession, its central drama revolves around a car race, in which Porky races for a two million dollar price, however, to win, he must beat a plethora of Hollywood actors and actresses. As this cartoon is Warner Brothers, different techniques are used within the animation to put across their political message. Not as

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<sup>188</sup> A. Romasco, *The Politics of Recovery*, pp. 224

<sup>189</sup> Ibid. pp. 226

<sup>190</sup> M. Bernstein, *The Great Depression*, pp. 2

<sup>191</sup> R. Edsforth, *The New Deal*, pp. 268

<sup>192</sup> Warner Brothers Archives (thereafter WBA) Box 00179. The box contains all the Production Code certificated granted to the animated productions by the Hays Office. There are no requests for amendments to any of the cartoons released from 1933 to 1945.



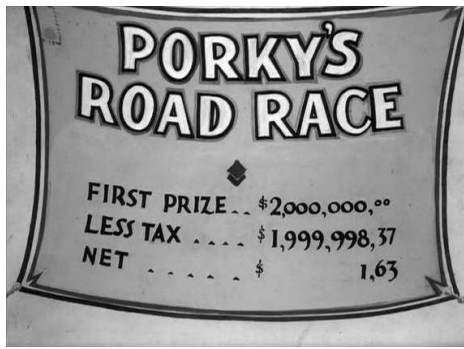


Fig. 15 From *Porky's Road Race* (US, 1937, dir. Frank Tashlin)

practised in the art of personality animation as Disney, this cartoon puts its ideology across through direct referencing in the frame of the cartoon itself. Nothing is said by the animated characters themselves, no ideological personification takes place however, their political grievances are directly stated.

Firstly, the prize of two million dollars on offer to the winner of Porky's Road Race is heavily taxed. On the sign addressing the reward for the winner of the Road Race, it states that 'first prize is \$2 million (less \$1,999,998.37 in taxes) This addresses a direct grievance within society that the New Deal was costing the American public too much money. Throughout the 1930s, FDR was constantly asking Congress for further budget approvals to fund his many public works schemes, which he deemed essential to the American economy's recovery. However, these demands were met with constant opposition. This criticism is further highlighted during the race itself. Whilst racing, the audience is given a glimpse of a WPA work site. (See Fig. 16)

The site is abandoned, is not serving any particular economic purpose and is simply portrayed as a wasteful eye sore on the landscape of the race itself. Combined with the direct grievance regarding the amount of taxes the American people were paying to support the New Deal, this animation is suggesting that FDR's economic policy has, in part, failed to do what it set out



Fig. 16 From *Porky's Road Race* (US, 1937, dir. Frank Tashlin)

to do. By portraying the WPA as a pointless, fruitless exercise, the animation is providing a direct commentary on the policies of the administration. Disney, however, found another way to comment on the frustrations of society with

the current politic and they used their popular cartoon star, Donald Duck, to vent this frustration for them.

### ***Self Control* (US, 1938, dir. Jack King)**

Released towards the end of what many historians would term the ‘active’ phase of the New Deal, *Self Control* seems to call into question the very premise on which the New Deal is based. During the period under which this animated short was produced, the United States had fallen back into recession. There were over four thousand labour strikes throughout the country and farm prices and industrial prices had fallen rapidly. It seemed as though the New Deal was failing. While FDR remained optimistic about the prospects of his Government, stating in a fireside chat in October 1937 that Americans do not ‘ask their Government to stop governing simply because prosperity has come back a long way’, the New Deal was falling into disrepute. This challenge is adequately addressed within the Donald Duck animated short, *Self Control*.



Fig. 17 From *Self Control* (US, 1938, dir Jack King)

Donald Duck is relaxing in a garden and listening to his wireless. The radio announcer states that someone is going to be talking to the listeners about self-control. The self-control program begins and the broadcaster opens with

‘Hello my friends.’ Donald preaches that he has never lost control, and vows that he will never lose control. However, as Donald tries to nap, he is continually bothered by animals and obstacles that disrupt his peace and quiet. While the wireless constantly coaches him to ‘Laugh his troubles away,’ and to ‘ignore petty crime,’ Donald eventually ends up ignoring the advice of the wireless, gets his gun and attempts to shoot the animals that are pestering him. While he is unsuccessful in his endeavour, he ends up not attacking the animals, but the wireless itself.

This animated short directly engages with the political forum of the late 1930s. The presence of the wireless providing advice for a member of the American public draws instant comparison with Roosevelt's fireside chats. Not only was the wireless the mainstay of the general public's connection with politics, but the announcer providing advice to Donald even uses FDR's common opening line, addressing his listeners as 'my friends.' The wireless tries to guide Donald through his crisis, preaching self control and patience. However, much like the American public's views of Roosevelt's politics during this year, Donald, who was never really an advocate of Roosevelt's community spirit, has lost his patience and self control. Interestingly, he does not attack the problems within his society, in his case, the animals that are disrupting him; the main force of his attack is reserved for his ideological guide, the wireless. This appears a striking rejection of the administration by Donald, in keeping with the political tide of the time. While this is eventually overtaken by an overriding nationalism, at this stage, the politics and ideology of FDR are rejected.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout these years, animation entered into an important transitional stage in its transmission of ideas. Gone were the days of caricature and symbolism to transmit ideology through animation. These cartoons began to use personification in order to carry messages through their productions. The techniques used in Universal's *Confidence* are transferred transparently into the narrative of the Disney productions.

The Disney animation of the 1930s wholeheartedly endorses the concept of 'the simple life.' While it recognised the changes wrought by urbanisation could be for the positive, overall, the animation landscape fears technology and the way it encroaches upon the human contact inherent in everyday life. In shorts such as *Building a Building*, and *Porkey's Building*, and to a certain extent, *The Country Cousin*, the opportunity of the urban landscape is acknowledged. It provides opportunity, luxury and certainly an experience of a different side to life. However, ultimately, each experience in the city ends in crisis. Donald is traumatised by his encounter with the robots in *Modern*

*Inventions*, Abner Country Mouse flees the city in fear of the life he would be forced to lead there and Porky is conned by the manager of the construction project he is working on. Here, we begin to see the importance of personification to transmitting ideology through animation. In this transitional stage, Disney began to seamlessly incorporate its favoured ideologies through the narrative of its productions.

However, the communitarian ideology and its clash with selfishness both take their hold within the personalities of Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck respectively. Donald embodies a frustrated spirit of Depression America through his very actions within these animated productions. Donald always strives to do the right thing, however, is easily distracted by his own selfishness. His moral conflict in *Self Control* and *Donald's Better Self* epitomise the frustration with the limitations of this new ideology. The ideological emphasis is no longer just on the individual to gain social advancement, it relies upon the work of the whole community. Donald finds this limiting. We have already associated Donald with the ideology of the 1920s through the early 1930s cartoon *The Wise Little Hen* and his association with this rugged individualism grows. Donald does not see why he must be a part of the community and go to school, or 'keep calm' as instructed by his 'Rooseveltian' psychologist over the wireless in *Self Control* when he can handle things in his own way. However, he is always confronted with disaster in choosing individualism over community. His frustrations in *Orphan's Benefit* are a good example of this conflict. Donald wishes to be a big part of the benefit, perhaps for his own sense of glory, but he is anxious to perform for the orphans. However, he is soon confronted with the need for patience and inner calm as they disrupt his well-rehearsed performance.

Mickey, however, never works alone. He is the epitome of the communitarian realisation of the American Dream. The leader of most cartoons, he always advocates the other characters working together in order to achieve an end goal of success in his endeavour. Hence we can deduce by the end of this phase in animation's ideological tuning, the personalities of the characters within the animation itself are coming to the fore as important

ideological imprints; Donald as the reluctant receiver of change, Mickey as its arbiter. Donald's 1920s values are inherent in his actions; however, their falsity is always proved wrong by Donald's constant failure and unhappiness in opposition to Mickey's constant success. Donald thus became a symbol for American resistance to the changes imposed upon American society by the New Deal. His frustrations with Government in the late 1930s animation and his consistent struggles with the ideology it imposed on society transforms him into a metaphor for a new 1930s individualism. He receives change, reluctantly, but still clings to the possibility of a time when he only has to look out for himself. He is not completely void of the New Deal spirit. He does work with Mickey and his other animated friends, when it is necessary and in the pursuit of a 'greater good.' In these cartoons, Donald emerges as Disney's primary ideological figurehead, highlighting the importance of his later roles in the nationalistic cartoons of the early 1940s and making his transition to Disney's wartime enthusiast all the more pertinent.

While the Warner Brothers cartoons of this era do not have the same ideological personalities at work, they do use several techniques of note which are later referenced by the Disney war time productions. Theriomorphism, the transference of animal qualities onto a human, is used to great effect in *Milk and Money* to allow a negative impression of the debt collector. This is used in contrast to the anthropomorphism used by both Disney and Warner Brothers for Porky Pig, Mickey and Donald in order to allow the audience to empathise with the plight of the leading characters. They also give life to concepts. The mortgage in *Porky's Poppa* is given human qualities, allowing it to have a physical effect; this is similar to the technique used in *Confidence* with the injection of confidence given to Oswald's hens.

These cartoons also cast light upon the ideological imprint of the Disney Studios during the 1930s. Despite the widely known fact that Disney took the limelight from many of his animators, rarely giving credit on the screen where credit was due and despite the many treatises to Disney films embracing the ideology of the far right, the cartoons of the 1930s tell a somewhat different story. The nature of the Disney enterprise itself, it seems,

was reflected within its cartoons, showing an even deeper reflection of the changes within society enhanced by the adaptation to New Deal liberalism:

‘He spared no money, no pains to improve the product. Ever. He never cut corners that I can recall. Cut salaries once, during the Depression. Everybody had to take a cut, but we were willing to do that. It was a community enterprise, you know. We all had a feeling of love for it, which I still do. It’s a wonderful organisation. There’s never been anything like it. Never will be.’<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>193</sup>American Film Institute Archives (thereafter AFIA) *From This You Are Making A Living?* An Oral History of Richard Huemer. Interview with Joe Adamson, 1968. pp. 122. Huemer animated *The Grasshopper and the Ants* and *The Tortoise and the Hare*.

#### Chapter four – International Relations in Animation 1934-1939

In a meeting that took place in early December 1942 between Allen Rivkin of the Motion Picture Division and Joe Grant and Richard Huemer, two of Disney's leading animators, the following minute was taken; 'We must wind up with some plus value, now that we have ridiculed the Hitlerian theory into complete destruction.'<sup>194</sup> A later correspondence between the three remarks, 'I gather you will have some good comic sequences in which the notable Nazi is fooled...'<sup>195</sup>

Lamponing the Nazi state and ridiculing those that followed its teachings was second nature to the Disney Studios during the Second World War. However, singing the praises of the United States in comparison to its fascist enemy in Europe did not commence in animation with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. It began earlier than the Nazi regime itself.

Hollywood's own connections with the worrying international situation in the 1930s are well documented. Despite the unconcerned attitude of much of the American public, Hollywood was quick to comment on the rise of fascism in Europe.<sup>196</sup> From Walter Wanger's production of *Gabriel Over the White House* as early as 1933, to the thuggish attitudes of the youths in Cecil B. DeMille's *This Day and Age* (US, 1933), fascism and the fear of the violence of Nazism made its way into the movies<sup>197</sup>.

Animation was by no means an innocent party in the early recognition of the worsening international situation. In a Columbia Crazy Kat short entitled *Disarmament Conference* (dir. Manny Gould & Ben Harrison) in 1931, the hero instigates a proclamation of peace to put a stop to warfare among the inhabitants of the jungle.<sup>198</sup> The short was described in *Motion Picture Herald* as

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<sup>194</sup> Margaret Herrick Library (thereafter MHL) Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, f.22, Memo from Allen Rivkin, 7 December 1942

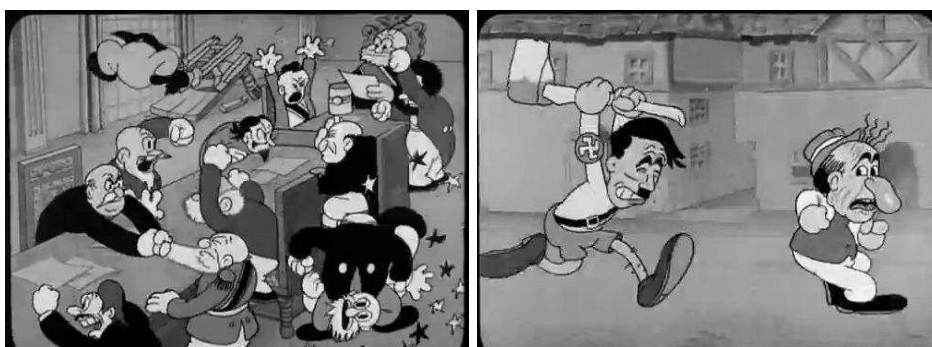
<sup>195</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, f.22, JKW520 Letter from Allen Rivkin, 19 January 1943.

<sup>196</sup> A. A. Offner, *American Appeasement: United States Foreign Policy & Germany 1933-1938*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1969) pp. 12

<sup>197</sup> B.F. Dick, *Star Spangled Screen*, pp. 44

<sup>198</sup> See *Disarmament Conference*, (US, 1931, dir, Manny Gould & Ben Harrison)

‘a novelty burlesque on the current conditions.’<sup>199</sup> Warner Brothers also mimicked a similar pacifist attitude with their production *Bosko the Doughboy* in 1932. Bosko is a soldier in the midst of trench like warfare, echoing the horrors of the battlefields in France during the First World War. Following the breakdown of the disarmament conferences of the early 1930s, animation began to stake its claim at a new target: Nazism. Warner Brothers’ *I Like Mountain Music* (1933) features Edward Robinson giving the fascist salute. *Bosko’s Picture Show* (US, 1933, dir. Hugh Harman) features a wealth of international awareness with its ‘Out of Tone’ newsreel reporting on world events. The cartoon features a caricature of the peace conference, in which many world leaders are physically fighting with each other. (See Fig. 1) The reel also charts events in the fictional town of Pretzel in Germany, showing American personality Jimmy Durante being chased down the street by Adolf Hitler wielding an axe. (See Fig. 2)



Figs. 1 & 2. From *Bosko’s Picture Show* (US, 1933, dir. Hugh Harman)

The internationally aware cartoons of the 1930s were by no means limited to the Warner Brothers cartoons, although Disney maintained its subtle approach to political commentary. The 1932 cartoon *The Wayward Canary* is one such charge. In this short, Mickey buys Minnie a canary as a gift. Unbeknownst to Mickey, however, the canary has given birth to many chicks, who subsequently cause havoc around Minnie’s house. At a pivotal moment in the cartoon, a cigarette lighter, sporting an inverted version of the Nazi swastika, catches fire and harms the chick. (See Fig. 3) While any production materials for this short are unreachable for scholars, the fact that the lighter brandishing the swastika causes harm to an innocent cannot be ignored,

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<sup>199</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 119, No. 6, 11 May 1935



particularly in light of the violence imparted by Hitler's S.A. even as early as 1932. A simple conclusion can be drawn from these early productions: animation simply sought out to use the power of the swastika symbol and the caricature of Hitler himself to make statements about the international situation. It took the sophistication of embedding ideological premise into narrative that allowed animation to make a stand in the mid-1930s.

However, when Mussolini sent extra forces into Ethiopia in February of 1935, animation's campaign against the fascist threat went into overdrive alongside the feature film, with commentary on both fascist Germany



Fig. 3 From *The Wayward Canary* (US, 1933, dir. Burt Gillett)

and Italy.<sup>200</sup> As Charles Aaronson stated in an editorial of July 1935, 'timeliness of subject matter' was partly responsible for the proliferation of the animated short subject during this period.<sup>201</sup> The *Hollywood Spectator* also recognised that the content of animation in these years seems to 'bear a remote resemblance to...international figures.'<sup>202</sup> While the rest of Hollywood was warned off the production of films demonstrating awareness of the international situation, animation was able to release productions with dramatic international undertones without being subject to the same scrutiny as the live action feature.<sup>203</sup> Throughout 1936 and 1937, pleas in trade press were circulated to the Hollywood movie-making community, to maintain the purity of cinema and ensure that 'films must be kept free from propaganda.'<sup>204</sup> Disney, however, used the personalities of characters already embedded within the American national mind-set to form an independent commentary on the events in Europe.

Mickey Mouse and Hitler never saw eye to eye. A 1944 edition of *Daily Variety* reports that in Coblenz, a novelty company started flooding the

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<sup>200</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 121, No. 3, 19 October 1935

<sup>201</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 120, No. 3, 13 July 1935

<sup>202</sup> *Hollywood Spectator*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 10 October 1936

<sup>203</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 123, No. 1, 1 April 1936

<sup>204</sup> *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 128, No. 11, 11 September 1937

German market with Mickey Mouse lapel buttons. By official decree, Hitler banned the sale of Mickey Mouse merchandise in Germany.<sup>205</sup> Disney was grieved by the fact that his creation did not have international appeal. In an interview in 1934, he famously stated, ‘Mr. A Hitler, the Nazi old thing. Imagine that! Well, Mickey is going to save Mr. A Hitler from drowning or something some day. Just wait and see if he doesn’t. Then won’t Mr. A Hitler be ashamed!’<sup>206</sup> Walt Disney also contributed towards the war effort in England in 1940, allowing proceeds of the premiere of *Fantasia* at the Broadway Theatre in London to be put towards soup kitchens for the homeless in bombed areas of England.<sup>207</sup>

Disney’s own anti-Semitic leanings are well documented. Marc Eliot’s discredited biography of 1993 paints a picture of Mickey Mouse’s creator as holding fascist views throughout his life and uses evidence of deleted scenes from the successful short *The Three Little Pigs* and Disney’s activities during the Communist sweep of Hollywood in the 1940s and 1950s as evidence for his claims. Disney’s critics also use the Nazi filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl’s visit to the studio in 1938 as evidence for Disney’s pro-Nazi leanings. While Disney undoubtedly knew who Riefenstahl was, he did not wish to get involved with any political controversy. He famously stated that he wanted Europe to ‘fight their own wars.’ Furthermore, Riefenstahl later reported that Walt expressed hesitancy over her visit, later claiming he had no idea who she was and had feared that he may be boycotted as a result of her visit.<sup>208</sup>

Other biographers of Disney have readily disputed claims for Walt’s supposed fascist connections. Disney’s most recent biographer, Neal Gabler is even less committal with Disney’s true political leanings, arguing that his Republicanism was perhaps a rebellion against his Father, more than any real political fervour.<sup>209</sup> Rather, Gabler states, ‘his politics were marked by confusion or neutrality.’<sup>210</sup> From the evidence collected in Chapter Three, it

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<sup>205</sup> *Daily Variety*, 12 June 1944 pp. 2

<sup>206</sup> Qtd. in R. Schickel, *The Disney Version*, pp. 159

<sup>207</sup> *The New York Times*, 23 October 1940, pp. 20

<sup>208</sup> L. Riefenstahl, *A Memoir*, (New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1993) pp. 286

<sup>209</sup> N. Gabler, *Walt Disney: The Biography*, (London, Aurum 2007) pp. 448

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

seems that Disney followed the populist political tide in the 1930s, supporting Roosevelt when he was popular but toning down his informal sponsorship when the President was losing his influence within Congress and the Senate.

Richard Huemer, one of Disney's leading animators, stated that Disney was very particular about his politics and the politics of his employees. He claimed that Walt was 'definitely to the right. He couldn't stand those guys who were tinged with a little pink.' While this does provide solid evidence for the case that Walt Disney had strong right wing political leanings, it seems that Eliot's claims for discrimination against his employees based on these claims is easily refuted. Huemer goes on to argue: 'One thing about Walt though. Regardless of political opinions or religious convictions or whatever, his first consideration was what a person could contribute to the studio and the product. He was always willing to give the benefit of the doubt and very liberal with those whom he employed. I think he would have used the Devil himself if he were a great animator.'<sup>211</sup>

From this, the case can be made that in fact, Disney valued the content of his animation over all else and thus it is to the content of his animation that we should turn. His first animation produced with awareness of the international situation utilised one of his more successful stories, *The Three Little Pigs* and yet modified certain elements of the plot in order to make a subtle commentary on the Nazi threat.

### **Disney & the rise of Hitler**

#### ***Three Little Wolves* (US, 1936, dir. David Hand)**

Released amid two fascist crises, the theming of *Three Little Wolves* could not have been more on point. Following Germany's reintroduction of conscription and subsequent announcement of an air force contrary to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, the world had one eye on Mussolini's activities in Africa and the other on Hitler's repudiation of the post-war European settlement.

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<sup>211</sup> AFIA, Interview with Richard Huemer, pp. 134

The short opens with focus on the Big Bad Wolf and his three little wolves. The wolves are sat watching the Big Bad Wolf who is instructing them on the different cuts of meat that can be attained from the Pig. Strikingly, from the outset, the Wolf not only speaks in German, but throughout the short, speaks in a German accent. He asks the three little wolves, 'Ist das nicht ein Sausage meat?' While this is obviously not a direct translation, the fact that the Wolf is identified with Germany from the beginning of the short suggests that the main threat to the Pigs' safety is also German. (See Fig. 4) In no other interpretation of the *Three Little Pigs* tales, is the Wolf so directly associated with a nationality. On the contrary, the Wolf dons many guises throughout these animated shorts. However, the power and popularity of the characters in this series of shorts allows historians to guess at the proposed impact of this modification. Disney allows the villain of his story to be interpreted as German

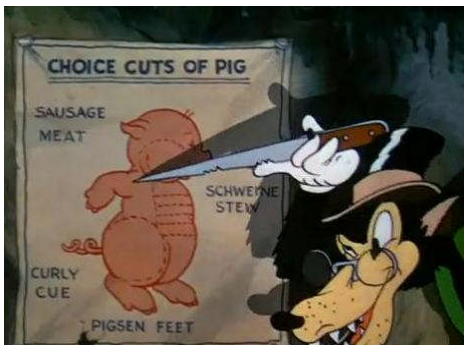


Fig 4. From *Three Little Wolves* (US, 1936, dir. David Hand)

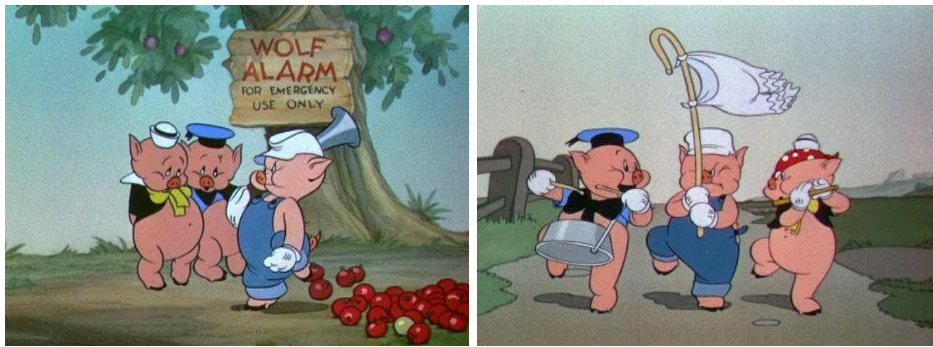
as early as 1936, before even any of Hitler's conquests in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

As in the previous tale, two of the Pigs are carelessly dancing through the woods, while the so-called Practical Pig is building a wolf pacifier. This construction is worthy of note. From

the beginning, the Big Bad Wolf was the external threat to the safe living of the Three Little Pigs. In the *Three Little Pigs*, the Practical Pig builds his own house to keep the Wolf at bay. However, in *The Three Little Wolves*, a wolf pacifier is the construction worked upon by the Practical Pig. This suggests that the Pigs, our substitute for the American people, viewed pacifying Germany as the only way to tame the Wolf's destructive urges and appetite and keep America out of conflict.

While the Practical Pig works hard to construct his pacifier, he demonstrates that he is unafraid to go into battle if provoked. The two foolish Pigs sound the wolf alarm and the Practical Pig comes running into the forest with a gun immediately, prepared for battle. (See Fig. 5) The Wolf tricks the

foolish Pigs into coming into his house with his little wolves, dressing as Bo Peep with her sheep. The Pigs are cornered and attacked by the wolves and seasoned for the wolf family to eat. However, the Pigs trick the wolves into blowing the wolf alarm loud enough for the Practical Pig to hear. The Practical Pig hears the alarm and drags his wolf pacifier through the forest. Peace is shown as the solution to the German threat. However, when the Wolf is thrown into the pacifier, the process is anything but peaceful. The Wolf is restrained, beaten and intimidated by the device. This suggests that perhaps the solution to the German threat was viewed as a show of strength through the guise of peace. After the Wolf goes through the pacifier, both he and the little wolves are catapulted away from the forest and away from the Pigs. After their victory, the Pigs come out of the Wolf's house, flying the white flag of peace. Noticeably, they are all three dressed in the American colours: red, white and blue. (See Fig. 6)



Figs. 5 & 6

From *Three Little Wolves*, (US, 1936, dir. David Hand)

In this short subject, animation uses several different techniques in order to put across its message. The most important technique employed in this short, however, is personality animation. In an interview for the *New York Times* following the success of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (US, 1937, dir. Wilfred Jackson) in 1937, Walt Disney stated that one of the most important things about his animated characters was his need for them to have personalities. He stated, 'We don't want them to just be shadows, for merely as moving figures, they would provoke no emotional response from the public.'<sup>212</sup> From the outset, Disney felt it necessary to imbue his personalities with characteristics the public would recognise. In this short, the strongest

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<sup>212</sup> *The New York Times*, 6 March 1938, pp.117

personality, that of the Practical Pig, takes the guise of the wary and attentive American. We can see from his construction of the 'Wolf Pacifer' that he is sensible, alert and prepared for danger. From the impact of *The Three Little Pigs*, the Practical Pig is already framed as the American who is most economically secure and the one who holds the most important and traditional of American values. In this short, we see this character protecting his way of life from an external *German* threat. While he is not actively seeking the Wolf, he is prepared to face him, if provoked. This is demonstrated by the way in which the Practical Pig rushes readily into the forest when the wolf alarm is sounded and by the action taken when the Wolf kidnaps his kin. While it could be argued that the Pig is taking an interventionist stance, advocating action against the German threat, what is important to note is that the Pig is provoked. Ultimately, however, the Pig preaches peace, for at the end of the cartoon, he waves a white flag, demonstrating that though the threat is neutralised, the Pig never desired to go to war with the Wolf.

On the contrary, the German Wolf is aggressive and provocative throughout, in keeping with Hitler's actions in Europe when the cartoon was in production. Not only does the German Wolf actively plan to destroy the Pigs but he is also teaching his young cubs to do the same, suggesting the indoctrination of the young German youth with destructive ideas. The short also uses sophisticated narrative devices in order to suggest the nature of the German threat. For example, the Wolf dresses as Little Bo Peep and claims that he has lost his sheep, with his young cubs literally donning the guise of wolves in sheep's clothing. This could suggest that the German threat should not be underestimated. While many had sympathy with the German public following the settlement at Versailles, the treatment of Jews in Germany under the new Nazi regime sparked a reactionary German boycott in New York as early as April 1933.<sup>213</sup> While the German threat may appear harmless, as Hitler publicly claimed he was taking back what was owed to the German homeland, the sinister trickery of the Wolf reveals its true intentions and its danger. While the Wolf does flee the scene after being tackled by the Pigs' pacifier, the very

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<sup>213</sup> A. A. Offner, *American Appeasement*, pp. 60.

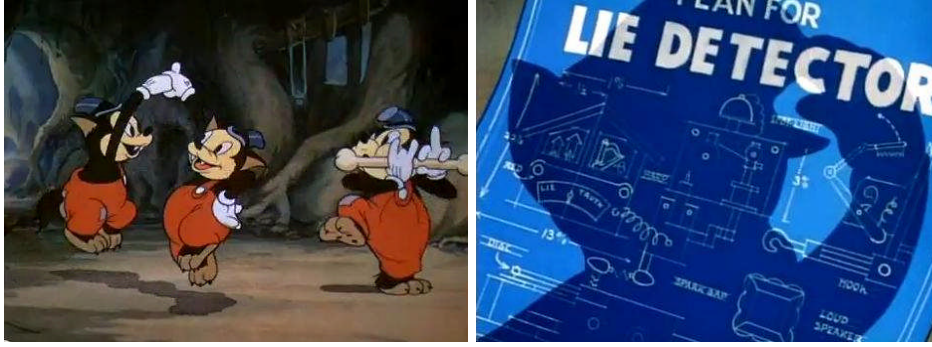
fact that the Big Bad Wolf has taught its philosophy to his little wolves suggests that a new generation of danger could be about to reveal itself to the world.

This short also uses the technique of music to instil this anti-German ideology into its audience. Previously, the title song for the *Three Little Pigs* sequence, 'Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf' was identified as the American people's battle with Depression. Since the American economy was recovering at this stage, a new threat is now identified. The Wolf, speaking German, identifies Germany as the principle threat to the American people. The Wolf's cubs mock and cheer at the Pigs' cheerful refrain to the Big Bad Wolf. (See Fig. 7) Given the cultural importance of this song to the American public, the very fact that the German cubs mock its significance would also have had a terrific impact.<sup>214</sup> Once the Pigs have triumphed over the Wolf, the song is played again. This time, the Pigs emerge victorious, flying the white flag of peace. However, for the first time, the undertone of the song is militaristic, indicating that the Pigs are willing to go to physical battle against an external foe. One of the Pigs plays a drum and the three heroes march towards the audience victoriously, as though returning home from war. The Pigs are transformed into national heroes, willing to fight for their country's safety. The economic and social importance of this song is hence transformed into a patriotic anthem for the American people, symbolising their triumph over the German threat. The Pigs' vendetta against the Wolf develops further in the 1939 short *The Practical Pig* when the Practical Pig develops a 'lie detector' for his German foe. (See Fig. 8) The production period for this short was in the midst of the Sudetenland crisis and it was released shortly before Hitler broke the Munich Agreement and entered the rest of the Czechoslovakia.<sup>215</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> *The New York Times*, 3 September 1933, pp. x2

<sup>215</sup> *The New York Times*, 7 April 1938, pp. 19



Figs. 7 & 8 From *Three Little Wolves* and *The Practical Pig* (US, 1939, dir. Dick Rickard)

The foundations for Government sponsored propaganda were laid down with these cartoons and by the time war broke out in Europe, the characters had already assumed their roles. When Disney was called upon by the Canadian Government to make a series of shorts supporting the purchase of war bonds, the result was a remake of the *Three Little Pigs* with minor modifications. These modifications were easy for the American public to accept, due to the characterisations that took place in the mid-1930s.

### ***The Thrifty Pig* (US, 1941, no director's credit)**

Disney was approached to make a series of shorts for the Canadian Government in 1941, following a successful screening of sections of *Fantasia* and *The Reluctant Dragon* in 1939 for the National Film Board of Canada. Seeing the effectiveness to which animation could be utilised for educational purposes, Disney was thus contracted for twenty thousand dollars to make four shorts. These shorts were to be used to promote the sale of war bonds within Canada. The first of these was produced in April 1941 and released on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November 1941, just before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>216</sup> Reusing footage from the *Three Little Pigs*, *The Thrifty Pig* follows the Practical Pig and his foolish kin as they battle once again with the Big Bad Wolf.

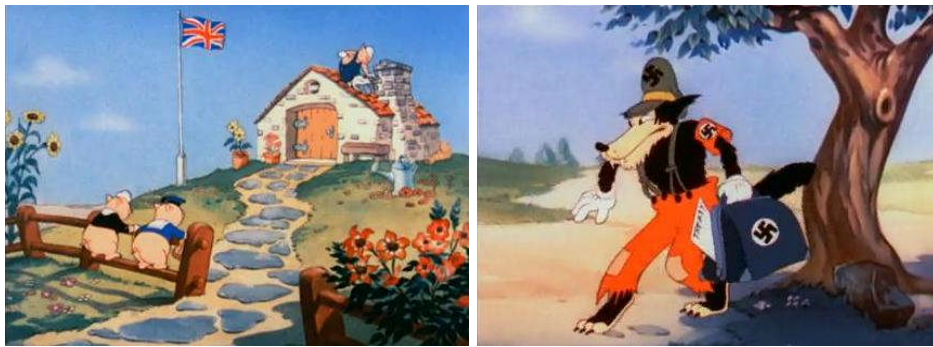
Adopting roles they assumed during the 1930s, the British Pigs now do battle with the Nazi Wolf. The Practical Pig builds his house with Canadian war bonds for protection from the Wolf. Animation uses the narrative devices of the mid 1930s in combination with the symbolism of early animation to play

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<sup>216</sup> R. Shale, *Donald Duck Joins Up*, pp.17



out the well-known drama between the Pigs and the Wolf with an international relevance. What was once simply an American safe haven for the Pigs, turns British as Disney animators placed a union jack flag in the Practical Pig's yard. (Fig. 9) The Pig's previous association with the common American man is now replaced by an affiliation with the ordinary Canadian as the War Savings Certificates with which the Pig builds his home hold the address 'All Over Canada.' Furthermore, this also indirectly associates a supposedly neutral America with the Allied forces, who were, at the time of the shorts release, at war with Nazi Germany.



Figs. 9 & 10 From *The Thrifty Pig* (US, 1941, no director's credit)

The Big Bad Wolf, as in *Three Little Wolves*, is portrayed as a foreign enemy to the Pigs. However, this short takes the insinuation further. Not only is the Wolf German, but he is affiliated with the Nazi party, wearing a swastika armband. (Fig. 10) He also wears a hat and carries a bag emblazoned with the famous Nazi branding. Animation is thus able to build upon the propagandistic foundations of its 1930s creations to produce Government sponsored propaganda, implicating the Nazi menace.

### ***She Was an Acrobat's Daughter* (US, 1937, dir. Isadore Freleng)**

Despite comfortably painting the ultimate 1930s Disney villain, the Big Bad Wolf, as an established Nazi as early as 1936, the Disney Studios did not physically produce a caricature of the man, Hitler, until their Canadian production, *Stop That Tank* (US, 1942, no director's credit). However, the Warner Brothers studio produced many caricatures of the Fuehrer throughout the 1930s. While their effort in *Bosko's Picture Show* was comedic, at such a time,

there was not the worry surrounding the rising strength of the Nazi state. Considering the political fervour surrounding the release of the Warner Brothers feature *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, taken from a series of newspaper articles in the same year, it is interesting that *She Was An Acrobat's Daughter* attracted no attention from the Hays Office, despite the obvious references to the international situation the animation includes.<sup>217</sup> The film has a very similar structure to that of the earlier Bosko productions in that it makes several gags surrounding the content of the film bill in the 1930s, which naturally includes references to the newsreels. The awareness present within this cartoon proves not only animation's responsiveness to the international situation in the 1930s but its willingness to provide a commentary on the world's events because of this startling sense of recognition.

The first news story worthy of note is the reference to the United States military expansion programme. Through his public works programmes such as the Public Works Administration, up until Congress forbade its use in 1935, Roosevelt had sanctioned the spending of eight hundred and twenty four million dollars on building aircraft carriers, naval ships, aviation research facilities and bombers.<sup>218</sup> Following Germany's announcement of an air force and Japan's naval expansion, Great Britain and the United States began to build up their military forces in response. Using what little funding Congress would allow, Roosevelt used limited construction funds to build carriers, battleships, cruisers and large destroyers.<sup>219</sup> Animation acknowledged this construction in this newsreel with its reference to the ship building race. While animation parodies this naval race by referring to the length of the ship, it also makes a connection between Britain and the United States, by including each in the story, indicating where a future military alliance could be forged. (See Fig. 11)

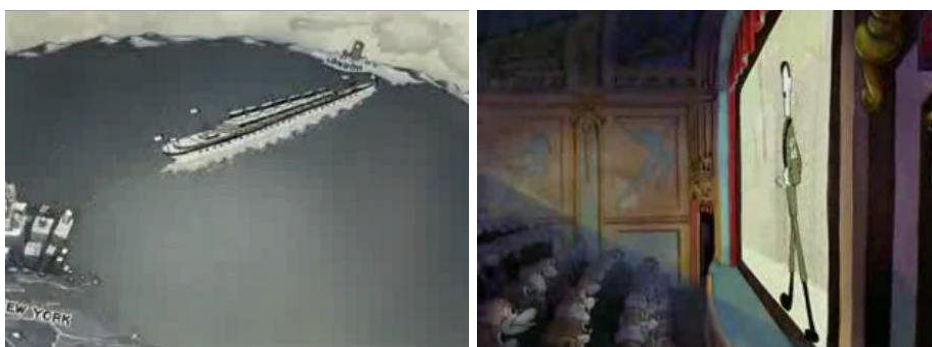
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<sup>217</sup> N. Roddick, *A New Deal in Entertainment*, (London, British Film Institute, 1983) pp. 162. For further information on the uproar surrounding Warner Brothers release of *Confessions*, see 'Council Bans Use of Alien Uniforms', *The New York Times*, 26 April 1939, pp. 25 and 'Espionage in Hollywood', *The New York Times*, 5 February 1939, pp x5.

<sup>218</sup> M. S. Sherry, *In the Shadow of War: The United States Since the 1930s*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995) pp. 20

<sup>219</sup> T. B. Buel (ed.) *The Second World War, Europe & the Mediterranean*, (Wayne, Avery Publishing Group, 1984) pp. 208

Alongside this commentary, there is also a reference to the Nazi state. There is no textual commentary alongside Hitler's appearance, nor is there any indication of what international situation the news is referring to. However, the appearance of Hitler on the screen acknowledges that Hitler was 'news', even in the animated world. It is interesting that the newsreel also fails to provide a full view of Hitler, as the animation provides only a side shot of his stature, displaying only a 2D caricature. (Fig. 12) This could be due to the restrictions in place surrounding the movie industry's commentary on international events. An extensive appearance of Hitler may have provoked controversy. However, what is also of interest that one of the animated characters in the audience appears terrified of Hitler's figure. This demonstrates that animation was willing to state that Hitler and his regime was a worrying threat to the international situation. The reluctance to provide a full caricature of Hitler shows that the animators knew they were dealing with a sensitive subject. All of the other news stories presented on the newsreel were presented in full view.



Figs. 11 & 12 From *She Was An Acrobat's Daughter* (US, 1937, dir. Isadore Freleng)

### ***Donald's Better Self* (US, 1938, dir. Jack King)**

In a further meeting between Allen Rivkin, Joe Grant and Richard Huemer during 1942, the ways in which the Good and Evil of the conflict during World War Two could be portrayed in an animated production were discussed. The minutes state; 'A prologue would establish the birth and growth of man, his desire to better himself, his family and his social surroundings. During this progression, two types of man would evolve; Good Man and Evil

Man. Evil would watch Good hungrily, seeing what personal privilege he would garner from Good's discoveries and developments, then evil would drop into the background as Good went about his business of making a better



Fig. 13 From *Donald's Better Self* (US, 1938, dir. Jack King)

world to live in.<sup>220</sup> As part of the World War Two propaganda effort, the Disney animators, Richard Huemer and Joe Grant sought out a personification of the conflict between Good and Evil and a visualisation of their impact on

the world around them, demonstrating for the audience the various potential outcomes of the struggle for world

domination. However, this personification is used throughout the 1930s and to particular effect in the 1938 Donald Duck cartoon, *Donald's Better Self*.

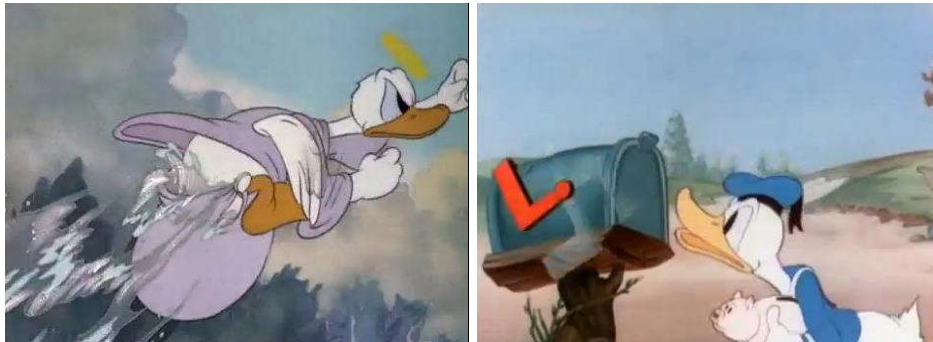
The ideological implications of this cartoon have been discussed in Chapter Three, however, this cartoon also has political implications that require further examination. When Donald is led astray by the Devil side of himself, or perhaps one could argue, the 'Evil Man', the Angel comes looking for him and confronts the Devil. 'Have no fear,' says the Angel, 'I do not intend to fight.' The Angel, or perhaps one could argue, the 'Good Man' initially adopts a pacifist stance with the Devil. However, the Devil is provocative and hits the Angel, bundling him up and throwing him into a nearby lake. (Fig. 13) The Angel, angered by the attack, announces that his action was 'the last straw.' Provoked, the Angel takes to the skies, taking the shape of a bomber aircraft. (Fig. 14) The Angel propels into the Devil, who is subsequently buried into the ground.

This cartoon was released in March 1938 and consequently would have been in production during 1937, in the middle of the Spanish Civil War and amid Roosevelt's renewals of the Neutrality Act.<sup>221</sup> It was also during the build-up to Germany's Anschluss with Austria, prior to the Munich Crisis of 1938.

<sup>220</sup>MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, f.22, Memo from Allen Rivkin, 7 December 1942

<sup>221</sup> A. A. Offner, *American Appeasement*, pp. 145

While there are no production documents available to scholars to confirm the contextual reasoning behind the cartoon, nonetheless, several conclusions could be drawn. Firstly, the cartoon advocates military action upon provocation. The Angel states clearly that he does not wish to fight and yet when the Devil takes action, the Angel takes to the skies, drops a water bomb on the Devil and ultimately kills him. Secondly, the document from 1942 states the method that could be used in animation in which the conflict between Good and Evil, the Allies and the Nazis, could play out. This cartoon utilises these very techniques. The inference is further confirmed by the fact that footage from *Donald's Better Self* is reworked into a propaganda film for the Canadian Government: *Donald's Decision* (US, 1942, no director's credit). When Donald is accosted by the Devil in the same manner, his decision to side with the Devil is implicated as aiding the Nazis. As the Devil Donald catches his attention by tapping the lever on the post box, it spins and makes the shape of a swastika. (Fig. 15)



Figs. 14 & 15 From *Donald's Better Self* (1938) and *Donald's Decision* (1942)

### **Animation & the Spanish Civil War**

Alongside the rising Nazi threat in the 1930s, the civil conflict in Spain attracted significant attention in Hollywood. Documentary films such as *The Spanish Earth* (US, 1937, dir. Joris Ivens) and features such as *Blockade* (US, 1938, dir. William Dieterle) passed commentary on the European conflict but were subject to heavy criticism because of the desires to keep Hollywood

neutral.<sup>222</sup> Animation, however, was able to pass commentary in its own way on the Spanish conflict. Amidst the neutrality crisis in Hollywood, Disney chose to take on ‘The Story of Ferdinand.’<sup>223</sup> The meaning of the story was not lost on the American public, attracting significant attention for its association with the Spanish conflict.<sup>224</sup>

### ***Ferdinand the Bull* (US, 1938, dir. Dick Rickard)**

Winner of the Best Animated Short Academy Award, *Ferdinand the Bull* tells the story of the little bull who, unlike all those around him, did not like to get involved in fighting. The short outlines Ferdinand’s childhood, during which all his friends used to fight and he simply preferred to sit under his favourite tree, out of conflict, and smell the flowers. Ferdinand grows into a



Fig. 16 From *Ferdinand the Bull* (US, 1938, dir. Dick Rickard)

big strong bull and all of his friends dream of fighting at the bull fights in Madrid. Men from the town come into Ferdinand’s field to pick a bull for the fight. Ferdinand tries to keep out of their way but unfortunately gets stung by a bee and inadvertently impresses the men with his speed and strength. He gets picked for the fight and taken into

town. In the ring, Ferdinand scares the men out of the fight by his sheer size but only smells the flowers the Matador has in his hands. The Matador pleads with him to take action and to fight, but Ferdinand stays peaceful and smells his flowers. The Matador cries out in desperation and Ferdinand has to be taken home, where he sits underneath his tree, smelling the flowers. (See Fig. 16)

The short provoked considerable response within the American public. When the animation was produced, writer Munro Leaf claimed that he

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<sup>222</sup> M. Quigley, ‘To the Propagandists...’ *Motion Picture Herald*, Vol. 128, No. 11, 11 September 1937

<sup>223</sup> ‘Walt Disney Takes Option on Munro Leaf’s Book “The Story of Ferdinand”’ *The New York Times*, 27 July 1937, pp. 24

<sup>224</sup> ‘Ferdinand Makes His Screen Debut’, *The New York Times*, 23 October 1938, pp. 165

received letters from Leftists and Rightists, wanting to know ‘where he gets off ignoring the Spanish Civil War like that.’<sup>225</sup>

From this insinuation, it seems *Ferdinand* was read as animated enactment of the United States refusing to live up to its responsibilities in Spain. Interventionist sentiment for the Spanish Civil War was rife in 1938. Following the bombing of Guernica on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April the previous year and the loss of American lives in volunteer forces fighting for the Loyalists, the American people campaigned actively for Roosevelt to apply the Neutrality Act towards Berlin and Rome, claiming that lack of action constituted fighting *for* Franco’s fascists.<sup>226</sup>

Importantly, the American people *saw* political undertones within animation, recognising the ideology within the cartoon from the outset. The short begins with the refrain, ‘Once upon a time, in Spain’. Animation uses narration in this short to tell the audience what is important to know about the story. Forming the basis of a memorandum on how animation could contribute towards the war effort in 1942, Disney story-liner Robert Spencer Carr stated that ‘the surface has not been scratched in the art of dramatic narration,’ highlighting the importance of dramatic devices of leading radio programs.<sup>227</sup> Principally, Disney saw the pivotal role that narration had to play in the direction of the story and highlighting the way in which narrators could serve as educators. Narration is used to tremendous effect in the wartime shorts but in *Ferdinand*, is used to the same effect, drawing attention to the contemporary situation and *Ferdinand*’s continued defiance against the Matador.

The memorandum also states that Disney needed to create a ‘glossary of new characters to express today’s new conceptions.’<sup>228</sup> It can be argued that with the character of *Ferdinand*, this was already accomplished in 1938.

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid

<sup>226</sup> R. Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy 1932-1945*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1979) pp. 141

<sup>227</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, R.S. Carr, ‘Ideas for a New South American Film Program,’ 7 January 1942 pp. 37

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

Ferdinand's primary characteristic is his pacifism. Despite provocation from friends and society, he remains unwilling to be taken into a war, preferring to sit and smell his flowers. This reflects exactly the stance taken in the Spanish Civil War by the American Government. Ferdinand does not like to fight. When drawn into the arena, he does not take a stand against the brutality of the men nor does he withdraw. He remains neutral. Using a character such as Ferdinand to embody political isolationism allowed Disney to create similar feeling within the American audience during the Second World War, arguably with Donald Duck leading the charge for American intervention in Europe. While Ferdinand embodied American isolationism in Europe, Donald stood for intervention upon provocation. Following the trend of channelling political ideologies through the personalities of their characters, Warner Brothers' animation also provided its own response to the situation in Spain, using its principal character of the 1930s: Porky Pig.

### ***Porky's Poultry Plant* (US, 1936, dir. Frank Tashlin)**

*Porky's Poultry Plant* was released just one month into the conflict in Spain, however, due to the rapid turnaround of Warner Brothers shorts in comparison to Disney, their production turnover was a mere four weeks, putting the production period for this short at the outbreak of hostilities.<sup>229</sup> Notably, due to Frank Tashlin's direction, Porky is here portrayed as an adult pig, running his own successful chicken farm business. Porky is shown to be caring and considerate with his hens and reaches out to a baby chicken at the outset, ensuring that she gets her share of feed. The audience soon discovers that the farm business is in danger from an external enemy: the Hawk. The Hawk is identified as Public Chicken Enemy Number One by a 'wanted' style poster. The external threat was significant to Tashlin, who even decided to name one of the kidnapped chickens after his first wife: Dorothy. (See Fig. 17) The Hawk flies high overhead and makes his play for the farm. Porky raises the 'Hawk Alarm' and the chickens flee for safety. All except one: the baby chick Porky sought to protect at the beginning of the cartoon. Porky sees the

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<sup>229</sup>L. Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, pp. 178





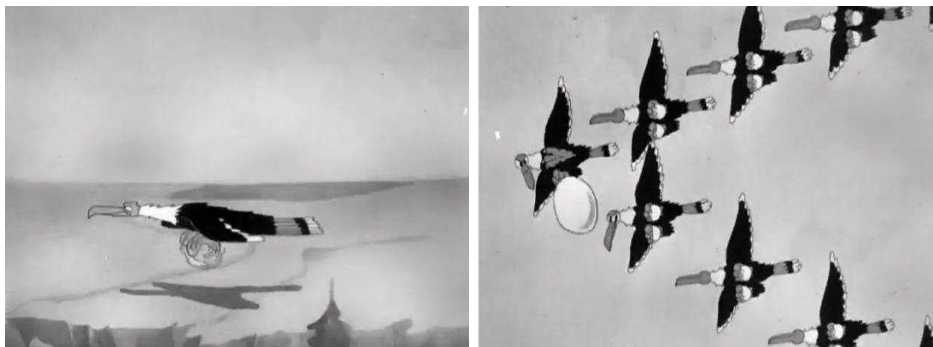
Fig. 17 From *Porky's Poultry Plant* (US, 1936, dir. Frank Tashlin)

chick in danger and gets his gun, immediately mobilising to protect his chickens. However, the Hawk takes to the skies and an aerial battle begins. Tashlin makes quick cuts in editing, to signify the danger and significance of the aerial conflict between Porky and the hawks. Porky climbs into his plane and begins attacking the Hawk, who calls for assistance from other hawks who fly and drop bombs on Porky in aerial battle formations. However, Porky is victorious and the chickens bury the hawks in the ground in exactly the same manner as Devil Donald in *Donald's Better Self* and *Donald's Decision*, signifying that Warners' and Disney had similar ideas when it came to tackling an external enemy.

There are several techniques used within this animated production that can be studied in comparison to the Disney cartoons. The first is the focus on aerial battle that forms the foundation for Porky's conflict with the Hawk. As in *Donald's Better Self*, aerial shots are used within the production, demonstrating that the principal threat to the short's protagonist is from the air. In *Porky's Poultry Plant*, the principal threat to Porky's farm is from a bird of prey, echoing this aerial danger. This is epitomised by the way in which the Hawk acts throughout the animated short: with exactly the same mannerisms as an aerial bomber. The Hawk takes to the skies like a plane taking off from an airfield and his allies fly with him in a plane-like formation (See Fig 19). While their attack is ultimately harmless, the idea of animating an aerial attack upon 'civilians', finds its origins in these cartoons. While Angel Donald drops a water bomb on the Nazi implied Devil Donald, the hawks drop egg bombs onto Porky. (See Fig. 19)

Furthermore, from Porky's point of view, he alerts his chickens to the threat with an air raid siren, suggesting the imminent threat of a bombing of a civilian target, integral to the later fighting in Spain, for example, the intense bombing of Guernica, resulting in the loss of thousands of civilian lives. This

technique of applying the characteristics of weapons to the animated characters is used in *Donald's Better Self* and in the later Disney produced propaganda shorts during the Second World War, proving the existence of political commentary on the international situation as early as 1936. However, one way that Disney remained more explicit in its commentary was in its utilisation of Technicolor. It was in 1932 that Disney first used the three strip Technicolor process with the Silly Symphony Short, *Flowers and Trees* (US, 1932, dir. Burt Gillett) and continued to use it to great effect. However, the significance of the red, white and blue at the end of *Three Little Wolves* was paramount to its overall political implication. Warner Brothers, due to Disney's exclusivity on Technicolor and Leon Schlesinger's refusal to spend as much money on the production quality of his cartoons, were restricted to black and white. They had to rely on the agricultural landscaping of the cartoon to create effect. In the case of this cartoon, they animate a reproduction of a Midwest farming estate and utilise Porky's own attitude towards the chickens to make the identification that Porky was standing for the defence of valued American principles. However, once Warner Brothers were able to utilise Technicolor, they did so to great ideological effect, the results of which will be discussed in Chapter Five.



Figs. 18 & 19 From *Porky's Poultry Plant* (US, 1936, dir. Frank Tashlin)

Due to Porky's quick triumph over the hawks, an insinuation is also made regarding the nature of the enemy threat faced by Americans from the events in Europe. Porky works alone to defeat the enemy and yet is still able to fight off a school of eight hawks. A common American man is easily able to defeat his external foe. What is also of interest is the technique Porky uses to

defeat the hawks. He uses strategies linked to the pride of the American nation: football. After the Hawk's attack of egg bombs proves unsuccessful, the enemies then turn to sport to try and outmanoeuvre Porky. The hawks get into a huddle and throw the chick between them like a football; however, Porky manages to catch the chick, sending the hawks flying to their death. This not only makes the connection between Porky and America but also implies that America's national strengths will ultimately allow them to defeat their foes.

The first of which is their moral superiority over their enemy, the second, the strength of their air force. In Robert Spencer Carr's 1942 memorandum on the ways in which animation could be of use in the Second World War, both of these strengths are mentioned but noticeably found their origins in this cartoon in 1936.<sup>230</sup> Each of these cartoons use similar techniques in order to get across their commentary on the action that should be taken by American citizens when they are faced with an external threat. They should take action, but only when provoked and as is suggested in this cartoon, only when there are innocent civilian lives at risk. This also insinuates a defensive type of warfare in order to keep the peace.

### ***What Price Porky (US, 1938, dir. Robert Clampett)***

The Warner Brothers cartoons continued to advocate such interventionist action and in time, became significantly more direct in highlighting who they believed the biggest international threat to be. This demonstrates explicit engagement with the sensitivities of the international situation and that they were subject to a freedom of interpretation. Such freedoms were not permitted in the world of the live action feature. United States involvement in world affairs became more direct following Roosevelt's

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<sup>230</sup> MHL, 'Ideas for the South American Film Program,' Motion Picture Society for the Americas records, f22, pp. 12-13. Carr mentions the moral superiority of the United States fighters, stating that animation could provide a commentary on the 'moral armament' of the United Nations and also states that animation could produce a short entitled 'Wings of victory' showing the superiority of the United States air force.

‘quarantine speech’ on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October 1937.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore, the issue of a volunteer army force into the Spanish Civil War drew out ‘American passion for action’ against Franco’s fascists.<sup>232</sup> While a statement from the Government was issued stating that ‘the enlistment of American citizens in either of the opposing sides in Spain is unpatriotically inconsistent with the American Government’s policy of the most scrupulous non-intervention in Spanish internal affairs,’ FDR stopped the State Department prosecuting those who volunteered and allowed for medical workers to obtain passports to provide assistance to the wounded. This spirit of intervention, while against official Government policy, played out in animation in a battle between Porky Pig and Daffy Duck, comically renamed as General Quacko, the Ducktator.

The short begins in a simple farmyard setting where Porky is feeding his chickens. However, before the meal is through, a provocative duck steals corn from the feeding chickens. Porky confronts the army of ducks, sitting on the periphery of his farmland, asking if they could return the corn, as otherwise his chickens will go hungry. An armed guard watches over the leader of the duck army. (See Fig. 20) Daffy wears a hat strikingly similar to the one worn by General Franco. Daffy issues a threatening directive to Porky, stating that they should fight for their corn. (Fig. 21)



Figs. 20 & 21 From *What Price Porky* (US, 1938, dir. Robert Clampett)

The chickens spring to action, one crying out, ‘Let’s quit cackling and fight!’ Drums roll and armies mobilise on Porky’s chicken farm. Newly hatched

<sup>231</sup> R. Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, pp. 148

<sup>232</sup> D. Tierney, *F.D.R. and the Spanish Civil War: neutrality and commitment in the struggle that divided America* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2007) pp. 67

chicks form an army (Fig. 22), trenches are dug out and battle begins. The battle is far from just a land conflict, as duck planes drop egg bombs from the air, taking off from carriers at sea, demonstrating a full scale war, mobilising all facets of military power.

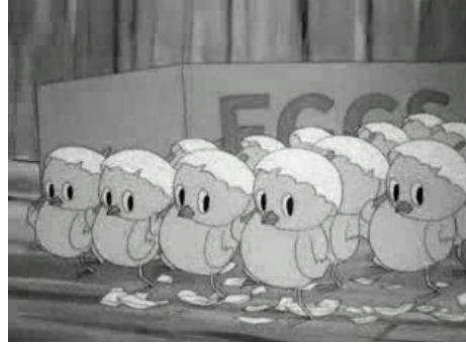


Fig. 22 The armies mobilise

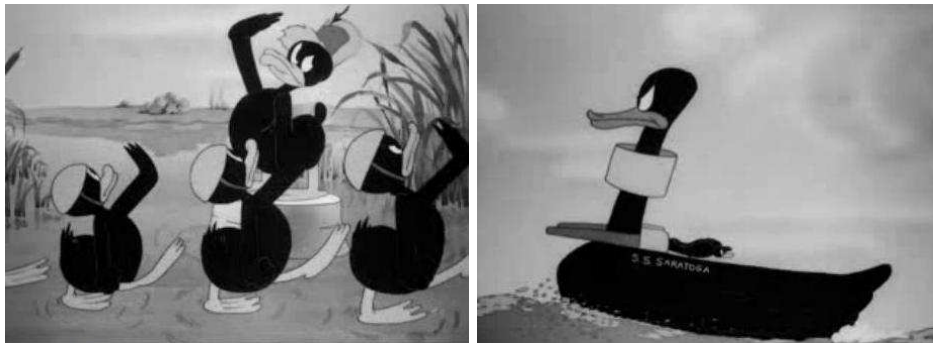
Tanks are also utilised in the battle. Porky Pig, for the most part, remains in a dug out in ‘no man’s land’ but is forced into battle when a grenade is thrown at him. He climbs out of his dug out and ‘zips’ it up, sealing the grenade inside. He is provoked into battle and fires corn at Daffy’s army. While he does not directly hit the forces, he inadvertently hits a nearby tree which topples over and restrains the Ducktator’s army. While Porky and his chickens eventually win the battle and successfully capture the Ducktator and his remaining ‘men’, the enemy forces do manage to keep the corn that started the fight in the beginning.

There are several techniques used within this animated production that draw comparison with the Disney shorts. The reference to air power is again, rife, drawing attention to the aerial nature of the conflict in Spain. Egg bombs are dropped, as in *Porky’s Poultry Plant*. The caricaturing and lampooning of the enemy that was widespread in the war time cartoons begins here. General Quacko is explicitly framed as a fascist dictator as the short reveals armies marching and giving the fascist salute to their leader. While the time frame of the short, the general appearance of Daffy and his title of the ‘General’ make the reference to Franco seem more likely, it does seem significant that the marching of Daffy’s soldiers bear resemblance to the Nuremberg rallies in Germany. (Fig. 23)

Similar to the Disney cartoons, this short uses the character of Porky to convey a particular mindset in American society. Porky is reluctant to go to war and only really gets involved in the conflict at the very end of the short. He is provoked into forming an army by the aggressive directive of General

Quacko. Porky makes no comment on the words, however, the chickens immediately mobilise. Much like *Donald's Better Self* and *Porky's Poultry Plant*, the short thus endorses military action upon provocation. The military action taken in this short, however, is far more widespread than evidenced in any other short of this period. Naval power, aerial power and land forces are all used to fight Daffy's army, suggesting the need for total mobilisation of all armed units in order to fight the fascist threat.

The short also includes references to history, most specifically, American involvement in the First World War. The name of one of the battleships involved is shown as the S.S. Saratoga which was an American hospital ship involved in the First World War. (Fig. 24) It carried the New York Post Graduate hospital unit. However, the ship sank on its return from Europe in New York harbour<sup>233</sup>. This reference forces the issue that many American lives were lost during the first conflict in Europe. Due to the fact that fighting in the short continues regardless of this reference, the animation suggests that despite America's devastating history with European conflict, intervention is still required.



Figs. 23 & 24 From *What Price Porky* (US, 1938, dir. Robert Clampett)

In unpublished Disney memoranda surrounding the animation to be produced in support of the Allied cause, reference is made to a need to highlight the tyrannical nature of the fascist regime. It states the necessity of showing the 'mass executions and oppressive laws' by transforming them into

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<sup>233</sup> M. T. Sarnecky, *A History of the US Army Nurse Corps*, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982) pp. 82

‘burning visual images on the screen.’<sup>234</sup> This cartoon is unquestionably more violent than any other aired during the 1930s and the reference to the fascist threat is explicit and obvious. There is extensive death and destruction evident throughout and General Quacko is ruthless and unyielding with the direction of his own army and in the action taken against Porky’s chicken army. The oppression of the fascist regimes in Europe is shown clearly in this cartoon, showing the beginnings of a propaganda campaign against fascism well before the United States became actively involved in the European conflict in 1941. Franco and Hitler are explicitly targeted in animation in the 1930s. While there is little explicit reference to Mussolini’s Italy, the ruthless attitude of the puppeteer Stromboli in Disney’s feature film, *Pinocchio* (US, 1940, dir. Ben Sharpsteen & Norman Ferguson) should not be overlooked to this end. Ruthless treatment in animation was specifically reserved for the fascist powers in Europe. A different treatment was awarded the threat in the Far East.

### **A comical threat – Asian stereotyping**

During the Second World War, it was the Japanese that principally came under fire from Hollywood. With films such as *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* and *Purple Heart* the bestiality of the Japanese soldiers was highlighted, indicating that the biggest ideological and militaristic threat to the American people was from the Japanese.<sup>235</sup> Interestingly, while a distinction was made between the German people and the Nazis during the war, no such distinction was present in the representation of the Japanese. All Japanese, no matter what their background, were presented as a threat to the American people and the arsenal of democracy. While animation’s main target prior to the Second World War was the rise of fascism on the continent and the action that should be taken in the event of a provoked attack, animation’s treatment of the Japanese was not quite as considered. It is, in fact, limited to a few simple appearances during which the Japanese *and* the Chinese are ridiculed for their traditions and

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<sup>234</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, R.S. Carr, ‘Ideas for a New South American Film Program,’ 7 January 1942 pp. 16

<sup>235</sup> See C. Koppes & G. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*

mannerisms. The deeper ideological treatment is reserved for Nazi Germany. However, nonetheless, these negative stereotypes upheld within 1930s animation are particularly interesting as they lay the foundations for a more ruthless representation within the boundaries of animation in the Second World War.

### ***Buddy the Gob* (US, 1934, dir. Isadore Freleng)**

Released following the Japanese attack of the Great Wall region of China, *Buddy the Gob* offers a negative treatment of the Far East. Due to the fact that FDR had chosen a path of isolationism in foreign policy from the beginning of his presidency due to the severe economic crisis, the short is in keeping with popular opinions of the conflict between Japan and China in the Far East.<sup>236</sup>

The short opens on the sea amid a great battle. There is a simple unrecognisable flag atop the boat the Warners' character, Buddy, is sailing on. After the battle, Buddy sails ashore on his own and ends up in China. From the outset, negative caricaturing of eastern traditions is rife. Buddy walks past a woman carrying her children on a stick. The children are tied up by their hair. (See Fig. 25) Buddy then watches a Chinese man reading a poster. The poster is translated and is an advertisement for a young beautiful girl being sacrificed to a dragon. (See Fig. 26) The way this advertisement is framed draws a comparison with a theatrical spectacle as it states to 'Come One, Come All!'



Figs. 25 & 26

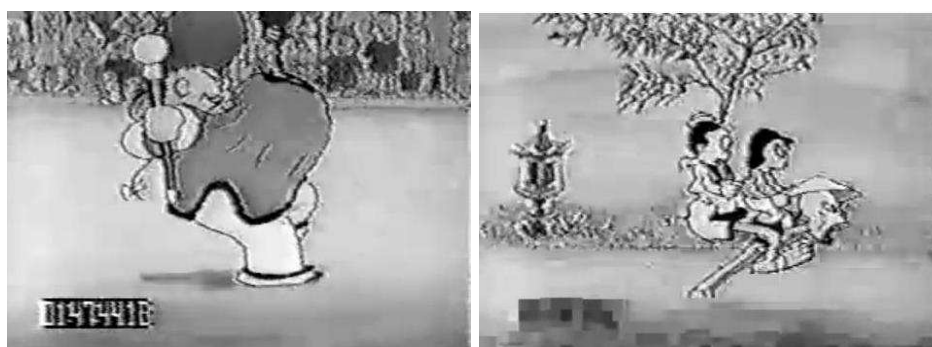
From *Buddy the Gob* (US, 1934, dir. Isadore Freleng)

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<sup>236</sup> S. E. Ambrose & D. Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy since 1938* (New York, Penguin Books, 1997) pp. 9



Buddy is enraged by the upcoming sacrifice of an innocent girl and goes along to try and rescue her. At the spectacle, there is a parade of musicians and acrobats, full of negative stereotyping. The man leading the parade is fat and fierce looking. (See Fig. 27) The young girl is also shown trapped in a cage like an animal, shouting for help. Buddy is determined to do what is right and despite getting captured himself, manages to tie up the man holding her hostage and free the girl. Buddy and the girl are subsequently chased from the theatre by an array of Chinese *and* Japanese men. There is further ridicule forced upon the Far East as Buddy and the girl physically ride a Japanese man out of the city and he begins to behave like a horse. (See. Fig. 28)



Figs. 27 & 28 From *Buddy the Gob* (US, 1934, dir. Isadore Freleng)

While it is clear from the outset that a negative portrayal of these countries underpins these cartoons, it is the forced comparison between the child Buddy and the adult Chinese and Japanese that is of interest here. There is no sophisticated ideological underpinning within the narrative of this cartoon. The negative impressions are gained solely from a comparison in character. The Chinese men in the street and at the theatre for the girls' sacrifice are all significantly taller than Buddy, highlighting his vulnerability in this strange new country he finds himself in. At the parade, Buddy is horrified to see that the girl is locked in a cage like an animal. This appears to highlight the bestiality of the Chinese due to the fact they are using the death of an innocent as a spectacle. The girl is treated like an animal throughout the short. Buddy goes to rescue her, carefully unlocking her chains and riding with her away from danger. When they are riding away, the Japanese man pulling their cart displays horse like characteristics, including the signature bucked teeth

associated with negative Second World War stereotypes of the Japanese. The cartoon also demonstrates the moral superiority of the United States over the Far East. Both Japan and China are grouped together in this cartoon, demonstrated by the mixed crowd chasing Buddy and the girl away from the city. Buddy and the girl are not safe until they cross a verge and destroy the bridge after their safe passage. This suggests that safety is to be found for the United States in isolation.

### ***Porky's Hero Agency* (US, 1937, dir. Robert Clampett)**

There are several points of interest in this animated short, released in the midst of two international conflicts: the Sino-Japanese War and the Spanish Civil War, fuelled by Franco's fascists and financed by Hitler's Nazi regime and Mussolini's Italy. The narrative of the short contains no ideological underpinnings, unlike *Porky's Poultry Plant* or even any of the Disney shorts. However, it is the obvious representations in this short that are worthy of discussion in this chapter.

The majority of the short takes place in Porky Pig's dream. Before he goes to bed, he is reading about a Greek Gorgon who turned people into stone and dreams of becoming a hero, rescuing maidens and slaying dragons. His dream makes his fantasy into a reality and he is shown running his own hero agency. He is called to action by the Emperor Jones who is shown 'giving a fireside chat to his (sic) sheeps.' Our attention is then turned to the Emperor's citizens who are all controlled by puppet strings and give the fascist salute. (Fig. 29) After the Emperor tells Porky of his challenge, he sets to work to animate the citizens who have been turned to stone by the Gorgon. In the meantime, some of the victims of the Gorgon's stone touch are shown. Three of whom are Japanese and are shown slapping each other before they have their photograph taken and are subsequently transformed into stone. (Fig. 30) This is an obvious reference to the Three Stooges act which was incredibly popular during the 1930s<sup>237</sup>. One covers their mouth, the other their ears, the

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<sup>237</sup> See M. Fleming, *The Three Stooges*, (New York, Hi Marketing, 2000) and M. Scordato & E. Scordato, *The Three Stooges* (New York, Chelsea House, 1995)

other, their eyes, referring to their famous pose – ‘See no evil, speak no evil, hear no evil.’

In terms of analysis, this cartoon certainly provides an interesting interpretation of American views on fascism and on the Japanese threat. When Emory gives his ‘fireside chat’ his subjects are made to salute him using puppet strings. This suggests that the animators involved in producing this cartoon at Warner Brothers believed that the Nazi Government was imposing its will upon the German people and forcing compliance with Nazi ideology. The fact that the fascist subjects are portrayed as puppets implies totalitarian control. Due to the Italian occupation of Abyssinia and Hitler’s moves on the Rhineland, the negative connotations associated with the fascist salute could be referring to either of these countries.

The Japanese portrayal is also of interest. While throughout the 1930s, there was a sinister portrayal of the German threat, dissipated through the *Three Little Pigs* story and through Donald’s crisis of conscience, the Japanese threat remains comical. There is negative stereotyping but nothing to suggest the bestiality implied by the wartime productions. Despite Roosevelt’s heavy preoccupation with the Japanese problem during the period under study in this chapter, it seems as though the Japanese were not considered a militaristic or ideological threat in 1930s animation.<sup>238</sup> They were simply a subject of intense ridicule with reference to a popular comedy act of the time.



Figs. 29 & 30

From *Porcky's Hero Agency* (US, 1937, dir. Robert Clampett)

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<sup>238</sup> S. E. Ambrose & D. Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism*, pp. 37

## Conclusion

Following the release of Warner Brothers *Confessions*, the Hays Office had imposed a ban on the production of anti-Nazi films. The ban was lifted in January 1940 however, by the summer of 1941, Hollywood's violation of United States neutrality warranted an investigation.<sup>239</sup> On the 1<sup>st</sup> August 1941, Gerald P. Nye introduced a resolution calling for an investigation of propaganda disseminated by the motion picture industry. Films such as *The Great Dictator* (US, 1940, dir. Charlie Chaplin) *The Mortal Storm* (US, 1940, dir. Frank Borzage), *Foreign Correspondent* (US, 1940, dir. Alfred Hitchcock) and *A Yank in the RAF* (US, 1941, dir. Henry King) all caught the attention of the Nye Committee for their commentary on the situation in Europe.

Animation was left untouched. Despite the lack of attention paid to cartoons by the Hays Office and subsequently, the Production Code Administration, this chapter has proven that in fact, cartoons provided their own commentary on the rising international crisis in Europe and in the Far East throughout the 1930s, well before the United States were involved in the Second World War.

However, what is most important to note, is that the channels through which animation provides its commentary on the international situation were all utilised when cartoons were drawn into the full scale propaganda battle conducted by Hollywood during the Second World War. The document produced by Disney story-liner, Robert Spencer Carr, in January 1942, used sporadically throughout this chapter, outlines these techniques explicitly. These techniques apply, in many guises, to the 1930s cartoons on the same subjects. Music, narration, use of celebrity, moral supremacy and the ridiculing of the Nazi state are all explicitly stated as ways in which the animated world could contribute towards the cause of propaganda. All of these techniques are used in the 1930s shorts.

“Music,” writes Carr, ‘plays a much more important part in an animated cartoon than in any other type of motion picture... The idea is that the music

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<sup>239</sup> C. Schindler, *Hollywood in Crisis: Cinema and American Society 1929-1939*, (New York, Routledge, 1996) pp. 212-213

track on all these pictures should not be merely ‘appropriate’ music – but should consciously be made part of the propaganda.<sup>240</sup>

As early as 1936, the Frank Churchill Depression anthem, *Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf*, takes on new military undertones when the Pigs emerge victorious after a battle with the German Wolf. This becomes more explicit in the later production for the Canadian Government. A battle cry against the Depression becomes a battle cry for the fight against the fascist threat.

The skill of narration allows for the audience to be guided in their thoughts on a picture. In *Ferdinand*, narration is used to alert the audience to the contemporary situation in Spain, in *Donald’s Decision*, and the earlier *Donald’s Better Self*, the Angel and Devil provide narration to Donald, our prototype for the common American man, so that the audience is made to draw the ‘right’ conclusions from the story’s drama.

Moral supremacy is subtly dealt with in the 1930s shorts, simply through the consistent involvement of innocents. Animation also provided its own viewpoint on the morality of war. Throughout, with its numerous references to armed conflict, often making explicit reference to aerial battle and the involvement of civilian casualties, animation enforces its moral code on audience. In *Donald’s Better Self*, *What Price Porky* and *Porky’s Poultry Plant*, Porky and Donald are provoked into battle by an external threat. Donald’s ‘better self’ fights with the Devil Donald, with heavy implications of a connection to the Nazis. Porky does battle with General Quacko, a ruthless ‘ducktator’ who provokes Porky’s chickens into total war on the land, air and sea. In all of these situations of conflict, both Disney and Warner Brothers animation make the case that war under provocation is justified. In most of these cases, an innocent is also involved, insinuating that in the case where civilians are drawn into the conflict, full mobilisation is justified.

Using personality animation developed during the 1930s, the Disney and Schlesinger Studios were able to develop characters which stood for intervention against the Nazi menace: the Practical Pig, Donald Duck and

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<sup>240</sup> MHL, ‘Ideas for the South American Film Program’, Motion Picture Society for the America Records, f22, pp. 6

Porky Pig were among the first to physically take up arms against the fascist threat. These characters became 'celebrities' of the 1930s and through their actions in these animated productions, they provided their own models for social, political and military action, long before the outbreak of war. Their actions within the paradigm of the 1930s animated world allowed them to assume their propagandistic roles with ease during the Second World War. They became believable patriots, nationalists and educators.

By including caricatures of Hitler and General Franco, animation demonstrated awareness of the most dangerous figures to world peace. The image of Hitler caused fear in the animated world and the caricature of Franco sparks total war in Porky's farmyard. Disney gave his greatest villain, the Big Bad Wolf, a German accent and a swastika armband, transferring the hatred of a nation battling Depression into hatred for the Nazi state.

However, these techniques were not just utilised in the pursuit of interventionism or indeed, in directing the American people towards war with Nazi Germany and Hirohito's Japan. Using the nationalistic fervour developed through the shared experience of the Depression, these techniques were also transferred into the development of a nationalistic culture within animation based upon geography, national traditions and institutions and a shared sense of history. Upon the outbreak of the Second World War, this nationalism was channelled towards raising morale on the Home Front and in the service of fostering unity between North America and Latin America.

## **Chapter Five – Animated Nationalism 1937-1941**

In his study of American culture in the 1930s, David Eldridge has made the argument for ‘mass communication of radio, cinema and advertising forging national bonds.’<sup>241</sup> Due to the social dislocation experienced by the American people following the Wall Street Crash, the ideology of the American Dream was called into question. People sought other ways to connect with their fellow Americans. Nationalism became a ‘prominent characteristic of the changed American popular outlook.’<sup>242</sup>

Nationalism, according to theorist Yehoshua Arieli, can be defined as the ‘creation and maintenance of community life and destiny with a will and purpose expressed in the state and a unity embodied in the nation. Such unity is maintained by a system of symbols, values and notions.’<sup>243</sup> This was a concurrent trend within the production of movies in the late 1930s that held particular focus on America’s national institutions, such as Warner Brothers’ *Code of the Secret Service* (US, 1939, dir. Noel M. Smith), American history such as Selzick’s *Gone with the Wind* (US, 1939) and military strength as found within Lloyd Bacon’s *Wings of the Navy* (US, 1939). Many of these films, alongside many of the ‘interventionist’ features, for example, Mitchell Leisen’s *Arise my Love* (US, 1940) were recognised as holding overtly propagandistic messages. However, in the current literature on this topic, there has been no case made for the inclusion of animation within this particular surge of nationalism in Hollywood towards the end of the 1930s.

Walt Disney has always had a close association with American nationalism. As Stephen Fjellman has noted, the Walt Disney World and Disneyland theme parks across the globe are ‘a concentrated distillation of one version of the United States and its view of the world...a combination of the

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<sup>241</sup> D. Eldridge, *American Culture in the 1930s*, pp. 23

<sup>242</sup> A. Ekirch, *Ideologies and Utopias*, pp. viii

<sup>243</sup> Y. Arieli, *Individualism and Nationalism in American Ideology* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press) pp. 1

mythical and the real.<sup>244</sup> Disney animation and its theme parks give a representation of the United States as ‘it should have been.’<sup>245</sup> Sklar has argued that Walt Disney ‘forged the nation’s myths and dreams.’<sup>246</sup> However, this thesis takes this premise one step further and argues that this association crystallised in the years 1937 to 1941, as the United States drew closer to war. Characters that had drawn the American people together in politics and Depression, as proven in Chapter Three, came to unite the nation in national identity. Animation, much like the movies, provided a platform for the most important elements of America’s character through its productions in these years, showcasing its history, geography, national institutions and traditions. However, what is most interesting about this particular period in animation’s history is the way in which animation drew on the lessons learned from transmitting ideology through its characters, narratives and music in the early 1930s and forged a very specific character for the American national identity. These lessons channelled into the fabric of animation before the war, ideologically developing the productions to a level through which they could be utilised for propagandistic purposes during the Second World War.

### **Dis-tory: Animation celebrates America**

An article in *Fortune* magazine in 1942 entitled ‘Walt Disney: Great Teacher’ tells of Disney’s educational efforts during the Second World War. The article states that Disney’s educational efforts are ‘not only enlightening but exciting.’ It goes on to claim: ‘Enthusiasts who have seen his work in progress believe that he has set in motion nothing less than a revolution in the technique of education.’<sup>247</sup> Disney, in the article, is labelled as an ‘educator and propagandist.’ While this primarily refers to the educational films produced during the war, Disney actually started his work in the field of education before this. In Robert Spencer Carr’s memorandum of 1942, the subjects of future

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<sup>244</sup> S. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America* (Boulder, Westview Press, 1992) pp. 21

<sup>245</sup> S. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves*, pp. 31

<sup>246</sup> R. Sklar, *Movie Made America*, pp. 204

<sup>247</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, f.404, ‘Walt Disney: Great Teacher’ *Fortune* Magazine, undated article 1942



animated productions were listed. One of the primary subjects listed was History.

‘History of a hemisphere: The British made an all cartoon film called ‘Atlantic’ in which they attempted to show England’s role as coloniser and organiser of the Atlantic world... My suggestion is that we make a much better, livelier film telling the true story of the colonisation and final independence of the Western hemisphere with special emphasis on how... we Americans have always fought for our freedom.’<sup>248</sup>

However, animation was producing films referencing United States history before the outbreak of war and utilised beloved American institutions to attempt to unite the American people behind their shared history. Stephen Fjellman refers to this concept as ‘Distory’: describing it as the ‘redefinition of the past as it should have been.’ That is to say, the veneration of celebrated elements of America’s past and the simplification of its tragedies.<sup>249</sup> Disney has come under attack for the 1946 production *The Songs of the South* (US, 1946, dir. Harve Foster and Wilfred Jackson) for its glorification of slavery through the characters played by James Baskett and Hattie McDaniel.<sup>250</sup> Its later production of the historical tale *Pocahontas* (US, 1995, dir. Mike Gabriel and Eric Goldberg) also came under similar criticism for being ‘historically dubious’ and for seemingly dismissing the harsher elements of treatment Pocahontas and her tribe were subjected to by the English settlers.<sup>251</sup> However, what is not taken into account by Fjellman is the fact that this animated representation of history was already taking place as early as 1938 within Warner Brothers and Disney animation. It is impossible to escape the ideological implications of these shorts. They are presenting their own versions of historical events. While many of these do involve spoofs and gags, as was the nature of the medium, it cannot be denied that they do put forward their own interpretations of historical events.

What is more, explicit connections can be made between what happens in many of these shorts and the war time propaganda productions. This

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<sup>248</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, R.S. Carr, ‘Ideas for a New South American Film Program,’ 7 January 1942, pp. 26

<sup>249</sup> S. Fjellman, *Vinyl Leaves*, pp.

<sup>250</sup> D. Brode, *Multiculturalism and the Mouse*, pp. 53

<sup>251</sup> Ibid. pp. 265

process took place in both the Warner Brothers and Disney cartoons of this era, clearing the way for nationalistic propaganda films in the Second World War. They forged an overtly positive outlook on American traditions, forging a unity among its citizens. Complicated yet important periods of American history are praised and simplified through the medium of animation.

***Johnny Smith & Poker-huntas* (US, 1938, dir. Tex Avery)**

*Johnny Smith and Poker-huntas* is a spoof animation, based on the story of the woman Pocahontas who became a well-known figure in American history for stopping the execution of the Englishman, John Smith.<sup>252</sup> The animation loosely uses the narrative of the well-known tale as a vehicle through which to glorify elements of American history and culture. This tale is littered with many contemporary references, which were recognised by audiences of the time.

When Johnny Smith first comes over on the Mayflower voyage, as he looks to land, his first sight is of a sign which reads, 'America: Free Parking' and another which reads, 'FHA Loans.' (Fig. 1) One of the most celebrated elements of the New Deal was the Federal Housing Association. According to Edsforth, the 'FHA made mortgage lending less risky and home ownership more secure,' and opened the 'possibility of home ownership to millions of families.'<sup>253</sup> This, in combination with the fact that by the end of the animated short, Johnny Smith and Poker-huntas live 'happily ever after' in a secure home, seems to suggest the revival of the American Dream that had been lost after the Great Depression.

The America that Johnny Smith stumbles upon is a thriving metropolis with an equally thriving economy. (Fig. 2) This suggests that America, as a country, was successful in rebuilding itself and its national institutions following the depth of the Depression. While similar cartoons released within a similar timeframe such as *Porkey's Road Race* suggest elements of failure in the New Deal, this cartoon's context is a celebration of America and its history

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<sup>252</sup> See G.S. Woodward, *Pocahontas*, (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1969)

<sup>253</sup> R. Edsforth, *The New Deal*, pp. 193

and recognises the successes of the New Deal. This explicitly constitutes a political commentary.



Figs. 1 & 2 From *Johnny Smith and Poker-huntas* (US, 1938, dir. Tex Avery)

*Johnny Smith and Poker-huntas* is narrated throughout by subtitles, much like many of the war time animated shorts. These sometimes advance the narrative and on other occasions, address the audience directly. This self-awareness helps to guide the American public in their reading of the animation. For example, the short opens with a dedication to the descendents of the Mayflower voyage, reminding the audience of their ancestors. This technique is also used in a later war short entitled *Scrap Happy Daffy*. The narration serves to remind the American public that they have a shared sense of history, not just with the other members of the audience but also with the animated world. Schlesinger admitted of the short *Johnny Smith and Poker-huntas* that he was happy to ‘satirise’ American history or well-known tales that people identified with.<sup>254</sup> This created a sense of unity between audience and animator. This unity was deeply embedded in a patriotic short released the following year.

### ***Old Glory* (US, 1939, dir. Charles Jones)**

*Old Glory* was first released over the Fourth of July weekend in the United States, just months before Hitler’s invasion of Poland and Britain’s declaration of war against Germany. It remains an astonishing example of the ways in which animation could present history through its use of colour and music. It educates not only the characters within its narrative but its audience as well. The short was three hundred feet longer than the average Merrie

<sup>254</sup> ‘He’s the Father of Looney Tunes,’ *Hollywood Spectator*, Vol. 14, No. 6, 24 June 1939, pp. 11

Melody cartoon and was produced in a record nine weeks. According to an article in the *Daily Variety* of late June 1939, Schlesinger was under ‘forced steam’ from the Warner Brothers distributors to get the short out in time for the holiday weekend, doubling its patriotic impact.<sup>255</sup> The short was also only the second of Porky’s Merrie Melodies to be released in full three-strip



Fig. 3 From *Old Glory* (US, 1939, dir. Charles Jones)

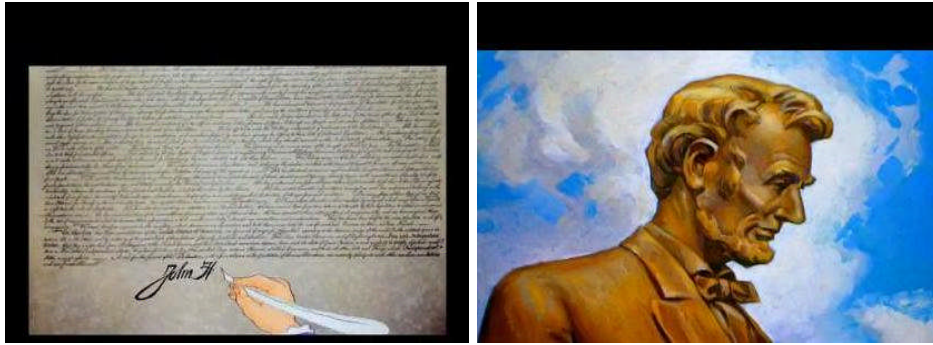
Technicolor, further emphasising its nationalistic impact as the utilisation of red, white and blue throughout is particularly effective.

The short opens on the American flag, blowing in the wind. At the foot of the flag’s pole, Porky Pig is reading a book on American history and is trying to learn his Pledge of Allegiance. However, he is struggling to remember the exact wording. Frustrated with his efforts, Porky falls asleep, throwing his book aside. Seconds later, the figure of Uncle Sam appears from the volume, and kneels down next to Porky, vowing to teach him why he needs to learn the Pledge of Allegiance. (Fig. 3) Uncle Sam confides in Porky the importance of freedom and vows that the American homeland was not always as fortunate as it is now. Porky is shown the figure of Patrick Henry and is made to listen to his famous ‘Give Me Freedom or Give Me Death!’ speech at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. While Henry calls the American people to arms, the well-known song *Yankee Doodle Went To Town* plays in the background as the focus falls to the march of the men. Next, Porky witnesses the signing of the Declaration of Independence by John Hancock (Fig. 4) while the British and American flags adorn the walls of Independence Hall. After the Liberty Bell rings out in a powerful montage sequence, Porky watches George Washington sign the United States Constitution. The key amendments flash out in bold subtitles for the audience to see. Uncle Sam explains to Porky that when George Washington signed the document, it laid the foundations for the United States democracy. Following this, Uncle Sam looks to a nearby statue

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<sup>255</sup> ‘Schlesinger Rushes Patriotic Short Out in Nine Weeks,’ *Daily Variety*, 11 June 1939, pp. 5

of Abraham Lincoln. (Fig. 5) After his lesson in American history, Porky wakes up and is able to recite the Pledge with little difficulty.



Figs. 4 & 5

From *Old Glory* (US, 1939, dir. Charles Jones)

Countless techniques are used within this short to forge an overwhelming sense of nationalism. Firstly, Technicolor plays a major role within this short. The key historical figures throughout are wearing red, white and blue. Porky himself is even sporting his patriotic colours, wearing a red and white hat, blue jumper and white trousers. A comparison to the *Three Little Pigs* at the close of the *Three Little Wolves* short should be drawn here. Colour is also used to effect in the Treasury films to be discussed in Chapter Six. Without the use of colour, the patriotic significance of *Old Glory* is completely lost.

Secondly, as mentioned in Carr's Disney memorandum, this Warner Brothers short uses history to tremendous effect to unify the American people behind their forthcoming Independence Day. Key historical figures such as George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, John Hancock and Patrick Henry are all animated within the confines of this short's narrative. They bring history them to life to give the short an educational direction. Through the use of the contemporary character, Porky Pig, history is also modernised making it appealing to adults and children alike.

Thirdly, the short also utilised another technique mentioned within the later 1942 Disney memorandum: the utilisation of animated posters. Carr writes; 'This term is used to describe those rapid fire, single scene presentations



Fig. 6 From *Old Glory* (US, 1939, dir. Charles Jones)

of disconnected ideas or tableaux.<sup>256</sup> This is used to display the importance of those amendments in the United States Constitution most at threat from the war against fascism in Europe: Freedom of Religion, Freedom of Press and Freedom of Speech.

The final technique used in this patriotic short is the animap. This is used to greater effect in the nationalist shorts in the period under examination that focus heavily on the geography of the United States, referencing its scope and natural beauty. However, it is also used within this short to ‘place’ the history in a specific geographical context. Carr’s memorandum states the animap is a ‘new, improved type. Not a flat geographic map but miniature landscapes in full colour, with tiny mountains, cities and rivers.’<sup>257</sup> While the Schlesinger Studios ‘version’ of the animap does not quite reach the proportions of the animap envisioned by Disney, the foundations for its use are undoubtedly displayed within this short on several occasions. The most effective use of the technique demonstrates the spread of democracy from East to West, as the map of the United States changes colour accordingly. (Fig. 8)

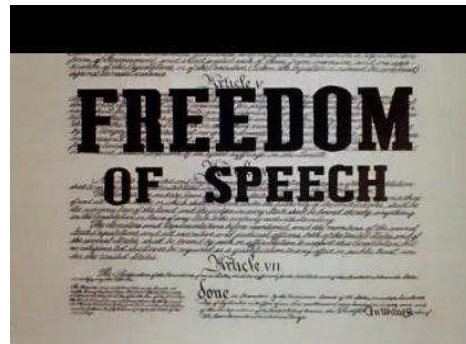


Fig. 7 From *Old Glory* (US, 1939, dir. Charles Jones)

<sup>256</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, R.S. Carr, ‘Ideas for a New South American Film Program,’ 7 January 1942, pp. 4

<sup>257</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, R.S. Carr, ‘Ideas for a New South American Film Program,’ 7 January 1942, pp. 2

*Old Glory* was an extraordinary cartoon, both for the extensive propagandistic techniques employed by the studios in order to forge a patriotic meaning and the fact that for the first time, audiences read and fully understood the consequences of its narrative. The review for the cartoon from *Motion Picture Daily* states; ‘There are no laughs in this cartoon and none are intended. It’s a lesson in the significance of the Stars and Stripes, imparted in unusual fashion with the cartoon character, Porky Pig, awakened to the struggle that achieved liberty and tolerance.’<sup>258</sup> The fact that this cartoon was also re-released during the war is a testament to the propagandistic power of the message within its narrative. The techniques used within *Old Glory* to convey its ideology fit well within the thematic content of the war time releases. *Hollywood Spectator* also illuminated the power of the message within this particular animated short. The review of the picture, which was part of a

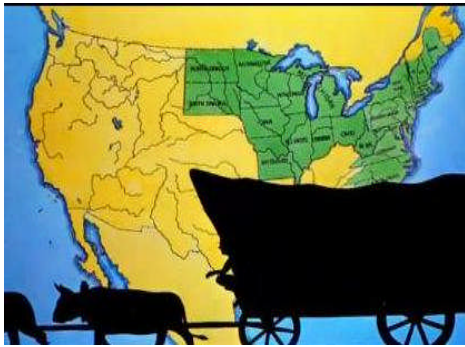


Fig. 8 From *Old Glory* (US, 1939, dir. Charles Jones)

longer article on the Schlesinger studios, recognised that, *Old Glory* has the virtue of being amusing as well as inspiring. Certainly he [Schlesinger] has turned out a picture that every man, woman and child in the country should

see.<sup>259</sup>

Following the success of *Old Glory* and capitalising on the national mood, Schlesinger announced plans to release further patriotic shorts in the *Motion Picture Daily*, proving that there was a conscious decision within the animated world to continue this nationalistic trend.<sup>260</sup> Thus, the Schlesinger Studios began to release a series of newsreel and travelogue spoofs, showcasing the best of the United States. While there is no documentary evidence available to historians to prove a conscious decision by

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<sup>258</sup> ‘Review of *Old Glory*’ *Motion Picture Daily*, Vol. 51, No. 108, 3 June 1942, pp. 9. The fact that this cartoon was re-released during the War is a true testament to its heavy patriotic impact.

<sup>259</sup> ‘Porky Pig Goes Patriotic,’ *Hollywood Spectator*, Vol. 14, No. 6, 24 June 1939, pp. 3

<sup>260</sup> ‘Cartoons Step Forward,’ *Daily Variety*, 30 October 1939, pp. 87

the Disney Studios to move in the same direction, the content of the shorts seems to suggest this was the case.

### **Idealistic Geography and its Historical Consequences**

As an early adaptation of the animap concept, many of the Disney and Warner Brothers productions during this period showcased the very best of American landscapes. Animated characters became physically involved with the land and with America's famous landmarks, placing them directly within the cultural fabric of the United States. The Schlesinger Studios became involved in making a series of travelogue spoofs, each of which demonstrate the adventure and joy citizens could get from touring around America, while the Disney shorts allowed their characters to feature as dedicated citizens of the United States, making a living wherever they could.

#### ***The Riveter*, (US, 1940, dir. Dick Lundy)**

There are many points of interest for scholars regarding the Donald Duck short, *The Riveter*. Firstly, much like the animated historical shorts released by Warner Brothers, this short seems to promote a pro-Government and pro-New Deal message. Based unequivocally in the city of New York, (we can see the Chrysler building in the background) in which a steady stream of employment through the Works Progress Administration and notably, around the time that this short was released, employment in New York was steadily increasing.<sup>261</sup> Hence despite the differences and conflict explored between the Government and the animated world during the late 1930s, this animated production seems to accept that things have improved for the average American.

Singing the popular song *Heigh Ho* from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, (US, 1937, dir. Wilfred Jackson) Donald rounds a corner on a New York street to find an advertisement for a riveter on a construction site and takes the job. The short centres on Donald as he struggles with the height at which he is

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<sup>261</sup> B. Blumberg, *The New Deal and the Unemployed*, pp. 26



being forced to work and with the endless pressures of his Boss, Pegleg Pete. Donald is, in this short, a citizen of the city of New York. This is an interesting departure from the average Disney short as most of Donald's previous encounters had been based on the West Coast.

However, he travels around the country in 1940 and 1941, looking for and finding employment, indicative of many men's employment patterns during the 1930s.<sup>262</sup> This assured identification with the figure of Donald as a citizen of the United States on both coasts of the country. An article in the *New York Times*, published a few months after this short was released emphasises the importance of the character, Donald Duck, for America.<sup>263</sup>

### ***Window Cleaners* (US, 1941, dir. Jack King)**

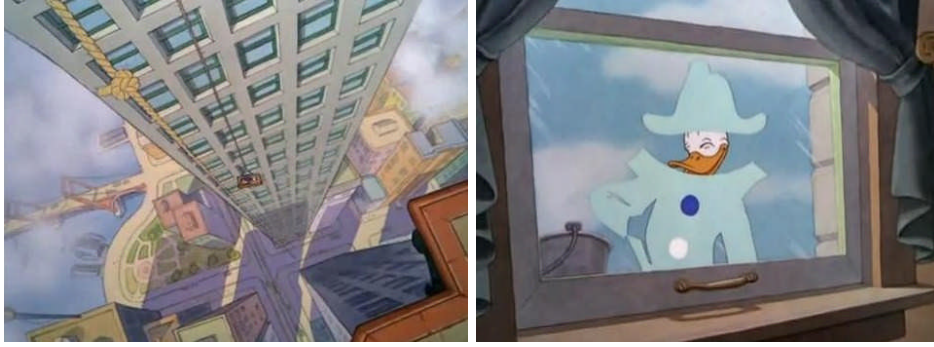
*Window Cleaners* sees Donald return to the West Coast as a window cleaner, as the short opens in a city, implicitly suggested as San Francisco by the appearance of the red, Golden Gate Bridge (Fig. 9). He is in employment, which is again suggestive of a change in the economic situation within America. Furthermore, his presence in both East and West Coast cities is indicative of the nationwide improvement in the employment situation.<sup>264</sup> Working with Pluto as his side kick, Donald is soon engrossed in his work. He further references himself as a proud of American history and as patriotic dutiful American by creating the silhouette of George Washington out of the water he uses to clean the windows. (Fig. 10) While there could also be a reference to Nelson here, Donald's pride at assuming this shape is suggestive of an American historical figure.

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<sup>262</sup>For more information on employment patterns during the Depression, see M. Wheeler, *The Economics of the Great Depression* (Kalamazoo, W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 1998) and N.E. Rose, *Put to Work: Relief Programs in the Great Depression* (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1994)

<sup>263</sup> 'The Ascendancy of Donald Duck,' *The New York Times*, 23 June 1940, pp. x4

<sup>264</sup> C. Gordon, *New Deals: business, labour and politics in America 1920-1935*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994) pp. 174



Figs. 9 & 10 From *Window Cleaners* (US, 1941, dir. Jack King)

What is also of ideological interest in this cartoon is the extent to which Donald shows his ideology changed. Just a few years earlier, he was frustrated with the politics of America, however, as war nears; it seems he is at peace with being in America, taking pride in his work in American cities and taking pride in his nationality. As each of the animated productions throughout this chapter seems to prove, there is a definitive shift in the tone of the cartoon shorts in these years, which mirrors the ideological focus of Hollywood in these years. While previously demonstrating a feeling of isolation from mainstream politics, animation unites itself with the Presidency again through its identification with the nation.

At the beginning of the Depression, Donald is lazy and an honorary member of the Idle Hour Club. As the mood of the country changes, he is persuaded into accepting this communitarian ideology, albeit reluctantly as his continuous grumbles seem to suggest. His patience runs out in *Self Control*, however, through many of these shorts, he finds his patience through a rediscovery of what it means to be American. He works hard, despite his many obstacles, and is distinctly placed within famous American cities. What is more, this short demonstrates an unbearable frustration with Pluto. Pluto is lazy, exhibiting many of the qualities Donald himself demonstrated at the beginning of the 1930s. However, Donald is consistently aggravated by Pluto's unwillingness to help him. On the other hand, Donald's willingness to work literally shapes his patriotism, a quality that we see carries through into the war years.

### ***Timber* (US, 1941, dir. Jack King)**

*Timber* features Donald wandering around rural America, looking for work. Pre-empting his involvement in uniting the nation through music during the War through anthems such as *Der Fuehrer's Face* and *The Army's Not the Army Anymore*, Donald sings *She'll be Coming Round the Mountain* when the short opens. As stated by Carr, 'music should consciously be made part of the propaganda.'<sup>265</sup> While this thesis is not proposing that this simple American folk song is propagandistic in nature, it is certainly suggestive of Donald's understanding of and identification with American folk culture.<sup>266</sup> Donald, by singing this song, becomes linked to a particular branch of American historical culture. This is also repeated during the war when he sings *Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush* in *The Vanishing Private* (US, 1942, dir. Jack King)

Donald, never able to keep out of trouble, spots some food through the window of a nearby log cabin and helps himself. Pegleg Pete, the cabin owner and lumberjack, makes Donald work to pay for his theft. Interestingly, Pete speaks with an Italian accent, perhaps indicative of the threat faced to American tradition from fascist Italy. This danger is emphasised further when during his stint of forced labour, Donald remarks that he 'might as well be in a concentration camp.' This is particularly poignant considering the number of labour camps set up in Nazi occupied Europe at the time this short was produced and the worry of further expansion evident within the American press.<sup>267</sup>

After a fight with Pete, from which he emerges victorious, Donald wanders off into the sunset, singing the song once more. Whilst engaging with American folk culture and embracing the American Dream by finding work and a livelihood as he wanders through the American countryside, Donald manages to conquer an implied fascist Italian threat, in the form of Pete. This constitutes a reassertion of the strength of American values when put against a

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<sup>265</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, R.S. Carr, 'Ideas for a New South American Film Program,' 7 January 1942, pp. 6

<sup>266</sup> K. Starr, *Endangered Dreams*, pp. 46

<sup>267</sup> 'Reich Said To Plan Five Zones in Europe' *The New York Times*, 24 June 1940, pp. 13 and '17 Polish Professors are Reported Dead: Paris Hears they were victims of Nazi concentration camp', *The New York Times*, 18 March 1940, pp. 5

foreign and conflicting ideology. Donald fights and wins his freedom after being subjected to forced labour. Democracy triumphs over dictatorship.

While the Disney shorts engage with nationalism through the employment and situation of the character, Donald, the Warner Brothers shorts showcased the best of America through travelogue spoofs, engaging with American history through its geography.

### ***Detouring America* (US, 1939, dir. Tex Avery)**

*Detouring America* is a particular celebration of all aspects of American history through its geography. At the outset, the animation declares itself completely neutral in political orientation and denies the fact that it is trying to portray any state in a positive or negative light. (Fig. 11) This naturally indicates

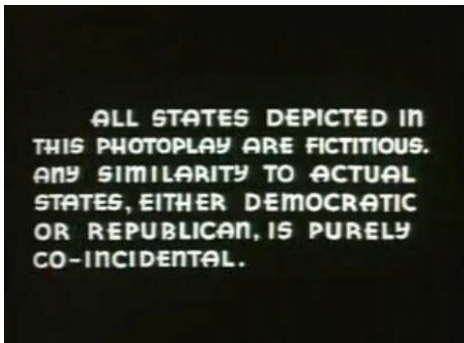


Fig. 11 From *Detouring America* (US, 1939, dir. Tex Avery)

that many of the depictions within this animation are suggestive and furthermore, alerts the audience to the potential undertones they may pick up on in the cartoon. Even if the Production Code Administration had no such problem with the content (the short was passed for exhibition without comment two weeks before its release), its directors were aware that many of its caricatures and landscapes could be considered ideologically provocative.<sup>268</sup>

The narrator opens the tour in New York, referring to its 'ever changing skyline' and its 'mighty skyscrapers.' Much like the Disney shorts, animation draws attention to the power of these cities. The 'monarch of them all' states the narrator, is the Empire State Building. The narrator attaches grandeur to such structures, making them a focus of American pride.

The short then moves to one of the nation's 'most outstanding military academies.' Given the structure of the building and its proximity to New York,

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<sup>268</sup> WBA, PCA Certificate Number No. 00179

it is likely the animation is referring to the West Point Academy.<sup>269</sup> The importance of discipline, obedience and strength are paramount in the narrator's description of this institution. In combination with the later shorts of these years referring to the build-up of the forces in the United States, the impression of outstanding military strength forged through animation is very clear. This short also provides gags surrounding the Everglades in Florida and a hitchhiking African American in Alaska. The Valley of the Giants in Oregon is also explored, referred to as one of nature's most 'breathtaking' sights. The audience also sees the Plains of Wyoming, the Indians of South Dakota and Yellowstone National Park.

Throughout this short, directed by the narrator, like many of the later 1941 shorts promoting the draft, this short celebrates the best of America by showing its most beautiful geographical assets, its awe-inspiring cities and military strength. The short, in combination with its patriotic counterpart, *Old Glory*, released only a month previously, forged a national pride within audiences. This also prompted Schlesinger to continue to make these productions as they were proving very popular.

### ***Aviation Vacation* (US, 1941, dir. Tex Avery)**

*Aviation Vacation* is a striking cartoon, particularly due to the prestige attached to American airplanes. Despite the fact that there are no insinuations of a military airforce within this short, patriotism is linked to air power from the outset. Much like *Old Glory*, red, white and blue colours surround the aircraft and the hanger it sits in. The plane, full of animated American citizens (notably people and not animals) flies through California, which is shown to be uncharacteristically cold.

The narrator, speaking to those aboard the plane as well as the audience of the cartoon, points out the faces of the 'famous Americans' carved into Mount Rushmore. (Fig. 12) The camera lingers on each of the figures for a few seconds at a time. Each of the characters, as in the later war short *Scrap*

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<sup>269</sup>See T. J. Fleming, *West Point: the Men and Times of the United States Military Academy* (New York, Morrow, 1969)

*Happy Daffy* (US, 1943, dir. Frank Tashlin) are accompanied by an American historical anthem, preserving the union of music with the medium of animation. This is even implicitly suggested as a technique in a further Disney memorandum of 1942, written by Robert Spencer Carr. He stated that ‘films could introduce these anthems, giving visual interpretations of the words.’<sup>270</sup> There is reference to a link between the music of the animation and what the audience is seeing on screen. This is, to an extent, evident here.

*Aviation Vacation* then makes an explicit reference to the election the previous year, providing the carvings of FDR and Wendell Wilkie as though they, too, were a part of Mount Rushmore. (Fig. 13) While no particular candidate is seen to be favoured, in combination with the later cartoons of this particular year, it becomes clear that the Schlesinger Studios and its characters had leanings towards Roosevelt’s policies. This short also provides a caricature of FDR, not attempted in any animated production since *Confidence*. The caricature is unequivocally positive, as it shows him laughing. It also forges the same sense of a shared politic between the animated world and the real world evident within the 1930s shorts centred around Depression America.



Figs. 12 & 13

From *Aviation Vacation* (US, 1941, dir. Tex Avery)

## What Makes America – National Traditions

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<sup>270</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, R.S. Carr, ‘Ideas for a New South American Film Program,’ 7 January 1942, pp. 6

In his cultural study *Nationalism and American Thought*, Charles Alexander highlights the ‘renewed interest in national values and traditions’ within American society in the period under study.<sup>271</sup> People became interested in what made America, *America*. This shift is referred to as a rediscovery of nationalism.<sup>272</sup> However, what is perhaps most important is that animation became a favoured medium for the celebration of these traditions. The characters within the animated world became central to this celebration. Paraded like celebrities in front of the American audience, the animated characters were acknowledged as being as recognisable as their human counterparts.

### ***Mickey’s Polo Game* (US, 1936, dir. David Hand)**

*Mickey’s Polo Game* constitutes the Disney studio’s first step into the real world. While the shorts forming political, economic and social commentary discussed in Chapter Three proved that animation was by no means immune to the pressures of Depression America, this animated short was the first to recognise that the real people also existed within the animated world, blurring the boundaries between the two. It is also the first time animated characters, en masse, are seen outside of their original contexts and thus, suggesting their existence outside of their original, fantastical narratives. (Fig. 14)

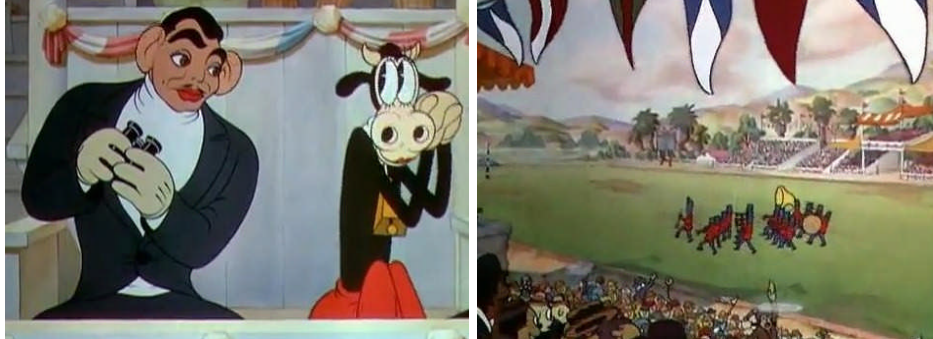
The short begins amidst a blur of red, white and blue, continuing to emphasise the power of Technicolor in transmitting a patriotic message to audiences. (Fig. 15) In combination with a brass band playing in the background, we are automatically introduced to the nationally celebrated sport of polo. Equally as celebrated are the players introduced to us on the polo team. Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, the Big Bad Wolf and Goofy (‘The Goof’) are each paraded on the field and cheered by the audience in turn. As the attention draws to the audience, we see animated Hollywood movie stars and animated characters co-existing and interacting. Their experiences of this world

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<sup>271</sup> C.C. Alexander, *Nationalism in American Thought 1920-1945* (Chicago, Rand-McNally, 1969) pp. 52

<sup>272</sup> B. Blumberg, *The New Deal and the Unemployed*, pp. 184

are shared. The war time shorts particularly capitalise on this link when acknowledging the existence of conflict within the fantastical confines of the animated world.



Figs. 14 & 15 From *Mickey's Polo Game* (US, 1936, dir. David Hand)

### ***Holiday Highlights* (US, 1940, dir. Tex Avery)**

Providing a link with a later war short *Fifth Column Mouse* (US, 1943, dir. Isadore Freleng) with the song, *Ain't we got fun*, this animated production makes further reference to the 'wonder' of living within the United States. The narrator introduces the 'well known holidays' of the year, starting with the New Year celebrations, moving to St. Valentine's Day and then notably, George Washington's birthday. We see an animated George Washington and the cherry tree fill the screen. Much like *Old Glory*, this short celebrates American history and the important figures within it. Audiences see the animated interpretation of history as we see the child George Washington picking at the cherry tree and being reprimanded by his Father.

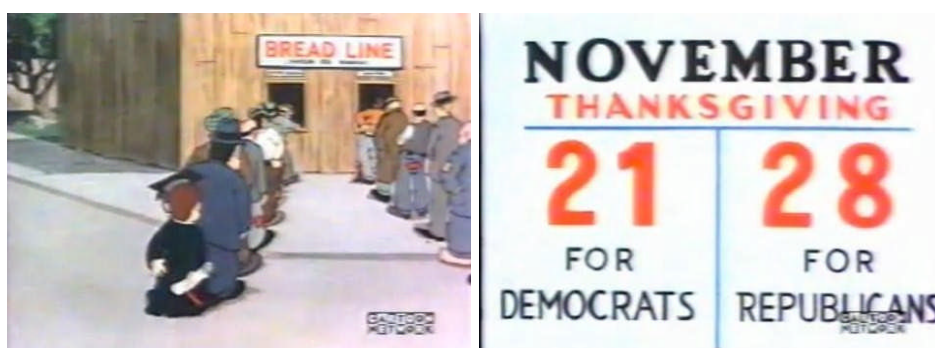
The short moves on to animate Arbor Day, Mother's Day, Graduation month (during which the new graduate goes out to join the Bread Line) (Fig. 16) This could be interpreted as an explicit gripe with the unsolved unemployment problem as Congress pulled the funding for many of FDR's public works programmes in the early 1940s as the country drifted to war.<sup>273</sup> A further political commentary is offered when the short moves to discuss Thanksgiving. A calendar displayed to the audience denotes that Republicans

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<sup>273</sup> See, in particular, T.C. Cochran, *The Great Depression and World War Two* (Glenview, Foresman, 1968) and R. Young, *Congressional Politics in the Second World War* (New York, Da Capo Press, 1972)



and Democrats are to celebrate the Thanksgiving holiday on different days, a testament to the deep political divisions evident within society during the campaigning for the 1940 election between Wilkie and FDR.<sup>274</sup> Hoping to capitalise on the retail potential of having an earlier Thanksgiving, FDR moved the holiday forward by a week. Republicans were outraged by the move and began to refer to the later Thanksgiving as the ‘Republican Thanksgiving’ and the earlier as ‘Franksgiving.’ (Fig. 17) This constituted an explicit political commentary, showing animation was willing, as early as 1940, to involve itself in the country’s political affairs. Like many of the later military shorts, there is little ambiguity in this presentation.



Figs. 16 & 17 From *Holiday Highlights* (US, 1940, dir. Tex Avery)

### ***Volunteer Workers* (US, 1941, dir. Riley Thompson)**

This short was produced by the Disney studios for the Community Chest programme.<sup>275</sup> It follows Donald as a charity collector, who is being given a hard time by the American public as he tries to collect money.

Donald, portrayed as a good will volunteer worker, happily sings his way through *Heigh Ho* while approaching various different households. (Fig. 18) The first household labels him a peddler and slams the door. The next, with a warm looking ‘welcome’ mat on the doorstep, promptly rejects him and

<sup>274</sup> ‘President to Shift ’40 Thanksgiving,’ *The New York Times*, 31 August 1939, pp. 16

<sup>275</sup>For more information on the Community Chest Organisation, see J.R. Seeley, *Community Chest: A Case Study in Philanthropy* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1957) and D.C. Hammack, *Making the Nonprofit Sector in the United States: A Reader* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1998)

whips the mat from underneath his feet. Dogs warn him off the next and he is swiftly rejected from a dozen more houses, driven dizzy by their rejections. Saddened and with sore feet, he sits down on the sidewalk where he encounters a drain worker. The worker enquires as to the reason Donald is downhearted. Donald shows him his charity papers and the worker explains the challenges of giving during these difficult times. He states that he knows the good work charities do as they helped him in his life. The worker explains he hasn't much but vows that, 'if everyone gave a little, then it would help a lot.' He gives Donald some money for his collection and is rewarded with an 'I Gave,' badge.

This is a short but powerful cartoon on the importance of the community within American society. Donald and the worker collectively acknowledge the frugality of everyday life experienced by the American people but also equally stress the importance of working together to achieve a substantial goal within society. The consequences of giving are shown through the man who converses with Donald. Thanks to the work of the community, he has a job and consequently has enough money to be able to give something back to the country that gave him so much. The patriotic nature of the deed carried out by the worker is emphasised by the red, white and blue clothes he is wearing. (Fig. 19)



Fig. 18 & 19

From *Volunteer Workers* (US, 1941, dir. Riley Thompson)

Within the simple narrative of these cartoons was couched an equally simple message: the exceptional importance of American tradition and national

cultural institutions. Animation was very much a part of these national institutions. Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse became, in this period, personalities to be celebrated alongside America's finest comedians, actors and actresses. They became symbols of national pride. The caricature of the rich and famous made them as much a part of the fanciful animated world as any member of the American audience. Such caricaturing allowed for the blurring of boundaries between the animated world and the real world. There is a shared experience evident within these cartoons prevalent in many of the war time shorts. The animated world and the real world share the same holidays, celebrate the same historical traditions and have pride in the same national institutions. This was a theme for many of the shorts released from 1938 right up until the outbreak of war. The war shorts garner patriotic spirit exploiting many of the same symbols utilised in these pre-war nationalist animated productions. Animation became both a part of the cultural fabric of America and a medium for translating it to the American public.

### **The Strength of America – Institutions of Authority**

In response to the growing threat from Europe, animation also became involved in hitherto uncharted territory. It became a part of authoritative culture and by doing so, asserted America's position in the world. This reflected a shift not just in cultural tradition but in America's foreign policy. Following the so-called 'quarantine' speech of October 1937, Roosevelt began to challenge isolationist sentiment within the country. He suggested that the nations of the world should unite and 'quarantine' the disease of 'world lawlessness.'<sup>276</sup> Just three years later, following the outbreak of war in Europe and the surrender of France in 1940, opinion polls in the United States were showing an increase from fifty per cent to sixty-four per cent in favour of peacetime conscription. While facing pressure from isolationists in Congress, Roosevelt introduced the first ever peacetime draft in United States history, passing a selective service law for all men between the ages of twenty-one and

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<sup>276</sup> M. Heale, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: the New Deal & War*, (London, Routledge, 1999) pp. 45

thirty-five.<sup>277</sup> This was swiftly followed by the introduction of the Lend-Lease scheme. Roosevelt justified Lend-Lease to the American people in a fireside chat on the 17<sup>th</sup> December 1940, stating it was 'essential' to national security. The scheme was passed in March 1941.<sup>278</sup>

This shift towards military cooperation with the Allies against the Nazi threat was directly reflected within the animated world. Animation showcased United States military strength and pride in its armed forces. Again, given the interventionist nature of these cartoons, much like those discussed in Chapter Four, it is extraordinary that these cartoons were allowed to be put into production by the Hays Office. Their commentary was explicit and militaristic in nature.

### ***The Fighting Sixty Ninth Half* (US, 1941, dir. Isadore Freleng)**

Indicative of the militaristic nature of Hollywood in the years before the war, animation eased its audiences into the arena of conflict. *The Fighting Sixty Ninth Half* does not involve the audience in the war displayed within the animated world, unlike *Meet John Doughboy*, released just six months later. However, it does suggest that the animated world is more than ready to take up arms against any external threat.

The short opens in a forest, where two ants, one red and one black, fight over an olive at a left over picnic. Unable to compromise, the ants mobilise their forces and go to war. (Fig. 20) There are many indications within this cartoon that perhaps the red forces are meant to depict the British. For example, their air force, the Royal Flying Ants (Fig. 21) seems suggestive of the RAF. The cartoon also goes behind the lines of the red ants, while the black ants are left to be the enemy.

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<sup>277</sup> R. Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy 1932-1945*, pp. 249

<sup>278</sup> S. E. Ambrose & D. Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism*, pp. 7



Figs. 20 & 21 From *The Fighting Sixty Ninth Half* (US, 1941, dir. Isadore Freleng)

In many ways, the type of warfare suggested within this short is indicative of the First World War. Trenches are built on both sides, surrounding the picnic, indicated to be a ‘no man’s land.’ The ants are told by their General to go ‘over the top’. The ant soldiers even use gas in their confrontation with the enemy. These references seem to imply that there is no real difference in the enemy faced for America in 1941, than the one faced during the First World War. When the humans return to take away the rest of the picnic, all that is left for the ants to fight over is a large slab of butter. The Generals agree to hold a peace conference to try and split the butter, but neither can agree on the way that the slab should be divided as each wants



Fig. 22 From *The Fighting Sixty Ninth Half* (US, 1941, dir. Isadore Freleng)

a bigger piece for their country. Fighting breaks out once more (Fig. 22) and the war between the two groups of ants continues. There is no resolution offered. This short seems to offer a commentary on the futility of negotiations with the Axis powers. Released following the fall of France and a few months before the invasion of the Soviet Union, it seems to suggest that fighting is sometimes the only way that a conflict can really be resolved. This was in sharp contrast to the popular mood within Congress and shows direct alignment with the cases made for further intervention in Europe by FDR during this year.

This short was viewed as politically provocative at its time of release. The *Hollywood Reporter* referred to its contents as an ‘interesting commentary on current world events.’<sup>279</sup> Again, this proves that animation was read ideologically at the time of its release. It was also read explicitly within its context. Its content was not ambiguous and became less so as the year progressed.

### ***Meet John Doughboy* (US, 1941, dir. Robert Clampett)**

*Meet John Doughboy* was released on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1941 and its timing could not have been more appropriate for the increasingly interventionist nature of Roosevelt’s foreign policies and for its poignancy both in America and in the world. Released the day after Independence Day and just a short week following Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union, this animated production constitutes an active piece of non-Government sponsored propaganda, rallying for Americans to support the war and oppose anti-draft legislation. Such is the tone of this cartoon that it would not have been out of place if released following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The cartoon opens in a movie theatre where Porky is introduced to the audience as a draftee. Porky confesses that the theatre will show them some movies full of military secrets and asks for any fifth columnists to leave the audience. Following the highly publicised speech of Charles Lindbergh declaring that the United States was not in any danger of military attack, FDR had grown increasingly wary of ‘fifth columnists’ and had become suspicious that some of Lindbergh’s supporters were, in fact, fifth columnists trying to sow domestic discord.<sup>280</sup> This was also reflected in a flow of spy movies released in Hollywood by the Schlesinger distributors, Warner Brothers, such as *Espionage Agent* (US, 1939, dir. Lloyd Bacon.)<sup>281</sup>

The curtain then falls upon an animated newsreel, which advertises America’s Defense Effort, animating the conversion of iron ore into military

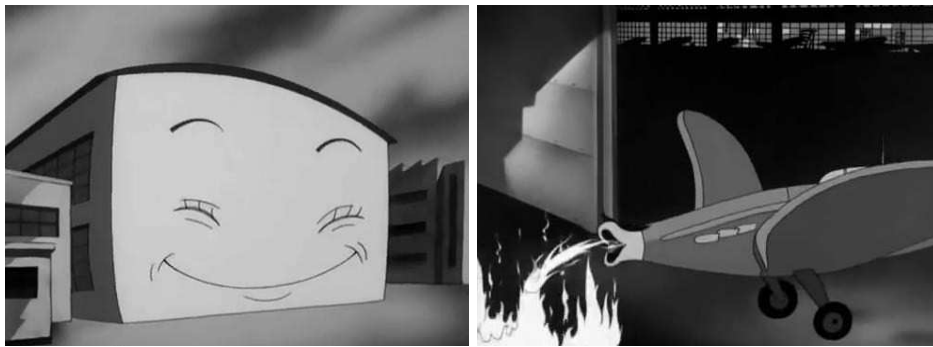
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<sup>279</sup> *Hollywood Reporter*, Vol. 6. No. 5, 5 March 1941

<sup>280</sup> R. Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, pp. 225

<sup>281</sup> B.F. Dick, *The Star Spangled Screen*, pp. 61

weapons. The narrator states the importance of air power and the production of many different types of aircraft. The aircraft hangar that houses the planes is animated, smiling at being able to play its part. (Fig. 23) The animation also refers to the study of RAF planes in American factories, making an explicit link to the Lend-Lease scheme and the ‘special relationship’ between Britain and the United States. The spitfire is one such charge, which is shown to physically spit fire. (Fig. 24) Citizen Sugar Kane is cited in the animated newspaper as saying that their ‘open door policy is responsible for the draft.’ This personification, used throughout the 1930s to allow understanding of complex concepts is used here to effect. Most of the weaponry tried and tested in this short is shown to be ‘alive.’ For example, the anti-tank gun acts like an elephant. This is again used throughout the war time shorts, proof that the blueprint for animated propaganda was in use prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor.



Figs. 23 & 24 From *Meet John Doughboy* (US, 1941, dir. Robert Clampett)

Animated men discuss their chances at being called into service. The cartoon glorifies conscription, referring to the ‘outdoor life’ and ‘regular hours.’ It even advertises that the recruits receive good meals. Describing the military equipment, the machine gun is personified into a chicken. Even horses raised in South America are mentioned, who salsa their way across the battlefield. Incidentally, many of the spoof soldiers and the gags utilised in these animated newsreel spots seem to provide a foundation upon which the character of Private SNAFU was later built. A ‘land-destroyer’ more powerful than any other weapon ever invented is revealed to be Jack Benny, driven by Rochester. This demonstrates that much like the characters of Donald Duck and Mickey

Mouse, their Hollywood colleagues in the entertainment industry were by no means immune from the seemingly inevitable fight against the Nazis. On the



Fig. 25 From *Meet John Doughboy* (US, 1941, dir. Robert Clampett)

contrary, they are happy to do their part and ‘assist’ the armed forces. On another level, this also provides proof of the interventionist nature of Hollywood. Animation vindicates the

worries raised by Gerald Nye. Giving an added edge of realism to the cartoon, more newspaper headlines are quoted.

The President is mentioned to be testing the defense strength of the United States. (Fig. 25) Not only does this ally the President with Hollywood but it distinctly separates him from the heavily influential isolationist sentiment within Congress and the America-First movement. Animation, it seems, much like the early 1930s shorts, puts its full weight behind President Roosevelt. Despite their differences concerning economic and social policy at the end of the 1930s, cartoons were happy to sing the praises of the President’s concern with the events in Europe. Moreover they were ready to rally behind America’s armed forces, despite the fact that America was not even fully involved in the war against the fascist powers. As the armed forces are, as narrated in this short, at the President’s command, the short also gives the impression of complete loyalty and obedience within the armed forces. According to the world of animation, there is no dissension within the country about their willingness to fight the war, despite the fact that the conflicts within Congress during 1941 suggested completely the opposite.

The short then moves to an explicit political commentary, urging the audience for action. For this, it uses the symbolic power of the Statue of Liberty. The narrator asks the audience, ‘Are we safe from air attack?’ while displaying a picture of the skyline in Manhattan, including Lady Liberty. (Fig. 26) The camera moves into the picture, animating the action within the shot. Bombers move towards New York, ready to attack but Lady Liberty shoots



them down before they take action. ‘Why isn’t something being done?’ the narrator asks the audience.

This sequence is astounding in the tone of its political provocation. Using the power of the many shorts released in 1939 and 1940, showcasing the importance and symbolism of America’s landmarks, this technique of promoting nationalism is then drawn into the military arena to astounding effect. Given the number of times that the Statue of Liberty is utilised in the war time shorts as a symbol for the United States of America (see Chapters Six and Seven) its use here is particularly important.

It proves unequivocally that animation was using these symbols before war even broke out. In Robert Spencer Carr’s memorandum of January



Fig. 26 From *Meet John Doughboy* (US, 1941, dir. Robert Clampett)

1942, he refers to the need for the creation of an animated character to symbolise America, stating that this figure-head should be a ‘cross between Lady Liberty and the Virgin Mary.’<sup>282</sup> This icon has already been created by 1941. The fact that Lady Liberty is also the first to take up arms against the enemy bombers also highlights the moral righteousness of the fight against Nazism.

Despite the power of this symbolism, there is much to be said for the use of narration in this short. Questions are directed explicitly towards the audience, provoking them into action. The power of narration is also mentioned in Carr’s memorandum and is used extensively during the war time shorts but here, it is used *before* the attack on Pearl Harbor. The audience are told how to interpret the images they are seeing. Animation allows no room for ambiguity. This makes it all the more astounding that the Production Code

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<sup>282</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, R.S. Carr, ‘Ideas for a New South American Film Program,’ 7 January 1942, pp. 37

Certificate for *Meet John Doughboy* is dated 11<sup>th</sup> July 1941, nearly a week after its premiere<sup>283</sup>.

### ***Rookie Revue* (US, 1941, dir. Isadore Freleng)**

*Rookie Revue* also spares no ambiguity in its overall interventionist message. Released just months after Nye's 'witch hunt' through Hollywood due to the explicit political undertones of its live action feature films, this animated short can be read simply as an animated advertisement for the army. It opens with a

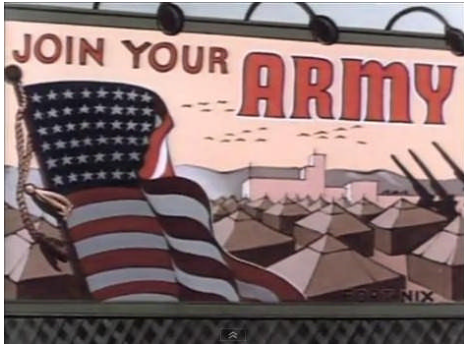


Fig. 27 From *Rookie Revue* (US, 1941, dir. Isadore Freleng)

billboard and the audience is then led to follow the lives of the recruits at 'Fort Nix', described as typical of the army camps throughout the United States.

(Fig. 27) Like its predecessor, *Meet John Doughboy*,

the explicit political undertones of such a short should not be underestimated. *Rookie Revue* advertises

joining the army as being an exceptional, patriotic thing for the average American to do. It is advocating intervention in the war in Europe. While its narrator does not offer the audience a rhetorical question, it does seem to provide the answer: joining the army to fight in case America's shores are invaded and its ideals under attack. These themes are again prevalent in the war time animation. Lady Liberty in particular is used to convey the importance of American ideals when put against the fascist threat in the Disney short *Der Fuehrer's Face*, (US, 1943, dir. Jack Kinney)

Army life is followed through with a series of gags throughout. However, what is most provocative about this short is the appearance of a cartoon character that became very famous during the war. While many jokes are included as to the training of army recruits (many of which were re-used during the SNAFU series) the overriding impression is of extreme military strength. The short showcases the various different types of bomb, anti-aircraft

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<sup>283</sup> WBA, Production Code Certificates, Box No. 00179

and anti-tank guns and airplanes utilised by the military. The ideal soldier is also pitted against the useless army recruit, who has his unnamed debut within this short. We see the undeniable blueprint for the army recruit Private Snafu. (Figs. 28 & 29)



Figs. 28 & 29

From *Rookie Revue* (US, 1941, dir. Isadore Freleng)

### Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, by the time America became involved in the Second World War, if not as early as 1938, animation was being read ideologically. Disney, Schlesinger and their captivated audience recognised the power of the animated medium to carry messages about what was going on in society. While Disney had an interest in the power and symbolism of his characters, for example in an 1939 interview he spoke of Mickey Mouse as being symbolic of American independence, Schlesinger did not particularly care for the content of his productions. All that concerned him was that his animation was successful, popular, and made money.<sup>284</sup> However, he changed the content of his shorts to adhere to audience response and demand. One cannot ignore the fact that the audience responded positively to these changes. The highest grossing film of 1938 was the Disney full length animated feature *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. People identified with the messages within Disney animation and as observed by *Hollywood Spectator* in 1939, animation was an expanding medium, growing in popularity every year noted by the increased orders for Schlesinger productions in 1939.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>284</sup> 'An Interview with Walt Disney,' *Fortune Magazine*, 1 May 1939, pp. 46 and 'Interview with Robert Clampett,' *Funnyworld*, Vol. 12, (1970)

<sup>285</sup> 'Schlesinger Came to Town,' *Hollywood Spectator*, June 24 1939, pp. 11

What also seems to be of note in these particular animated shorts is the extent to which animation and the real world were developing a shared experience of life. This would be important during the war, as each world experienced the hardships of the conflict together. However, animation recognised and celebrated America's proudest achievements in these years. The Disney Studios and the Schlesinger Studios ensured that the best of America was recognised in the animated world. Many of these productions were narrated, proving the ideological power of narration referred to by Robert Spencer Carr during the War. They told their audiences exactly how to feel about what they were seeing on screen.

The techniques in which animation channelled patriotic feeling within society during the later years of the 1930s were invaluable during the War. They were a combination of the visual markers shown in the early 1930s productions and the sophisticated ideological narrative of the social and economic commentary seen in the mid-1930s productions. They also demonstrated the international awareness of the late 1930s, actively campaigning for intervention. However, this intervention was couched within a nationalist rhetoric banished from mainstream Hollywood features.

Many were written down and referred to in Carr's 1942 memorandum, proving that in fact, animation had already begun interpreting American society for its audiences and thus forging a particular political, social and economic ideology through its productions.

## Chapter Six – Animation at War

### Disney, Warner Brothers and the United States Government 1941-1943

‘Well you want to get this message over,’ Walt said. ‘I’ve given you Donald Duck. At our studio, that’s the equivalent of giving you Clark Gable out of the MGM stable. Donald Duck is known by the American public. He’ll open doors to the theatres. They won’t be running a cartoon of Mr. Taxpayer; they’ll be running a Donald Duck cartoon.’<sup>286</sup>

Animation was instantly mobilised for war. Just one day after the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor, Walt Disney received a call from his studio manager, informing him that five hundred army troops were moving onto the Disney soundstage at Burbank. They stayed there for eight months.<sup>287</sup> By the end of 1942, over seventy-five per cent of Disney’s film output was for government work, making him the primary Hollywood contributor towards government training and propaganda films.<sup>288</sup> By the end of 1943, this number reached ninety-five per cent. From his work for the National Film Board of Canada, Disney had proved he could utilise animation for the purposes of education. Each of the films he had made in contribution, *Stop That Tank* (US, 1942, no director’s credit), an instructional film on the anti-tank rifle, *Four Methods of Flush Riveting* (US, 1940, no director’s credit) and *The Thrifty Pig* (US, 1941, no director’s credit) had all been enormously successful, receiving even the accreditation of well-known documentary filmmaker, John Grierson.<sup>289</sup> After the Japanese attack, the American Government was quick to capitalise on the effectiveness of the medium of animation as a channel for persuasion and for emphasising the importance of patriotism and sacrifice in the wartime climate. As Sells has argued, ‘The US State recognised the potential for ‘direct propaganda films couched in the simplicity of animation.’<sup>290</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> B. Thomas, *Walt Disney: An American Original*, pp. 181

<sup>287</sup> N. Gabler, *Walt Disney: The Biography*, pp. 381

<sup>288</sup> Ibid. Gabler, pp. 401

<sup>289</sup> Accredited documentary filmmaker John Grierson was appointed as First Commissioner of the National Film Board of Canada in 1939. For more information on his position and the films produced for Canada during the war, see G. Evans, *John Grierson and the National Film Board: the politics of wartime propaganda* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1984) and D.B. Jones, *Movies and Memoranda: an interpretative history of the National Film Board of Canada*, (Ottawa, Canadian Film Institute, 1981)

<sup>290</sup> E. Bell, L. Haas & L Sells (eds.) *From Mouse to Mermaid*, pp. 5

Disney was among the first to be approached. The day after Pearl Harbor, a navy official contacted the Disney studio, offering a contract for twenty films on aircraft and warship identification at a total cost of ninety thousand dollars.<sup>291</sup> The Department of Agriculture, too, had offered Disney a contract for a film promoting Lend-Lease and even Frank Capra enlisted Disney's help to make the animated excerpts for his *Why We Fight* series.<sup>292</sup>

The first animated film to be made under Government instruction after the United States declared war against the Axis powers was not in fact, Disney, but made by the Schlesinger Studios who distributed through Warner Brothers. While the Donald Duck short, *The New Spirit* was the first to be released, Schlesinger's *Any Bonds Today?* (US, 1942, dir. Robert Clampett) was finished just a week after the attack on Pearl Harbor. An article in *Daily Variety* dated the 14th of December 1942 reported, 'Before the war began, Schlesinger pointed out he put Bugs Bunny in *Any Bonds Today* – an animated short for the Treasury bond drive and Secretary Morgenthau had written a letter of thanks.'<sup>293</sup> Schlesinger mentions the desperation of the animated studios to acquire government work 'along lines being pursued by Walt Disney.'<sup>294</sup>

However, the issue at the forefront of the studio's production was *how* exactly they would translate their entertaining animated medium into a vehicle for the transmission of ideals. How could animation be used for the purposes of propaganda? The techniques utilised by the Disney Studio, and by Warner Brothers, found their origins in the films of the 1930s. It is through comparison of the pre-war and war material that these similarities come to light.

### **Taxes to Beat the Axis**

#### ***The New Spirit* (US, 1942, dir. Wilfred Jackson & Ben Sharpsteen)**

While FDR himself had little interest in the systematic use of propaganda, Secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau fronted the

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<sup>291</sup> M. Barrier, *Hollywood Cartoons: American Animation in its Golden Age*, pp. 368

<sup>292</sup> N. Gabler, *Walt Disney*, pp. 388

<sup>293</sup> *Daily Variety*, 14 December 1942, pp. 7

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*

campaign to persuade Americans to help finance the war.<sup>295</sup> The week of the attack on Pearl Harbor, John P. Sullivan, the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury, contacted Disney to make a film to encourage Americans to pay their income taxes. Due to the fact that the first set of payments for the film were due on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March 1942, the Disney studio was given the deadline of the 15<sup>th</sup> of February, allowing the staff only a month to write the script, compose the music and complete the animation.<sup>296</sup> Disney agreed to produce the cartoon for eighty thousand dollars. Wilfred Jackson, the short's director remembered the pressures the studio was under to produce the short in an interview with Michael Barrier in 1978. He stated;

‘Our little crew working on the picture pitched in that first day and each of us kept on working until he was too tired to work anymore. Then he went home to sleep, whatever time of whatever day it was, and whenever he woke up he came back to work again, whatever time of the day, or night, of whatever day that might be. This caused some interesting problems for a director, who was also working that way, in coordinating the efforts of the various artists and technicians who actually made the cartoon. We had to invent a completely new approach, for us at Disney’s—a production routine that would save every minute possible in each step on the way to the final answer print.’<sup>297</sup>

As it turned out, the Studios needn’t have worried. *The New Spirit* was produced in record time and as Disney story liner, Richard Huemer recalled, to great praise. He remembered ‘[Morgenthau] was very pleased when we took the boards to him, very pleased. I remember that we tried to do it in the Baby Weems technique, limited animation. We actually ran Baby Weems for Morgenthau and he just shook his head and said, ‘No, I want the Blue Plate special.’ He wanted full animation. Which he finally got.’<sup>298</sup> Disney boasted to the Treasury when the short was finally turned in mid-January that the turnaround on *The New Spirit* was the fastest in Disney history for an animated short and in turn, they had received the fastest ever service from Technicolor.<sup>299</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> J.M.Blum, *V was for Victory*, pp. 17

<sup>296</sup> N. Gabler. *Walt Disney*, pp. 384

<sup>297</sup> ‘Interview with Wilfred Jackson’, *Funnyworld*, No. 19, 1978

<sup>298</sup> AFIA, Interview with Richard Huemer, pp. 116

<sup>299</sup> R. Shale, *Donald Duck Joins Up*, pp. 28

Audiences were immediately drawn into the patriotism of the cartoon by the memorable theme song, *Yankee Doodle Spirit*, written by Oliver Wallace. Wallace would later go on to write the immensely popular *Der Fuehrer's Face* another theme tune to the Oscar winning short by the same name. The music plays over the opening credits, immediately drawing the audience into the musical foray of the animated world. From their experiences in the Depression era cartoons, it is clear that the Disney studios had learned the power of music. Robert Spencer Carr was placed as head of the Walt Disney Training Films Unit by Disney himself in March 1941 and was subsequently the lead contact at the studio for the films made by Government contract.<sup>300</sup> In

his memorandum on Government work, dated January 1942, during the production period for the Treasury short, he wrote of the importance of a musical score; '[Songs] are counted on to help the film short subjects

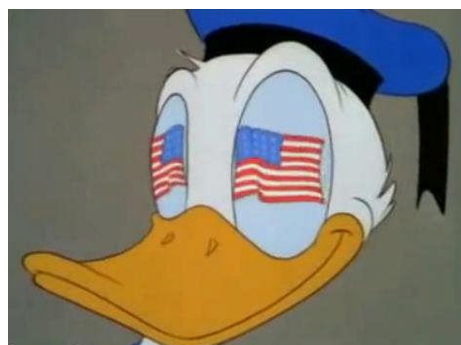


Fig. 1 From *The New Spirit* (US, 1942, dir. Wilfred Jackson & Ben Sharpsteen

suggested. The idea here is that the music track on all these pictures should not be merely appropriate music – but should consciously be made part of the propaganda.<sup>301</sup> This was a conscious decision by the Disney Studios and evidently was used in *Three Little Wolves* to foster unity after the Pigs victory over the Wolf as we hear *Yankee Doodle Went to Town* over their closing march as well as the well-known rallying cry for external enemies, 'Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf.' After the song plays on the radio, Donald valiantly salutes his wireless and we see the American flag shining in both of his eyes. Disney makes use of colour throughout the short, much like Warner Brothers in *Old Glory*, to emphasise the importance of the red, white and blue of the flag. (Fig. 1)

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<sup>300</sup> N. Gabler, pp. 383

<sup>301</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, f22, R.S. Carr, 'List of Suggested Subjects,' pp. 6



What is also of interest in this cartoon is the reappearance of the wireless. The last encounter Donald Duck had with his radio ended in violence, as Donald was frustrated with its 'advice' and smashed it to pieces. From *Self Control* (US, 1938, dir. Jack King), the audience immediately has an association with Government in Donald cartoons where the wireless is shown.

Naturally, this stems from Roosevelt's fireside chats but also from the wartime advertising and newsreels on the radio. In this cartoon, the wireless plays Government as well, however, Donald shows a change in his character. There is patience and willingness in his demeanour now the country is at war and he is willing to listen. Much like *Self Control*, Donald engages in a dialogue with the voice on the radio, which states that 'our very shores have been attacked.' Donald is outraged, and throwing his hat on the floor, exclaims,



Fig. 2 From *The New Spirit* (US, 1942, dir. Wilfred Jackson & Ben Sharpsteen)

'That is not right!' After being told that he is needed by his country, Donald quickly retrieves his stash of weaponry and gets ready to attack. (Fig. 2) The radio tells Donald that as a patriotic American, there is something he can do

to help his country. He does not need to fight, but he does need to pay his income taxes. At first, Donald is reluctant and does not see why it is important but after hearing the clever tag line for the short, 'Taxes to beat the Axis,' he is more than willing to pay his way.

The short then takes on many of the traits of Disney's earlier instructional films from before the war. Such ideas originated in the animation of the 1930s. For example, the animated mortgage roll in *Porky's Poppa* seems relevant here. Difficult and daunting prospects for the American audience are given animated form. This animated short simplifies a difficult and complicated process. In *The New Spirit*, the stamp, accounting pad and pen are all animated and help Donald to complete his income tax form. Even the mailbox that Donald rushes past when he is going to post his form is animated. However, moved by the 'new spirit,' Donald rushes to hand deliver

his income tax form and cheque to Washington. We also see a more developed version of Carr's 'animap,' here. These were seen in primitive form with the nationalist location shots of the late 1930s cartoons and in the patriotic Warner

Brothers short, *Old Glory*. (Fig. 3)



Fig.3 From *The New Spirit* (US, 1942, dir. Wilfred Jackson & Ben Sharpsteen)

*The New Spirit* then moves to a darker montage sequence, in which the voice from the radio transforms into a more general narrator. We see the chimney of a munitions factory chirp

out steam. Similar to the early 1930s cartoons, anthropomorphism is utilised to great effect here. These dull

mundane objects associated with the munitions industry are transformed into animated creatures and are thus made more endearing to the American public.

The chimney even wears Uncle Sam's hat. (Fig. 4) We see the guns produced

in these factories used against enemy ships. However, animation uses simple

symbolism from the early 1930s

cartoons to deliver these messages. For

example, no caricature or enemy is

utilised at this stage for the Japanese.

Only their flag is used to represent their

nation. Interestingly, there were no

plans for an ideological treatment of the

Japanese nation. The primary source

documents simply suggest that Nazism

as an ideology was the only political system that would come under direct

scrutiny from Disney's animation. The narrator of the short also makes

reference to the threat from the air, naming them the 'birds of prey.'

There is an allusion here to the interventionist shorts of the late 1930s, which portrayed

threats to the animated characters as birds from the air. Even the menace from

under the sea is animated. The Nazi U-Boats are made to look like great white

sharks.



Fig. 4 From *The New Spirit* (US, 1942, dir. Wilfred Jackson & Ben Sharpsteen)

The short concludes with a slow pan to the sky, in which the American flag is emblazoned in the clouds, associating the United States with moral righteousness and to a certain extent, heaven. This association was also made during the cartoons of the 1930s, particularly evident in the battle for Donald's conscience that took place in *Donald's Better Self* and the more potent, *Donald's Decision*. The Angel embodied the spirit of the United States and the Devil was associated with Nazi Germany, or in the case of this short, the Axis powers.

*The New Spirit* is an astonishing cartoon and in many respects, can be seen as an amalgamation of all of the techniques used in the 1930s shorts to convey ideology: music, colour, Donald's character, animaps and anthropomorphism. The subtlety of ideological narrative, however, is reserved for the later propagandistic shorts. *The New Spirit* was an incredibly effective cartoon.<sup>302</sup> As Gabler states, 'By one estimate, over thirty-two million Americans eventually saw the film at nearly twelve thousand theatres and of these viewers, according to a Gallup poll, thirty-seven per cent said that the film had had an effect on their willingness to pay taxes and eighty-six per cent felt that Disney should make shorts for the government on other subjects.'<sup>303</sup> This statistic in itself proves that animation was viewed as an effective medium for propaganda by the American people. The trade press review of *The New Spirit* even seems to recognise the techniques used by animation in this short in order to convey meaning. The review states that the short 'serves its purpose well,' and adds that 'Colour, music and entertainment combine to convey the idea with graphic effect.'<sup>304</sup> Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* described the film as 'the most effective of the morale films yet released by the Government.'<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> Congress was unfortunately not receptive to the film. John Taber of New York stated publicly before the House, 'They have hired him to make a moving picture that is going to cost \$80,000 to persuade people to pay their income taxes. My God! Can you think of anything that would come nearer to making people hate to pay their income tax than the knowledge that \$80,000, that should go for a bomber, is to be spent for a moving picture to entertain people?'

<sup>303</sup> N. Gabler, *Walt Disney*, pp. 385

<sup>304</sup> *Motion Picture Daily*, Vol. 51, No. 20, 29 January 1942, pp. 4

<sup>305</sup> B. Crowther, 'Animated Colour Film Used to Show New Tax Program,' *The New York Times*, 27 January 1942, pp. 25

The American people were thus incredibly receptive to animated propaganda and yet the same techniques were used to convey ideology in the 1930s. The only thing that had changed was the fact that America was now at war.

One who was not happy with the finished product was Disney himself. As Wilfred Jackson recalled, 'I do not believe I have ever seen Walt so completely frustrated when viewing one of the cartoons I directed for him.'<sup>306</sup> The animation in *The New Spirit* fell far short of the quality he was used to delivering in his productions. By his own admission, after spending too long on *Pinocchio* and *Fantasia*, he had to concede that the war time productions worked to a different quantity and quality scale than his peace time productions. His animation was not going to be perfect. Disney also lost an enormous amount of money making the film. As he explained to *Motion Picture Daily* after the 'Treasury short's premiere, '[At] Radio City Music Hall, the booking on one of the regular short subjects had been reduced from two weeks to one to make room for the income tax short. The same thing is happening all over the country, with the result that about fifty thousand dollars in bookings will be lost completely.'<sup>307</sup> He also lost money in the production of extra prints of the film and through all the overtime put in by his staff to get the film out to their tight schedule.

While seemingly bitter about the costs of the production at the time, Disney later recounted to Hollywood reporter, Hedda Hopper that he 'didn't expect to [receive full payment.]' He explained, 'We were in war and I wanted to do what I could. The guys who went to battle were lucky to come out with their lives. This was war – this was something we could do and we did it.'<sup>308</sup>

### ***Any Bonds Today?* (US, 1942, dir. Robert Clampett)**

Donald Duck was not the only cartoon character to get involved in campaigning for the 'Treasury. Bugs Bunny first appeared in Schlesinger's

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<sup>306</sup> W. Jackson, 'Letter on the New Spirit,' *Funnyworld*, (1978)

<sup>307</sup> *Motion Picture Daily*, Vol. 51, No. 28, 10 February 1942

<sup>308</sup> MHL, Hedda Hopper Papers, f. 599, 'Interview with Walt Disney,' 19 January 1962

cartoons as early as 1938 with the popular Warner Brothers character Porky Pig.<sup>309</sup> He was first sketched by animator Ben Hardaway and later appeared with adversary, Elmer Fudd in *Elmer's Candid Camera*. (US, 1940, dir. Charles Jones) He took on his more popular form as late as 1940.<sup>310</sup> While Bugs Bunny's personality evolved far too late for him to capture the imagination of the American people in Depression, unlike his animated predecessor, Porky Pig. Bugs, much like Donald Duck, quickly became a star in his own right. Steve Schneider describes this progression as running alongside Warners' take on personality animation as it evolved 'to a different and eminently hipper level.' He argues, 'The turnabout could not have been more extreme: where cartoons had been soft and frolicsome, Warners' made them hard and brassy and confrontational.'<sup>311</sup> However, it was exactly this confrontational style which made Bugs Bunny the perfect host for a war bond cartoon.

Unlike the dialogue with the 'Government' evidenced in *The New Spirit, Any Bonds Today?* capitalises on an explicit relationship between Bugs and the audience and is thus able to build on foundations of the 1930s cartoons to make a direct connection to the audience. The self-awareness evident in the Schlesinger animated shorts of the 1930s that we witness in *Milk and Money*, *Porky's Poppa* and even in the early politicised Bosko cartoons such as *Bosko in Person*, is used to great effect in this war time animation to create a new dynamic.<sup>312</sup> Unlike the Disney shorts, these characters could be blunt in their patriotic pleas. It was the way that they had been developed.

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<sup>309</sup> L. Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, pp. 241

<sup>310</sup> See *A Wild Hare* (US, 1940, dir. Tex Avery)

<sup>311</sup> S. Schneider, *That's All Folks*, pp. 21

<sup>312</sup> M. Cohen, 'Warners Revisited: Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies,' *The Velvet Light Trap*, Vol. 15, pp. 36. While this article does discuss the self awareness evident in Warner Brothers cartoons, there is no reference to the War. Evidently this has been excluded from the current scholarship.



Fig. 5 From *Any Bonds Today?* (US, 1943, dir. Robert Clampett)

However, for all of the differences in the characteristic approach to the war bond cartoon, *Any Bonds Today* and *The New Spirit* utilise many of the same techniques. Exploiting the impact of American history used in *Old Glory*, Bugs walks toward the audience with a backdrop of George Washington hoisting the American flag through the clouds.

Similar to the closing scene of *The New Spirit*, the idea of the United States representing moral righteousness through the power of religious imagery is exercised. (Fig. 5) Without any need for introductions, Bugs bluntly tells the audience that the ‘tall man with the high hat will soon be coming down your way.’ He then puts on Uncle Sam’s hat and begins to dance. He continues with a musical interlude, singing *Any Bonds Today?* Again, similar to *The New Spirit*, this short uses music to similar effect as Bugs launches into a musical rendition of the Irving Berlin song *Any Bonds Today?* As stated by Carr, music is of the utmost importance in animation and for arguably the first time, Warner Brothers utilises an explicitly Disney technique in order to convey ideology specifically linked to animation. Previously, the Warner Brothers cartoons only utilised songs from Warner Brothers’ films.<sup>313</sup> Toward the end of the cartoon, Bugs slips into a performance of *Any Stamps Today*, as Al Jolson. While the reason for the parody is unknown, especially given Al Jolson was considered a Hollywood ‘has been’ by the time of the war, audiences at the time did not mind the racial stereotyping evident in this cartoon and in fact, responded well to its overall message.<sup>314</sup> The cartoon later includes Porky Pig, dressed in naval uniform, alongside Bugs and Elmer Fudd (in an army uniform) all singing the rest of the song together, asking the American audience to ‘buy their share of freedom,’ against a staged backdrop of bombers and naval ships. (Fig. 6)

<sup>313</sup> L. Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic* pp. 220. The song *Any Bonds Today?*, later featured in the 1946 Paramount musical comedy *Blue Skies*, starring Bing Crosby.

<sup>314</sup> *Hollywood Reporter*, 1 May 1942, pp. 550

*Any Bonds Today?* should be noted for employing the patriotic techniques of the Warners cartoons of the late 1930s and early 1940s discussed in Chapter Five through its use of colour, American institutions and American history. Noting the extensive effect these techniques had upon the national mindset of the American people, Clampett connects these patriotic markers to the animated world as carried out in *Old Glory*.



Fig. 6 From *Any Bonds Today?* (US, 1943, dir. Robert Clampett)

However, there is a subtle difference between the integration of the cartoon characters into the battlefield which is of interest here. While Donald involves himself directly in the war effort by filling out his tax form and marching over to Washington, the Warner Brothers cartoon characters, Bugs, Porky and Elmer simply ‘put on a show’ to the American people regarding *their* involvement in the war. This does again, highlight the differences in animation techniques used by the different studios. Warner Brothers characters remain self-consciously animated, they are not *real* and in this war time setting, do not yet exist as characters *at* war. However, as the conflict continues, Warner Brothers integrate the Disney style of character involvement into their productions to create a very real connection between the animated world and the real world.

### ***Spirit of '43* (US, 1943, dir. Jack King)**

Despite the conflict surrounding payment for the first Treasury film, *The New Spirit*, Disney was approached to construct its sequel, *Spirit of '43* within six months.<sup>315</sup> While he was opposed to reusing footage from its predecessor, Morgenthau and Lowell Mellett, head of the domestic branch for the Bureau of Motion Pictures only agreed to give Disney twenty thousand dollars to make some new scenes to be tagged onto the beginning of *The New Spirit*. However, it is in these new scenes that we can see *explicitly* the ways in

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<sup>315</sup> R. Shale, *Donald Duck Joins Up*, pp. 34

which the ideological techniques used in sequences of the 1930s are used again in wartime animation.

The short opens on the chimneys for the munitions factories audiences witnessed in *The New Spirit*. However, the camera then pans to Donald, who is busy counting dollar bills in his hands after having just received his wage. The narrator then tells us that in the mind of the average worker, two separate personalities live side by side. Out of midair, a thrifty Scotsman (which interestingly provided the prototype for the later animated character Scrooge McDuck) tells Donald to save his money. However, Donald's money literally burns a hole in his pocket and he is tempted into spending it by 'The Spendthrift.' This character is simply a Donald Duck dressed in expensive clothing. This 'version' of Donald puts his arm around his real life double and takes him to the 'Idle Hour Club,' where posters tell him to relax and spend his money. (Fig. 7) While Donald is contemplating how to spend his money, the Scotsman pulls him away from the Idle Hour Club and presents him with a calendar, brandishing the date 'March 15<sup>th</sup>' – the deadline for income taxes. (Fig. 8) The calendar then presents all subsequent deadlines for payment of American income taxes. The narrator puts the need for extra taxes down to 'Hitler and Hirohito.' Noticeably, the enthusiastic fervour of wartime Donald felt during *The New Spirit* has disappeared. 'Taxes are higher than ever before,' notes the narrator. The excuse given is simple but appropriate for the time at which the short was released as the Allied forces were still on the North African offensive.



Figs. 7 & 8

From *Spirit of '43* (US, 1943, dir. Jack King)



The Scotsman Donald asks the real Donald if he ‘wants to forget our fighting men?’ to which Donald is outraged and replies, ‘No, Sir!’ The spendthrift continues to tempt Donald away from the ‘correct’ path and the two literally fight over Donald’s conscience until the spendthrift tumbles into the ‘Idle Hour Club.’ The ‘camera’ pauses and the swing doors of the club are revealed as the Nazi swastika. (Fig. 9) Startled, Donald then looks towards the Scotsman Donald, who has crashed into a wall, revealing the American flag. Donald contemplates his choices as narrated, ‘Spend for the Axis or save for Taxes?’ Disney also transforms the spendthrift into a comic Donald Duck version of Hitler with a swastika tie, black hair and short black moustache. The figure is also smoking a cigar, the smoke clouds from which also spiral into swastikas. (Fig. 10) Donald walks up to the spendthrift Hitler and hits him back into the Idle Hour Club, leaving a ‘V’ sign outside the door where the swastika once was. This was associated with the ‘V for Victory’ campaign throughout the United States.



Figs. 9 & 10 From *Spirit of '43* (US, 1943, dir. Jack King)

The key concept of this cartoon is the battle for Donald’s conscience. This conflict, between good and evil, morally right and morally wrong is taken directly from the 1930s cartoons, also featuring Donald Duck. *Donald’s Better Self* and *Donald’s Decision*, both released before the United States was at war, and indeed, *Mickey’s Pal Pluto* reference this fight over Donald, or in the case of this cartoon, the average United States citizen.

Animation personifies these ideals, the spendthrift is transformed into a Nazi, Scotsman Donald is transformed into democracy, and the sway of Donald’s own ideology is reflected in his eyes which brandish a swastika and a United States flag in this short. The concept of the battle between good and

evil within the conscience of a cartoon character is played out in a Government propaganda cartoon. Its purpose was to persuade the American people to pay their taxes. This was a tried and tested technique to convey ideology. In the early 1930s, in the Pluto cartoon of similar storyline, it was used to convey the differences between the 'selfish' 1920s ideology of individualism and the 'selfless' ideology of FDR's new America: community. As the ideological premise of these cartoons changed, so too did the associations made with the Devil and Angel characters. The Devil becomes a smoking truant, an aggressive Nazi and then is transformed into Hitler, cast as the ultimate Disney villain. It is also of interest that 'Hitler' Donald smokes, which is exactly what the devil Donald in *Donald's Better Self* tries to get him to do while he is off school.

Historians should also note the reference to the Idle Hour Club. In the cartoon *The Wise Little Hen*, released in 1934, Donald and Percy Pig are the charter members of the Idle Hour Club. At this time, this was associated with 1920s individualism. Those who were not willing to work under Roosevelt's new system of government were frowned upon. Especially those who wished to reap the benefits of other people's work, as Donald and Percy try to do with the Hen. Donald, as the audience know, is opposed to working hard and does try to 'cut corners' wherever he can. Over the course of the 1930s cartoons, he complains constantly when forced to do something he doesn't want to do. In fronting the Treasury campaign, he is transformed into the ultimate patriotic citizen. However, as the war deepens and the sacrifices demanded of him seem to get bigger and bigger, he is tempted back to his old ways. The reference to the Idle Hour Club ultimately ties Nazism with 1920s individualism. Donald must find his new 'community' spirit in order to help the United States fight the war. By not working and spending his money, Donald is helping the Nazis to triumph over the Allies.

Naturally, Donald does the right thing and saves his money for his taxes. The film was as effective as its predecessor. In a review of the short on

the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 1943, the *New York Times* described *Spirit of '43* as a 'thoroughly agreeable inducement to a tough task.'<sup>316</sup>

### **Der Fuehrer's State – The Animation of Nazi Germany**

Unpublished minutes from a meeting between Robert Spencer Carr, Joe Grant and Government representative, Allen Rivkin, reveal that Disney's plan for contribution towards the war propaganda effort did not begin and end with the film produced for Morgenthau at the Treasury. In fact, they did not even end with the films well known now to scholars of the period, which were made as an extension of the contract with the Treasury.<sup>317</sup> On the contrary, this document lays out provisions for the handling of other proposed subjects for propaganda and the way in which the Disney studio believed animation could convey these subjects to audiences effectively. To scholars, this proves that Disney already had a well-developed ideological plan for how animation *could* handle ideologically sensitive subjects. The studio was already aware of the techniques that could be utilised in order to relay ideas and emotions to the American public.

While plans were in motion for the animators to consult with anthropologist Dr. Hooton in order to ridicule Hitler's racial theory, the Disney studio also planned to showcase Hitler's life 'starting with Hitler in the Munich cell, writing *Mein Kampf*, realising his German countrymen had inferiority complexes.'<sup>318</sup> The studio planned to realise Hitler's inner circle through a 'conference of stooges.' This conference was to animate a 'Minister for Pure Blood Strains who would draw the perfect Aryan.' Disney even planned to show the German people trying to adhere to the Fuehrer's order....peroxide stocks in pharmacies go down to such a level that the Army starts beefing.'<sup>319</sup> This lampooning of the Nazi state began as early as 1936 and

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<sup>316</sup> 'Spirit of 43,' *The New York Times*, 4 February 1943, pp. 29

<sup>317</sup> The films now known as *Education for Death*, *Chicken Little*, *Der Fuehrer's Face* and *Reason and Emotion* were made with financing from Reader's Digest and from the Treasury.

<sup>318</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas records, f.22, 'Memorandum from Allen Rivkin,' 7 December 1942

<sup>319</sup> Ibid.

was heavily developed during the Second World War into a powerful ideological treatment.

Carr, Grant and Huemer also envisaged a production entitled 'Hitler the Anti-Christ.' This was thought of as a 'powerful appeal for the defeat of Hitler on religious grounds.' Grant suggested that the short should, 'Re-enact atrocities, show bombed churches, imprisoned priests, teaching of atheistic heresies to little children.'<sup>320</sup> While this inevitably plays on much of the religious imagery found in *The New Spirit* and *Spirit of '43*, the reference to religious morality, one could argue, also has its roots in the battle for Donald's conscience.

However, while most of these productions were intended for domestic audiences, many of these ideas were presented for release in South America, as part of an extension of Disney's contract with the Office of Inter-American affairs. The document containing the outline for these productions acts as a belated blueprint of the ways animation had already channelled ideology in the 1930s. It also contains a subtle reference to the part Disney saw itself playing in the war. Carr writes;

'Exposing Goebbels' technique of spreading lies, doubt and suspicion among Good Neighbours. We show how ideas can be more dangerous than bombs. We show South America being shelled by Axis radios, show the 'propaganda bombs' landing and bursting like real bombs, throwing harmful rumours far and wide. Backed up with sufficient facts about Axis propaganda activities in South America, this should be an effective counter stroke.'<sup>321</sup>

This suggests that the Disney studio, despite only having been at war for five weeks, saw itself as fully mobilised and a part of a propaganda war with the Axis powers. It also demonstrates that they envisaged this animated war of ideas to be the way in which they could contribute towards the war effort. It is also of interest that this is viewed by the Disney studios and by the Government as an example of 'good' propaganda. Lampooning the Nazi state;

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<sup>320</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas records, f.22, R.S. Carr, 'Direct Propaganda Films,' 7 January 1942, pp. 15

<sup>321</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas records, f.22, R.S. Carr, 'Direct Propaganda Films,' 7 January 1942, pp. 16-17

ridiculing Hitler's personality; elevating the religious and moral superiority of the Allies; exposing the lies, executions and oppression of its people and undermining the ideology at its core was seen as the most effective way to turn the South American people away from their temptation to endorse Nazism.

Many of the films within this document were not made into either animated shorts or feature films. However, much of the ideology, technique and content did make its way into the films that were made under contract with the Government. Some of the ideas made it into films that were produced out of contract. Indeed, many of the techniques used in these films had been tried, tested and read in a political context in the 1930s.

### ***Der Fuehrer's Face* (US, 1943, dir. Jack Kinney)**

Perhaps the most famous of Disney's wartime contributions was the Donald Duck short, *Der Fuehrer's Face*. Originally to be released under the title *Donald Duck in Nutziland* but changed due to the popularity of the short's title song, written by Oliver Wallace, the short won an academy award in 1943 for Best Animated Short Film.<sup>322</sup> The story was first intended for the Treasury short and was developed by Huemer and Grant. However, it was eventually rejected by Disney as it did not lay the focus on taxes.<sup>323</sup> There is no mention

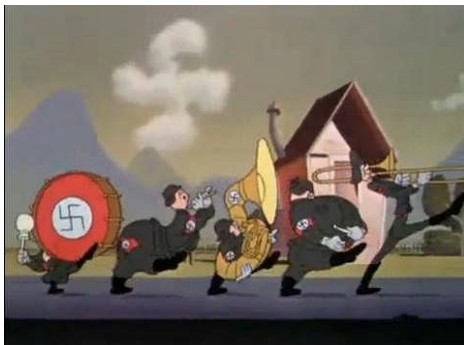


Fig. 11 From *Der Fuehrer's Face* (US, 1943, dir. Jack Kinney)

of Government involvement in the picture under the title cards, unlike the Treasury shorts. Despite the notation of Government funding in the archival documents, the American public would not have been aware that the short was

made under Government contract. Audiences simply believed they were

going to be viewing another Donald Duck cartoon.

<sup>322</sup>R. Shale, *Donald Duck Joins Up*, pp. 62

<sup>323</sup>AFIA, Interview with Richard Huemer, pp.116

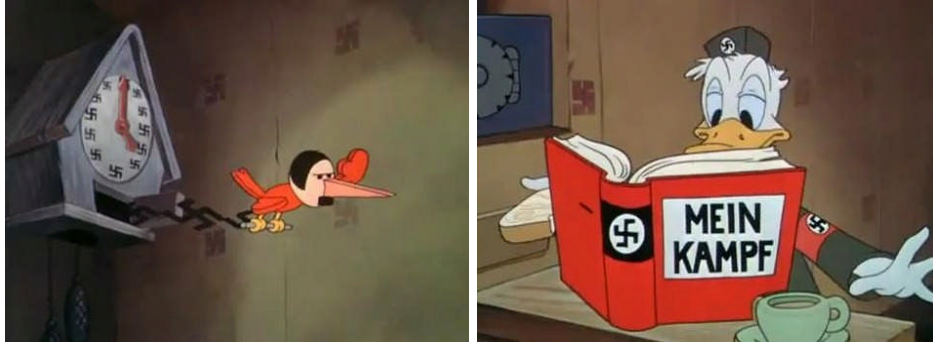
The short opens with the title tune. Disney again were capitalising on the unification of the American public behind an animated song. Gabler argues that the song became an anthem for Hollywood's battle with the Nazi threat, as one and a half million copies of the song were sold.<sup>324</sup> In combination with the music, the shot fades in to show the comical goosestep of the Nazi elite, marching in a marching band. The short, for the first time, includes animated versions of Goebbels, Goering, Tojo (caricatured heavily with yellowing skin, buck teeth and large glasses), Mussolini and an unnamed Nazi on a snare drum marching along in the background (Fig. 11). The camera pans to Donald, who is sleeping in a tiny house.

In sync with the singing elite who are marching on the street outside his house, Donald even gives the Hitler salute in his sleep, lampooning the severe indoctrination of the German people into the Nazi ideology. Donald's alarm goes off and the cuckoo in the cuckoo clock in his bedroom pops out a caricature of Hitler himself, ridiculed for his chirping 'Seig Heil!' (Fig. 12) Donald jumps out of bed and salutes the three Axis leaders in pictures on the wall of his bedroom.

He sleepily tries to climb back into bed, but hands come through the window and splash cold water onto his face so he isn't allowed any further rest. Complaining, Donald dresses in his uniform, exclaims he is very hungry and goes in to his safe to retrieve his breakfast: a grey looking coffee bean, which he dips in water before putting it back into the safe; a piece of rock hard bread, that he hacks at with a saw and 'essence of eggs and bacon.' Whilst eating his breakfast, a sword comes through Donald's window, providing his morning reading material: *Mein Kampf*. (Fig. 13) The marching elite parade straight into his house and when they emerge, Donald is carrying the snare drum and marching with the Nazi elite, out into the street.

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<sup>324</sup> N. Gabler, *Walt Disney*, pp. 390



Figs 12 & 13 From *Der Fuehrer's Face* (US, 1943, dir. Jack Kinney)

The short then fades to a shot of a Nazi munitions factory where Donald supposedly works. Swastikas adorn the chimneys of the factory against a threatening red sky. A voice over explains to the people of Nutziland that it is 'their privilege to work forty-eight hours a day for the Fuehrer.' With knives to his back and his arm thrust into the air, Donald marches into the factory.

Echoing the Treasury shorts, even the chimney in the factory is dressed in Nazi uniform. Donald gets to work, screwing the caps onto artillery shells. Whilst he is working at immense speed, pictures of Hitler appear on the assembly line, which Donald has to salute as he is working. The work becomes too much for Donald and he soon resumes his grumbling. However, at first grumble, he is threatened with seven knives to his throat. Overtaken with the speed at which he is expected to work, Donald soon descends into an exhausted delirium and shouts, 'I can't stand it! I'm going mad!'

After experiencing an abstract world in which he is stamped upon by an iron boot and made to salute as an iron prisoner, Donald wakes up and rubs his head. The shadow of what appears to be man saluting is upon his bedroom wall, however, Donald is in his stars and stripes pyjamas. He gets ready to salute but his attention is drawn to the window, in which there is a gleaming miniature Statue of Liberty. Donald kisses the statue and states how glad he is to be a citizen of the United States of America. (Fig. 14)

Following the release of *Der Fuehrer's Face*, Theodore Strauss of the *New York Times* described Donald Duck as 'one of this country's No.1 propagandists.' The article quotes Disney's view of animation being used for 'educational purposes'. Disney stated that; 'The war has taught us that people

who won't look at a book will look at a film... Mass education is coming. It's coming because it's a necessity. Democracy's ability to survive depends on the ability of its individuals to appreciate their duties as citizens and to comprehend the complex problems of the changing world we live in.<sup>325</sup> This film was viewed in contemporary society as the film that solidified Disney's commitment to the war effort as a citizen of the United States. Moreover, the short cemented Donald's position as the figurehead of the Disney Studios for the propaganda war against the Nazi threat.

There are several techniques of interest within this film. However, what is most pertinent is the use of the character, Donald. Donald, who fought the Depression by reluctantly adhering to the ideology forced upon him, was now



Fig. 14 From *Der Fuehrer's Face* (US, 1943, dir. Jack Kinney)

to come directly into contact with the new threat to the United States: the Nazis. For the very first time, Donald leaves the comfort of the United States, even his dreams are threatened by the Axis powers. Donald has been so associated with the United States that as evidenced by reviews, the American

people had come to rely on him as being at the very heart of United States society. In this film, however comical, Donald is subjected to torture, both physical and psychological, at the hands of the Axis powers. He leaves the comfort of United States society and becomes a part of the conflict.

As in other animated productions, the swastika is used as a well-known symbol of the Axis powers to ensure the American people are well aware that Donald is no longer in the United States. It should be noted that as in *Donald's Decision* and *Spirit of '43*, swastikas are everywhere in the animated version of Nazi Germany. The bushes, windmills, clouds, and even the pulley on the blinds in Donald's bedroom are all swastika shaped. The medium of animation is able to realise such a ridiculous notion because its limits are endless. In the animated world, anything goes.

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<sup>325</sup> T. Strauss, 'Donald Duck's Disney', *The New York Times*, 7 February 1943, pp. x3



However, this short also uses many other sophisticated persuasion techniques only possible within the animated medium. *Der Fuehrer's Face* uses Donald as something of a 'test subject.' Much like in the shorts *Moving Day* and *Self Control*, we see the effect of a political change, not on the real victims, but on Donald himself. Everything the American public may imagine the German people were going through, we see happening to Donald.

The audience is told that the average Nazi is impoverished and under constant threat. Animation satirises and exaggerates these ideas by the invisible man holding a knife to Donald's back and throat as he goes about his everyday life. Donald hides his coffee bean in a safe. We learn his bread is hard, not because he tells us but because he cuts it up with a saw. His only source of protein is sprayed into his mouth like a perfume. The American people are educated on the hardships being experienced by the Nazi threat, implying that their morale is at an all-time low because Donald cannot stand to live in the confines of the Nazi state.

Donald is exhausted from his forty-eight hour day, implicitly suggesting that the average German is forced to work constantly and that their consistent surveillance to Nazi ideals (implied by Donald's salute of Hitler's picture on the production line) actually diminishes their productivity. Animation also capitalises on the nationalistic symbolism of the late 1930s in this short to exemplify Donald's patriotism. Lady Liberty, associated with the city of New York and with American democracy is perched on Donald's bedroom window. Donald is dressed in American flag pyjamas. Animation uses the unification power of these symbols to provide a stark contrast to Donald's early morning awakening in Nazi Germany.

*Der Fuehrer's Face* is also the first Disney cartoon to provide proper caricatures of all of the Axis power elite. While Hitler's first caricature was provided in *Stop that Tank*, Disney had previously left figures such as Goebbels, Goering, Mussolini and Hirohito untouched. The American public were used to negative caricatures of the Japanese, as they were rife in the Hollywood film industry following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In films such as *Remember Pearl Harbor* (US, 1942, dir. Joseph Santley), *A Prisoner of Japan* (US, 1942, dir.

Arthur Ripley) and *Danger in the Pacific* (US, 1942, dir. Lewis D. Collins), the Japanese are often stereotyped and typified by their cruelty. However, little had been shown regarding the other Axis powers.

Their forms appear ridiculous in this short, making them comical to the American public, lessening the impact of their threat. Similar to the way in which the Big Bad Wolf and the villainous Pete are easily defeated by the Pigs and Mickey Mouse, the Nazi threat seems defeatable in *Der Fuehrer's Face*. While other treatments of the Nazi menace are more ideologically based, the entire regime is ridiculed in this short. This is a lighter propagandistic treatment before the Disney studio began to use its skill in animation to chip away at the underlying ideology of Nazism.

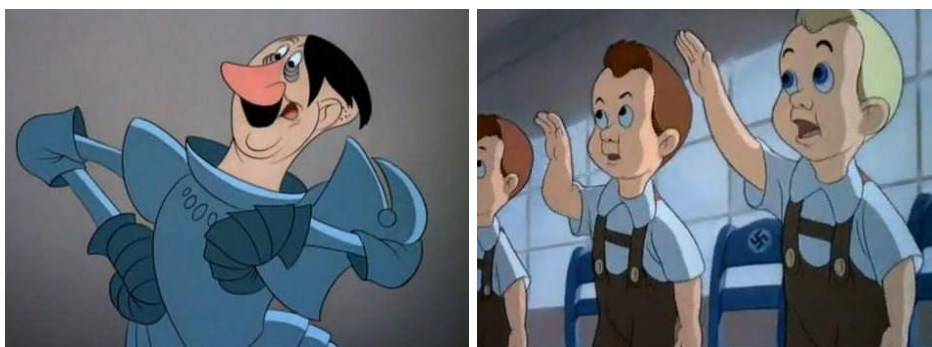
### ***Education for Death* (US, 1943, dir. Clyde Geronimi)**

*Education for Death* was a true first in Disney animation. Based on the book written by George Ziemer and published in 1941, the short follows the education of a young Nazi boy named Hans and his ideological journey into becoming a German soldier. For the first time in Disney history, the short embraces a wholly dark and conservative tone. Caricatures are utilised in part, however there is little room for humour.

The short is narrated throughout, from the birth of the child until his indoctrination into the German army. The audience sees a young German couple registering the birth of their child in an intimidating German court. The man who registers the birth of the child is faceless and the shot is consumed by his frightening shadow as he snatches the birth certificate from the parents. The narrator informs the audience that the couple first has to prove their 'pure blood' status and the name, Hans, has to be approved by the Government before his birth can be registered.

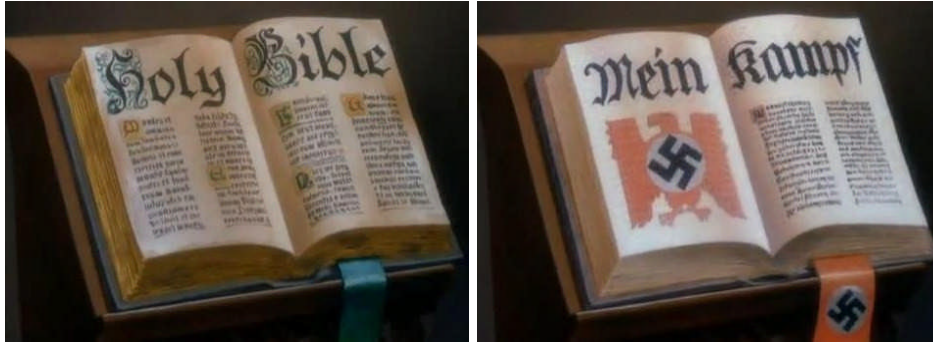
As a reward for his birth, the child is given his own copy of *Mein Kampf*. The narrator tells the audience to follow the child's journey. We are taken inside a Nazi version of the fairy tale of *Sleeping Beauty*. The narrator tells us that the wicked witch is democracy, the beautiful princess is Germany, and the 'brave handsome knight' is Hitler himself (Fig. 15) At one point during one of

his outbursts, the Prince even sports devil horns. He hoists the Princess Germania onto his horse with difficulty as she is quite large, however they eventually ride off into the distance. Despite the brief comical interlude of this sequence, the narrator tells us that the moral of the story is simply that ‘Hitler got Germany on her feet again and took her for a ride.’ We are then transported into the German schoolroom, in which children salute a picture of Hitler in armour. (Fig. 16) Hitler is now shown to be Hans’ idol. Hans becomes ill and the audience sees Hans’ Mother tending to him by his bedside. She is worried for his safety for, as the narrator tells us, the unkempt are taken away and never heard from again. The faceless Nazi soldier knocks on her door, coming for the ill child. Hans, we are told, recovers and we are once again shown the school room, where the children are saluting Hitler, Goering and Goebbels.



Figs. 15 & 16 From *Education for Death* (US, 1943, dir. Clyde Geronimi)

The Darwinist principle of ‘survival of the fittest’ is animated on the school blackboard, showing a rabbit getting eaten by a fox. Hans expresses sympathy for the rabbit but soon changes his mind when he is ridiculed by the teacher. The short then moves to a montage sequence of German soldiers holding flaming torches against a red sky and marching. The short even shows the mass book burnings carried out in 1933 and 1934 and the replacement of the Bible by *Mein Kampf*. Statues of Jesus Christ are replaced with a Nazi sword (Figs. 17 & 18) Hans then evolves into a German soldier from a Nazi youth. The soldiers march forward but a montage transforms these soldiers in to gravestones. His education for death is complete.



Figs. 17 & 18 From *Education for Death* (US, 1943, dir. Clyde Geronimi)

Politically striking and ideologically disturbing, *Education for Death* had an immense impact on American audiences.<sup>326</sup> They noted upon the worrying absence of their familiar characters, Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and the Three Little Pigs and the ‘grim’ use of humour.

In the Carr memorandum of January 1942, it is stated that animation could use ‘personification,’ ‘word visualisations’ and ‘narration’ in order to convey its ideological message.<sup>327</sup> These are used to effect in *The Wise Little Hen*, *The Country Cousin*, and *Ferdinand the Bull* and to a certain extent, Warner Brothers’ *Porkey’s Poppa*. Capitalising on their previous effect, they are used again here.

Hans’ story is narrated to us throughout. There is no room for interpretation by audiences. Even the most comical moments of the short, such as the caricaturing of Hitler and Germany in the story of *Sleeping Beauty* is translated seriously for the audience. In the absence of subtitles, the German spoken by Hans’ parents, the faceless soldier, the teacher and even Hans’ himself is translated for us by the narrator. This is particularly striking in the case of the soldier and the teacher as they are shown to shout and gesticulate violently for a fairly simple message, mocking the many newsreels of Hitler’s speeches to the German public. However, as the soldier is threatening to take away the child from his Mother and Hans himself is ridiculed in front of the class, the amusing impact of these sequences is minimal.

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<sup>326</sup>*Motion Picture Daily*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 6 January 1943, pp. 9

<sup>327</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas records, f.22, R.S. Carr, ‘Methods of Presentation,’ 7 January 1942, pp. 4-7

Hitler's complicated rise to power and fight for the restoration of a 'great' Germany is animated to the audience through personification. The ideal of democracy, associated with the cause of the Allied powers is personified by a wicked witch, providing a true inversion of animation's traditional enemy associations. Hitler, the knight in shining armour of the ideal of fascism comes to the rescue of the Princess Germania. These complex ideas are given physical form, allowing the audience to see their impact. As the next shot is the indoctrination of young Hans, the editing of this short works alongside this personification as an 'happily ever after' for the twisted Nazi fairy tale.

Word visualisation was suggested by Carr to be used as follows; 'Word visualisations [are] animated reincarnations of the good old fashioned lantern slide, by which phrases sung or spoken are literally illustrated in sync. For instance, if our commentator says, 'Hands across the sea,' we simply show a pair of hands clasped across the sea.'<sup>328</sup> While this was intended for use to simulate the unity between the Allied powers, this is used in the final montage sequence of *Education for Death* to show the true limitations of the fully indoctrinated Nazi soldier, Hans. As he 'sees nothing but what the party wants him to see and says nothing but what the party wants him to say and does nothing but what the party wants him to do,' Hans is shown blindfolded, with a muzzle upon his face and a chain around his neck. As the audience had seen the development of Hans from a small child, this image is particularly disturbing.

Montage sequences developed from the Canadian war bonds film *All Together* are used to great effect in *Education for Death*. These are particularly in keeping with Carr's ideological message regarding Hitler being depicted as the 'Anti-Christ.'<sup>329</sup> The sequences toward the end of the short, showing the supersession of religion by Nazism are particularly effective. The colour of the film also changes in sequence from a god-like white to a devilish red. Again this also references Devil Donald's personification as Nazism, depicted in *Donald's Better Self*, *Donald's Decision* and to a certain extent, *Spirit of '43*. These links made

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<sup>328</sup>MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas records, f22. R.S. Carr, 'Methods of Presentation,' 7 January 1942, pp. 4

<sup>329</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas records, f.22, R.S. Carr, 'Direct Propaganda Films', 7 January 1942, pp. 15

within animation were very simple but powerful to convey ideological messages.

*Der Fuehrer's Face* mocked the Nazi regime, *Education for Death* followed a young child and his journey through the Nazi system and yet Disney delved still further into the ideology mindset of Hitler, using in particular the method of personification, now perfected, to animate complex psychological ideas to great effect.

### ***Reason and Emotion*, (US, 1943, dir. Bill Roberts)**

As the Motion Picture Society for the Americas records reveal, Walt Disney began the storyboarding process for *Reason and Emotion* as early as June 1942. The short was produced at the recommendation of figurehead Walter Wanger who wished to see an animated version of the 1941 book *War, Politics and Emotion* by Geoffrey Bourne.<sup>330</sup>

He deemed a psychological treatment was necessary in order to pre-empt a 'complete understanding of the Nazi threat.'<sup>331</sup>

*Reason and Emotion* constitutes Disney's first journey into the realm of the psyche. The short opens on a set of scales,

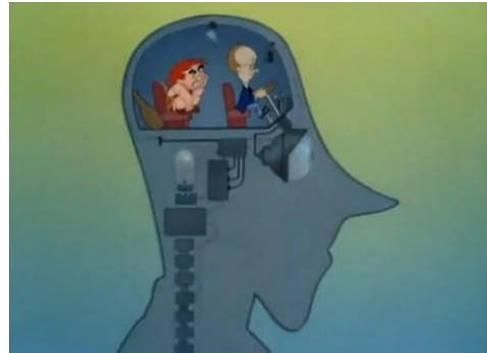


Fig. 19 From *Reason and Emotion* (US, 1943, dir. Bill Roberts)

portraying the balance between 'Reason' and 'Emotion' within a person's brain. It begins with a baby boy, in which we are told, Emotion is alone in controlling his movements. Emotion is personified as a little red headed child inside the baby's brain. He is dressed in a leopard skin loin cloth, encapsulating his relationship to the primitive. When the child grows older, the audience sees that Reason has now joined Emotion in the man's head. This relationship takes the form of a car, in which Reason is driving the man's actions inside his head, while Emotion is made to sit in the back seat (Fig. 19) On occasion, Emotion tries to take over, for example, when the man sees a pretty lady on the street,

<sup>330</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas records, f.409, 'Letter from Walter Wanger,' 2 June 1942, pp. 3

<sup>331</sup> Ibid.

but unfortunately, Emotion's attempts end in failure. A similar journey is made inside the lady's head. Emotion wants the lady to eat whatever she wants, while Reason insists she stick to her diet, otherwise she will get fat.

The short then takes on a more sombre tone. We see headlines of newspapers stating the seriousness of the current international situation. They refer to Axis and Allied victories, the drafting of soldiers and even the appearance of a 'fifth column' within American society. (Fig. 20)



Figs. 20 & 21 From *Reason and Emotion* (US, 1943, dir. Bill Roberts)

The average American, John Doe, is listening to the wireless in his living room. Whilst listening, many different viewpoints try to battle for his attention. These take the form of ghostly figures, which sit on his chair, pulling at his ears and tagging on his arms. The man is an emotional wreck, with bags under his eyes and a pale looking face. Inside his head, we see Reason and Emotion battling with one another but Emotion has the upper hand.

However, the narrator tells both Reason and Emotion that their squabbling is great for Hitler as he tries to destroy Reason by playing upon Emotion with fear. The short then cuts to a shot of Hitler at a microphone, speaking to an audience of German people. We then get a shot of the inside of a Nazi 'superman' where Reason and Emotion are again at odds. As Hitler speaks to the German people, Emotion is taken aback with fear (of the Gestapo) and sympathy for Hitler's plight, as he explains he 'didn't want to go to war.' When Reason attempts to calm Emotion by telling him that Hitler is lying, Emotion hits Reason on the head with a club. As Emotion gains the control through Hitler's further speeches, instilling Pride into Emotion, Reason becomes smaller and smaller in the mind of the Nazi.

Inside the Nazi's head, Hitler's control over Emotion becomes more widespread. He locks Reason inside a concentration camp (Fig. 21). We then venture outside of the Nazi's head and the marching feet of a Nazi soldier leads us through a heavily bombed Germany. The narrator explains that Emotion is now the Master of Reason. Churches and houses are completely destroyed. We return to the battle between Reason and Emotion in the mind of John Doe. He explains that the two must work together in order for the Allies to be successful. The shot pans out to transform John Doe into a bomber pilot who, now Reason and Emotion are working together, can 'do the job he [sic] set out to do.' The animated production finishes with a shot of the American air force flying proudly in formation in the clouds.

In a 1947 article in *Hollywood Quarterly*, Charles Palmer described the process utilised in *Reason and Emotion* as 'solidifying the intangible.'<sup>332</sup> However, on closer analysis, it seems all the Disney animators utilised here was their already tried and tested technique of personification of an ideology. The abstract ideas of Reason and Emotion are simply caricatured to the extreme and given physical form. Emotion is portrayed as an untrained caveman, guided by his primitive instincts; Reason as an unmistakably British character obsessed by social rules and regulations. These characters are then placed in different locations – one in America, the other in Nazi Germany. In America, the two characters are at odds with each other inside John Doe's head. Recognising the pressures of the war on the ordinary American's emotions, the narrator explains that Reason and Emotion must not fight as this is 'good for Hitler.' In Germany, Emotion is taken in by Hitler's pleas to the nation and eventually beats Reason with a club and locks him away. After telling his story, the narrator tells the pair in the American's head that they must work together to fight the war. Given the nationalities of the two ideological characters, this could also be indicating the relationship between Britain and America during the War; America driven by Emotion; Britain, by Reason.

*Reason and Emotion* also uses the 'animated poster' technique exercised in *Old Glory* and *All Together* during the Hitler speech sequence, to illustrate the effect particular 'emotions' displayed on screen have upon the Emotion

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<sup>332</sup>C. Palmer, 'Cartoons in the Classroom,' *Hollywood Quarterly*, (Fall, 1947) pp. 27



caricature. (Fig. 22) The combination of all of them within the mind of the average Nazi; fear, sympathy, pride and anger lead to the imprisonment of Reason and the widespread destruction within Germany.

By highlighting the ideological differences between the average



Fig. 22 From *Reason and Emotion* (US, 1943, dir. Bill Roberts)

American and the average Nazi, *Reason and Emotion* again taps into the battle for control exemplified in many of the Donald Duck short subjects. Allowing the caricature of Emotion to be dominant within the mind, exemplified by selfishness, truancy and want within

the Donald shorts, constitutes a contribution to the Axis powers. On

the other hand, allowing Reason to sit ‘in the driver’s seat,’ exemplifies the community spirit needed by the Government in order for the United States to win the war. In some ways, therefore, scholars can view *Reason and Emotion* as its most advanced treatment of the ideological battle between the Angel and the Devil.

### ***Chicken Little* (US, 1943, dir. Clyde Geronimi)**

*Chicken Little* has already attracted the attention of scholars for its references to the battle with the Axis powers. Richard Shale has commented that *Chicken Little* rivals *Education for Death* in its grim, unhappy ending.<sup>333</sup> It was the fourth and final film to be produced as an extension of the contract with the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs and along with *Reason and Emotion*, *Education for Death* and *Der Fuehrer’s Face*, was financed by Reader’s Digest and the Government.

The short opens on the traditional animated farmyard setting. We are introduced to our characters by a narrator, which seems to further differentiate many of the Government cartoons from those under normal release. With the exception of *Der Fuehrer’s Face*, all of the Government releases were narrated to

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<sup>333</sup>R. Shale, *Donald Duck Joins Up*, pp.65

ensure there was no ambiguity in the ideology they were transmitting to their audiences.

The protagonist in the story, *Chicken Little* is identifiable as a small middle class American child. By the narrator's admission, he is not particularly intelligent. The audience is also introduced to the villainous character: Foxy Loxey. Foxy vows to get through the compound's defences to serve his 'culinary interest' in the community. This is not an insubstantial feat, particularly given that the narrator emphasises the heavy fencing surrounding the compound, the locks and even the farmer's shotgun. Foxy then states that he's 'not a fox' for nothing and cunningly calculates that there is 'more than one way to pluck a chicken.' He then reaches for his psychology book and reads.

Again, speaking on the production of *Chicken Little*, animator Ward Kimball confided that originally, 'Foxy's book was meant to be *Mein Kampf* but this was 'watered down' for the version that reached the screen'<sup>334</sup> However, reading from *Mein Kampf* all the same, Foxy says, 'To influence the masses, first aim for the least intelligent.'

Surveying the animals in the farmyard, Foxy aims for Chicken Little. He blows a puff of cigar smoke in his face, tips a watering can over him and drops some wood on his head to simulate a thunder storm. Foxy then pretends to be the 'Voice of Doom' following the storm and tells Chicken Little that the sky is falling and he must run for his life. Panicking, Chicken Little dashes off to tell Henny Penny and the other animals. Cockey Locky, the group's leader, however, is not fooled and declares that it was only a piece of wood that fell on Chicken Little's head. Foxy reads some more of his book aloud, which tells him to undermine the leaders of the masses. Taking on the voice of one of the hens as they play cards, Foxy whispers through the fence, making them doubt the judgement of Cockey Locky. He states, 'Now in my opinion, Cockey Locky displays some totalitarian tendencies.'

Foxy's whispering campaign reverberates throughout the community. With the seeds of deceit spread throughout the farmyard, Foxy then tells Chicken Little that he was born to be a leader. Foxy undermines Cockey Locky

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<sup>334</sup> *Walt Disney Treasures: On the Front Lines: The War Years*. DVD. (2004) Audio commentary.

in front of the farmyard community, ensuring that they look to Chicken Little as their leader and tells him to relay the message that the animals should seek shelter in the cave. The animals flee the safety of the farmyard community and are taken right into Foxy's lair. The narrator assures the audience that all turns out all right, however Foxy takes charge of the narrative as he sucks on chicken bones which gives way to a sinister bone graveyard. (Fig. 23) The narrator exclaims 'This isn't how it ends in my book,' to which Foxy retorts, 'Don't believe everything you read.'

In terms of its sombre tone, *Chicken Little* is comparable to *Education for Death* in that it is one of the only Disney shorts to end on a negative note. The



Fig. 23 From *Chicken Little* (US, 1943, dir. Clyde Geronimi)

premise behind it is comparable with the 1933 shorts *Confidence* and *Bosko the Musketeer*, in relaying the physical power of an idea and the effect it can have upon an animated society. These shorts dealt with the power of confidence and

the New Deal '32 ideology. However, unlike these productions which simply give the idea a physical form in the animated world, Foxy actually puts the idea into practice, using 'psychology' to manipulate the farmyard community. This ultimately sends them all, except Cocky Locky, to their death. This was particularly shocking for the audience, who expected a happy ending from the fairy tale world of animation and unfortunately, the manipulative Fox is triumphant.

Thus, the impact of this short on war audiences was extensive. According to *Hollywood Spectator*, audiences found the short 'deeply disturbing' and described it as a 'fable to the power of ideas'<sup>335</sup>. Audiences read this animated short ideologically, proving that animation had fully developed into a sophisticated propagandistic medium.

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<sup>335</sup>*Hollywood Spectator*, Vol. 16, No. 5, 6 January 1944

## Disney Educates: The Informational & Advisory Short Subjects

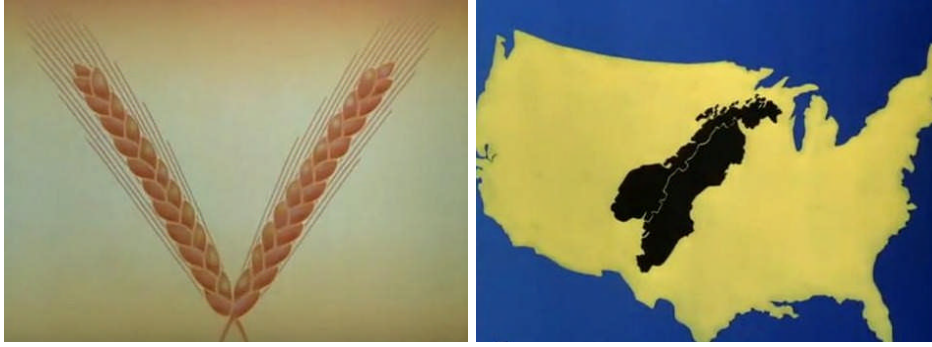
### *Food Will Win The War* (US, 1942, dir. Hamilton Luske)

Disney was approached by the Department of Agriculture within weeks of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor to produce a short film stressing the abundance of American agricultural output. The film was to propagandise Secretary Wickard's slogan 'Food Will Win The War.'<sup>336</sup> Its purpose was also to link the Department of Agriculture's efforts with the Lend Lease scheme, showing how the extensive food output of the United States could contribute towards the victory of the Allies and most importantly, the defeat of the Axis powers.

The short opens with an explicit reference to the 'V for Victory' campaign as wheat grain in the shape of a V even precedes the opening credits. (Fig. 24) The audience then sees an animated shot of the Earth, which the narrator explains is 'afame.' Using the multi-plane camera, the short focuses on a war torn landscape, ripped apart by conflict. The narrator draws attention to the victims of this barren wasteland, explaining that there is hope for Europe: the hope of American agriculture. The shot fades to an extensive map of the United States, in which its sheer size in comparison to Europe is emphasised. This is done through highlighting of the European countries which would comfortably fit within the borders of the United States. (Fig. 25) The next shot features the cusp of a globe, on which the farmers and their wives stand, poised for battle. The narrator explains that their number is twice as many as the Axis powers have soldiers.

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<sup>336</sup>University of California Los Angeles Archives (thereafter UCLAA), Walt Disney Publicity Ephemera, Box 9, Collection 280, folder 9-22, 'Walt Disney: Great Teacher' *Fortune Magazine*, 14 May 1942, pp. 154



Figs. 24 & 25 From *Food Will Win The War* (US, 1943, dir. Hamilton Luske)

A montage of farming production methods follows, accompanied by extensive battle rhetoric from the narrator. Animated production statistics are also displayed, in which the annual sum total of United States production of various crops are compared with the sizes of cities and global landmarks such as the pyramids of Egypt and Niagara Falls. Many of the comparisons are also linked to the Axis powers. For example, the number of bushels of corn grown into one ear would stretch from London to the Black Sea, which ‘hangs right over your head, Adolf,’ explains the narrator.

In the middle of these statistics, there is also reference to the fact that the United States produces food with enough power to ‘bowl’ over the Axis powers. This is displayed literally as the skittles animated are caricatures of Hirohito, Mussolini and Hitler. A girl grown fat on the oils produced by the United States would ‘black out Berlin.’<sup>337</sup> The Three Little Pigs then feature as part of a feature on bacon. The Pigs are marching forward playing *Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf* on their instruments and waving the American flag. A naval sequence follows in which U Boats are signed with the Japanese flag and the swastika, the fronts of which are shaped like sinister skulls. The short closes with an insignia featuring a blue eagle, adorned with white stars on a red background, signifying the fight for the ‘freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear.’

This short lends much to the ideological devices of the 1930s cartoons, even to the extent that footage from *Three Little Wolves* is utilised in *Food Will*

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<sup>337</sup>According to the same article in *Fortune Magazine*, in this particular sequence, Disney requested to have the girl sit on Hitler’s head but the Secretary refused.

*Win The War* to create the same nationalistic effect. The Three Little Pigs, leading the charge of the one hundred million American pigs willingly sacrificing themselves to the Allied powers for bacon could be interpreted as sinister, however, the resolve of the Pigs marching forward waving the American flag diminishes any doubt in the mind of the audience. The only difference is the white peace flag of the 1936 short is replaced by the United States flag. (Fig. 26)

The position of America has changed from a reluctant interventionism to a fierce nationalism. Reference to the Wolf is again made, but simply through the music played by the Pigs on their instruments as the narrator links this shot with the next, stating, ‘And who is afraid of the Big Bad Wolf? Not the farmer of the United States.’ Again, this puts the Axis Powers in the position of the Wolf, indicative of the narrative of the 1930s short *Three Little Wolves* and the pre-war Canadian Short *The Thrifty Pig*. Much like Donald Duck, the Pigs were

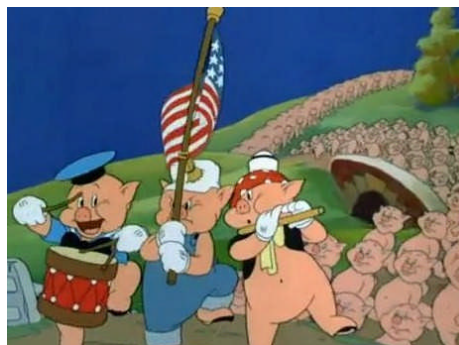


Fig. 26 From *Food Will Win the War* (US, 1943, dir. Hamilton Luske)

now central to the war time narrative of the Disney Studios.

While lending itself to the device of caricature in the skittles sequence, *Food Will Win the War* also extends the boundaries of the hyperbolic animated universe to demonstrate the relative impact of the agricultural industry on the Axis powers. The bowling ball literally knocks down Brandenburg Gate. While Carr’s 1942 memorandum describes this technique as a ‘word visualisation,’ similar techniques are utilised to effect in the Depression films of the 1930s such as *Porky’s Poppa* (1938) and *Confidence* (1938). Animation is able to give a ridiculous notion a presence within the animated world, showing its physical effect. In a similar vein, as in the Treasury films, the weapons of the Axis powers are personified, stressing that they are a direct threat to the beloved Disney characters of the animated world. Carr refers to this technique as ‘personification’ using the example that ‘Hitlerhito’ could be a ‘two faced

monster’, however the personification of villains within the animated world simply reinforces a dialogue already current within the animated productions.

Ideas and weapons and even real life personalities are not a threat in the animated world unless they are given an animated form, Pegleg Pete, the Depression (as animated in *Confidence*) the Wolf, Hitler and the other Axis leaders are all given a presence within the confines of the animated world so they are *physically* a threat to both the characters and therefore, by extension, the audience.

### ***Out of the Frying Pan and Into the Firing Line***

**(US, 1942, dir. Ben Sharpsteen)**

As well as the films for the Department of Agriculture, Disney was also called upon to make films for the Conservation Division of the War Production Board. These were simply informational films, to advise American citizens of the ways in which their conservation at home could aid the war effort.

The film opens on a frying pan itself, where Minnie Mouse is cooking eggs and bacon. Pluto can smell the food cooking from the other room and pushes his bones away, ready for the grease the eggs and bacon are cooked in. Minnie goes to give the grease to Pluto, however, the narrator tells her, as a ‘housewife of America’ that the fat must be conserved. The narration is, similar to *Self Control* and *The New Spirit*, coming from the wireless in the kitchen, indicative of authority and instruction. Pluto, much like Donald, is hesitant over the sacrifice he is being asked to make for the war effort. The audience is then shown a montage sequence, demonstrating the ways in which fats can be utilised for the war effort. We follow the glycerine through a funnel, through which it is transformed into



Fig. 27 From *Out of the Frying Pan and Into the Firing Line* (US, 1942, dir. Ben Sharpsteen)

droplets which further transform into bullets. The bullets are numerous enough to circle an animated globe six times.

Following further explanation from the narrator, the audience see fat dripping from the bacon into the pan. These droplets also transform into bombs underneath American squadrons. This plane goes forth to successfully bomb an enemy submarine. In another montage sequence, the fat from French fries powers death charges to crush Axis submarines. The narrator explains that Pluto's fat will give some boy at the front some extra cartridges. Pluto looks to the wall, where there is a picture of a saluting Mickey in his army uniform. (Fig. 27) Minnie asks Pluto if he still wants the grease but he turns away from it and instead, brings Minnie the correct container in which to store it. The narrator describes *how* the audience need to conserve their fats.

When Minnie has enough, Pluto balances the can of grease on his nose and trots down the street (adorned with war saving posters) taking it to the local approved meat dealer. Pluto is meant to receive money for the fats but instead takes sausages from the butcher. The scene fades into what we believe is the American flag, but when the camera pans out, it is simply Pluto's tail, from which the flag is hanging, as he makes his way home to Minnie.

While this is simply an informational film as opposed to carrying an explicit propagandistic message, ideology is still forged throughout the short subject. When the film opens, the audience hears the first few bars of *Yankee Doodle Spirit*, written for the Treasury film starring Donald Duck. This not only serves as a reminder of the patriotic duty of each American citizen, as demonstrated by Donald himself, but forges a patriotic link between animated characters, showing that they all belong to the same world, are aware of each other's experiences and are in the fight together. Minnie hums the song herself while she is cooking bacon until the narrator interrupts her. There is also an association to the Allied powers over the end of the short, as a few bars from the British national anthem, *God Save The King* are played.

Secondly, in the absence of Donald, Pluto (another reluctant receiver of 1930s communitarian values) plays the part of the selfish individualist who must convert his way of thinking for the war. Pluto is desperate for the grease



from Minnie's bacon and eggs, but after hearing the narrator, is convinced of the need to conserve the fats for the war effort. What finally sways his ideology is the picture of Mickey, hanging on the wall of Minnie's kitchen. Again, this serves as a reminder that while he and Minnie are doing their bit on the home front, they are helping their 'boy' out in the field. Incidentally, this is the only shot of Mickey in army uniform throughout the entire series of war time shorts. With the popularity of Donald, it was mainly he who did the war campaign for the Disney studios. However, this short confirms to the audience that Mickey, too, has gone out to fight for America. Minnie has also remained an absent fighter in the war against the Axis powers until this short. She is referred to as a 'housewife' of America and represents those left on the home front. Her partner, Mickey, has left her at home with the dog and yet the short stresses that her role in the war is also very important.

Thirdly, *Out of the Frying Pan* continues the trend of showcasing authority through the wireless. Since *Self Control* and its indications of the frustration the American public were experiencing through Roosevelt's fireside chats, it is apparent that a link is made between the wireless and the Government. This is built upon further in *The New Spirit*. What is interesting about this film is that authority is directly applied from the wireless into the animated world. Minnie is all set to give Pluto the grease from the frying pan until she is stopped in her tracks by the narrator of the short, the voice coming from the wireless.

### **Conclusion**

The war time shorts that the Disney studios made for the Government are of interest to scholars for several reasons. Firstly, for the first time in Disney history, their content was explicitly propagandistic. These films were financed by the Government with the specific purpose of making the American audience feel a certain way about paying their income taxes, saving grease for bullets and fighting the Axis powers. Hitler is portrayed as both the devil and a ridiculous figure to be made fun of. Because of the flexible medium

through which animation proved it could operate, it could both educate and persuade.

Animation did not draw the attention of the Hays Office for producing such content during the 1930s but was the first to be called upon to do so during the Second World War. During the war, Disney animation proved itself an effective ideological medium. For financial necessity and for his own patriotic drive, Disney needed the Government contracts. However, this relationship worked to profit both parties. The American Government needed the products and characters of his studio to fight the war alongside the American people.

Secondly, Disney characters were further confirmed as national symbols. The characters of Mickey, Donald, Pluto, The Three Little Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf all assumed these roles during the 1930s. They fought the Depression, became community idealists and witnessed the rise of Nazi Germany alongside the American people. However, they were called upon to act in these roles *for* America and *with* America during the war. By doing so, they validated their own importance within American national culture. If even the fantastical world of Disney was going to war, then so too should the American people.

Hitler and the Nazis were introduced to the animated world in the form of the Big Bad Wolf and the Devil, the ultimate Disney villains. In the 1930s, when the United States was not yet at war with the Axis powers, the threat was concealed behind these 'acceptable' animated figures. However, in a wartime setting, it was now acceptable for the real characters to make their way into the animated world, representing the fact that they too, were a threat to the safety of Donald and Mickey.

Furthermore, because of the nature of animation, these characters could embrace an exaggerated form of patriotism without appearing ridiculous. Animation, by nature, was ridiculous. Therefore, it was of no object for the American public to see the American flag glowing in Donald's eyes. Or even to see him run all the way from California to Washington faster than the speed of light, simply to get his taxes paid. Animation was utilised to produce overt,

hyperbolic propaganda for the war and hence was not subjected to the same constraints as the live action movie. What is more, the American people recognised the symbolism in these characters. Movie reviews and responses within the national press prove that these characters had become more to American audiences than simply cartoon personalities. They represented, as Carr wrote, ‘a glossary of new characters to express today’s new conceptions.’<sup>338</sup> They were not just cartoons but in themselves, represented ideas and symbols. As written in the *New York Times* as early as May 20<sup>th</sup> 1942 – even before the creation of the Office of War Information – these characters were seen as ‘ambassadors of goodwill’ and a ‘growing force within our midst.’<sup>339</sup>

However, this thesis argues that what is most important about these cartoons was not their content, but their place in Disney’s animated narrative. These shorts represent the culmination of Disney’s contribution to forging ideology through its short subjects, not the extent. The lengthy memorandum, written by Disney’s key contact with the Government, Robert Spencer Carr, less than a month after the United States joined the war, outlines all the different ways in which animation, as a medium, could ideologically contribute. This should be analysed, not as a war time document, but documentary proof of all the lessons learned by the Disney studios throughout the 1930s. The Studio already knew how to put messages across through animation. This is evidenced by identical ideas, narratives, and even reused footage to transmit the same effect. This document simply proves their plans to put their skills to Government use during the war.

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<sup>338</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, R.S. Carr, ‘The Creation of New Symbols,’ 7 January 1942, pp. 37

<sup>339</sup> ‘Notes on Books and Authors,’ *The New York Times*, 20 May 1942, pp. 17



## Chapter Seven- Animation at War

### Disney, Warner Brothers and War Time Entertainment 1941-1945

Despite the explicit nature of the cartoons Disney produced under contract with the Government, animation's contribution towards the war effort did not end with its Treasury productions, instructional films or even psychological propaganda films surrounding the Nazi regime. Animation, in keeping with the stringent traditions of Hollywood during the Second World War, was responsible for the production of many more ideologically focused films. These, too, capitalised on the techniques of the 1930s films in order to put across their ideological messages.

Following the establishment of the Office of War Information in 1942 by former journalist Elmer Davis, the department issued a decree to all motion picture production studios<sup>340</sup>. The Office of War Information (OWI) explained that its purpose was 'to coordinate the dissemination of war information by all federal agencies and to formulate and carry out, by means of the press, radio and motion pictures, programs designed to facilitate an understanding in the USA and abroad of the progress of the war effort and of the policies, activities and aims of the Government.'<sup>341</sup>

Central to the purpose of the Motion Picture Division was the idea that the studios in Hollywood had to produce motion pictures with central storylines or theses falling under the following headings; why we fight, the need for total war to bring victory and any film that focused on the 'four freedoms'; the enemy, including negative representations of same and the fifth column element; the United Nations as a union of democratic societies with a common anti-fascist goal; the Home Front, particularly the union of the civilians contributing towards the war effort through the payment of taxes and purchase of war bonds and lastly, the fighting forces. The union of the components of the various strands of the armed forces was to be emphasised,

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<sup>340</sup> For further information on the establishment of the OWI, see C. Koppes & G.D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, A.M. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda* and D.Culbert, *Film and Propaganda in America*, Vol. 3 (New York, Greenwood Press, 1990)

<sup>341</sup> J. M. Blum, *Was for Victory*, pp. 31

as well as the union of the various different nationalities in the United States. Fatalities and sacrifice were also to be handled by the motion picture industry.<sup>342</sup>

### **Donald Gets Drafted – The Entertainment Shorts of the Disney Studios**

While on the surface, these subjects seemed too solemn to be handled within the realms of the animated world, the Studios rose to the challenge, producing films that coordinated with each of the required topic areas. Disney himself was not keen on producing overtly propagandistic films and detested the idea that his studio was no longer its own boss, with over ninety-eight per cent of his studio output geared towards the production of Government war films in 1943.<sup>343</sup> Nonetheless, his strong focus on the development of personality animation throughout the 1930s allowed his characters to fit into this new world of conflict, while still satisfying the entertainment and morale boosting needs of his keen audience.

In an article in *Daily Variety* in 1942, Disney revealed that he believed ‘keeping them [American audiences] laughing’ during war time was paramount.<sup>344</sup> However, the presence of many of the ideologically focused animation techniques within the cartoon shorts produced during this period proves that while entertainment was definitely a consideration, Disney was also happy to keep in line with Government requirements and produce animation with an ideological focus. Central to this development, again, was the character of Donald Duck.

#### ***Donald Gets Drafted, (US, 1942, dir. Jack King)***

Donald, who showed his overwhelming patriotism by fronting the war bonds campaign for the Treasury, was also the first cartoon character to be drafted into the United States Army. In this extraordinary cartoon, audiences saw Donald suffering for the very first time, at the hands of his own country,

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<sup>342</sup> C. Koppes & G.D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, pp. 69

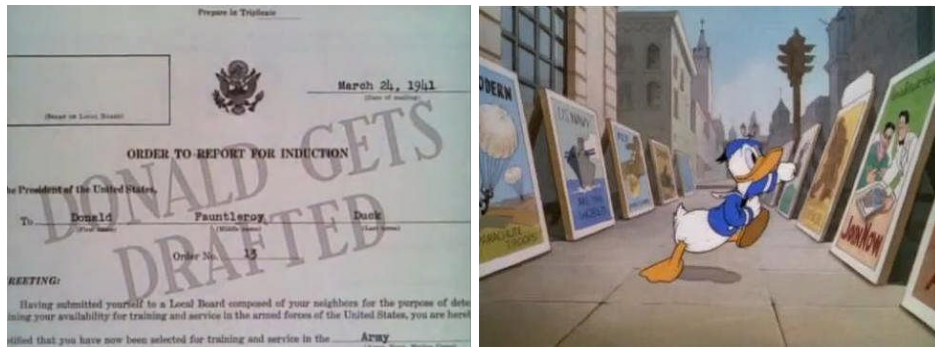
<sup>343</sup> *Motion Picture Daily*, Vol. 53, No. 47, 11 March 1943, pp. 1

<sup>344</sup> *Daily Variety*, 7 October 1942, pp. 47

allowing them to understand the ‘sacrifices’ made by soldiers on the front lines and the terrible conditions they were often forced to live in. However, as Donald is willing to make these sacrifices, audiences responded well to the cartoon and its overall message.

The short opens with the traditional image of Donald’s face, except Donald’s usual sailor hat has been replaced with an army hat, immediately alerting the audience to the fact that Donald is in a completely different place physically and perhaps, psychologically, now the country is at war. Engaging its audience with music at the outset, *Donald Gets Drafted* opens with a ditty regarding the strength of the army. The lyrics state, ‘The army’s not the army anymore, it’s better than it’s ever been before.’ Animation instantly boosts the morale of the audiences through exhibiting confidence in America’s forces. The combination of this ditty with the fade in to Donald’s conscription notice also implies that Donald’s influence on the army is going to be a positive one. (Fig. 1)

Donald salutes the audience, marching down the street of New York to the tune of the music, showing his excitement and willingness to take up this new military challenge. He wanders down the street, looking at all the posters of exciting things he will be able to do once enrolled in the army. Many of the posters show the friendly nature of all the soldiers and generals within the forces. Donald is also thrilled by the pictures of pretty women on the arms of many of the soldiers. (Fig. 2) He arrives at the conscription office and salutes the general. He states to the general that he wants to be in the air force. The general gets him to sign in to the army. Donald wants to fly straightaway but is told that he must pass his physical examination first. Noticeably the office holds many maps and flags of the United States, underling the patriotism of Donald’s conscription.



Figs. 1 & 2 From *Donald Gets Drafted* (US, 1942, dir. Jack King)

Going into the back of the office for his physical examination, Donald is quickly prodded by the army doctors who assess his general level of health. He is also subjected to a round of tests. Donald is told he must guess the colours of the cards put in front of him, which state the colour on the card clearly. He is also told the colour of the card by the doctor testing him. When Donald gets one of the colours wrong, he is told that 'it's close enough.' The audience sympathises with Donald's stupidity but are pleased that he is still able to do his patriotic duty. Donald is then stripped bare and measured for his army uniform. He is dressed in a uniform that is far too big for him, but soon shrinks to size. He is stamped with a blue 'Ok.'

The location switches to an army camp, where Donald is shown frustrated by the fact that all he does is march. The army sergeant, Pegleg Pete, demands that he 'get in step.' Donald, however, enthusiastically marching, accidentally steps out of line. Pete announces he's going to give Donald 'special training.' He announces that Donald 'ain't no soldier' and that he is 'hopeless.' Donald is furious and is told he needs to learn discipline. Pete demands that he doesn't move a muscle, which proves particularly difficult for Donald when ants begin to crawl all over him, making him want to scratch. When the ants become too difficult for him to bear, Donald begins to fire his gun everywhere. His punishment is peeling potatoes, while the music concludes, 'The army's not the army anymore.'

There are several points of interest within this cartoon. The first, naturally, relates to the character of Donald. In this year, Donald has already



shown his willingness to fight for his country by rushing to pay his income taxes. However, this did not involve physical involvement with the war effort. When he receives his draft notice, Donald is excited by the possibilities of the army, particularly the glamour associated with the air force, as demonstrated by the posters. However, his experiences in the army prove that being drafted does not automatically qualify him for the glamorous lifestyle, vindicated by his position at the end of the short, as he is left peeling potatoes as a punishment. However, Donald does not run away from his position. While he does complain about his plight (he peels his complaint word 'phooey' out of the leftover potato peel), he keeps loyal to his draft notice and tries desperately to obey the commands of his sergeant, Pegleg Pete.

Another point of interest in this cartoon is that the animated world directly reflects the real world. While the Treasury film was meant to instruct people on the necessity of paying their income taxes, *Donald Gets Drafted* shows the direct impact of the new conscription legislation introduced in American society from 1941. Due to the speed at which this film was made and released, the conditions of the army are displayed before American audiences so they are able to see the reality of life in the forces, before many of them had heard about it from friends, neighbours or even loved ones. While no mention of identity of the enemy is made in this film, Donald is nonetheless signing up to fight and the valiant patriotism of his act of conscription is heavily suggested.

The music relays the pride experienced by Donald in being allowed to fight for his country. The first half of the animated short takes on the traits of many of the nationalistic shorts of the late 1930s, such as *The Riveter* and *Window Cleaners* by showcasing famous American landmarks and cities. Donald is in New York when he gets drafted into the army. The office he enters to sign up is full of posters of famous American landmarks, maps of the United States, army crests and American flags. Donald is entering a new level of patriotism by signing up to fight for his country.

The short was received exceptionally well by American audiences. *Hollywood Spectator* reported that the short 'solidified animation's position at the

head of this fight with fascism.<sup>345</sup> This proves again, that audiences were capable of responding ideologically to animation. It also demonstrates that Donald appeared to be the best ‘man’ for the job, following his lead role within the Treasury films. *Donald Gets Drafted* thus fulfils many of the required aims of the OWI, by glorifying the fighting forces and through the suggestion of total war implied by Donald’s conscription into the army. It also demonstrates that every person involved within the war effort is of vital importance. While Donald does not prove himself a particularly effective soldier, he is still given an important role in preparing food for the soldiers. His position is integral to the winning of the war.

### ***The Army Mascot (US, 1942, dir Clyde Geronimi)***

No stranger himself to the ideological conflict experienced by Donald in the 1930s, Pluto was also a key Disney character who was heavily involved in the war effort. Divorced for the first time from his owner, Mickey, who audiences later discover is, of course, fighting in the war, Pluto takes on his own role within the wartime landscape of America.

In this short, he stumbles across the army camp whilst out hunting for food. Noticeably, the audience automatically makes the assumption that the training camps are within America. There is no real distance between what is going on in the army and the situation on the Home Front. Looking into the camp, Pluto spots a series of tents, army vehicles and importantly, an American flag blowing in the wind. He then spots the kennel of the ‘Mascot’ of the 1<sup>st</sup> Tank Corps which is an unattractive, grumpy looking bulldog. The bulldog, comically entitled Winston by the army general who comes to feed him, is given a joint of juicy roast beef to eat. Even the chihuahua nearby who is named as the ‘Mascot’ of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Corps is given a large porterhouse steak to eat, which is even bigger than him. Pluto licks his lips, excited by the prospect of such luxurious food. He then spots ‘Gunther Goat’ who is ‘Mascot’ to the ‘Yoo-Hoo’ division of the army. Thinking quickly, Pluto buries a way underneath the army camp fence and creeps up to Gunther Goat. Disguising

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<sup>345</sup> *Motion Picture Daily*, Vol, 51, No. 145, 15 September 1942

himself as Gunther, Pluto is the recipient of Gunther's food, which is simply a stack of canned goods. Pluto is then chased around the camp by Gunther. Tired and jealous of Gunther's popularity among the soldiers, Pluto is determined to prove himself a better mascot than Gunther. He begins to chew on tobacco to impress the soldiers with his 'manliness.' Soon after, Pluto begins to feel very lethargic and unwell. After turning a variety of colours,



Fig. 3 From *The Army Mascot* (US, 1942, dir. Clyde Geronimi)

Pluto curls up, feeling sick. Gunther creeps up on the sleeping Pluto and tries to fire him into the explosives container, however, on his approach, he misses Pluto, crashes into the container himself and manages to fly high up into the sky on a Boeing 314 flying boat.<sup>346</sup>

The plane is also adorned with the American flag. (Fig. 3) With Gunther out of the way, Pluto takes his place as the army mascot for the 'Yoo-Hoo' division.

While there is little to say ideologically regarding this cartoon, there are a few points of interest. Firstly, Pluto, who through the 1930s cartoons had proved himself to be just as selfish as Donald, changes substantially during the course of this animated short. It is the smell and promise of food that attracts Pluto into the army camp, as opposed to the pull of honour and patriotism. However, once he proves unsuccessful in getting the food he desires, it is the attraction to the honour of serving that makes Pluto want to prove himself to the army camp as a better mascot than Gunther. He chews a substantial amount of tobacco in order to position himself better with the soldiers. When he demonstrates that he can't get into the army through selfish means, such as the pursuit of food, he has to seek other ways to impress. This ends up being a substantial sacrifice for Pluto as he ends up feeling exceptionally unwell as a result. This seems to read as the sacrifice he is made to make. Pluto, too, wants

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<sup>346</sup>P.M. Bowers, 'The Great Clippers, Part I,' *Airpower*, Vol. 7, No. 6, (1977) pp. 14. This plane was among the first passenger aircraft to be able to fly over the Atlantic Ocean on a single flight. The plane referenced in the cartoon, the *Yankee Clipper* had its first flight in 1939 and crashed in 1943.

to be a part of the war effort. He is rewarded with the position of mascot at the end of the film.

Another point of interest within this cartoon is the undeniable background of war. Unlike Donald's foray into the world of the army training camps, Pluto's encounters in this short show the presence of men in these camps. This constitutes a clear link between the conflicts experienced within the animated world and those of the real world. Audiences are reminded in simple Disney animation that the war depicted in this world does not simply affect the animated characters. It affects real men too. These men are made all the more lifelike by the fact that the entire cartoon is shot on Pluto's level. We never see their faces. Like Pluto, we only hear their voices and see their cars and legs. Through allowing an identification of the audience with Pluto, we are still exposed to the reality of war and the world experienced by the army recruits.

Much like *Donald Gets Drafted*, response to this cartoon was very strong. *Motion Picture Daily* reviewed that 'Pluto joins the forces in this short. Highly entertaining. It would seem that no character is exempt from doing their bit.'<sup>347</sup>

### ***The Vanishing Private* (US, 1942, dir. Jack King)**

In *The Vanishing Private*, we once more return to Donald Duck's experiences of war. Donald, we discover, is still in camp and is now enrolled properly into the United States Army (Fig. 4). Continuity is established between this animated short and *Donald Gets Drafted* as we hear Donald singing 'The Army's not the Army anymore'. Donald, despite his shortcomings as a soldier in the previous short, is now shown fully integrated into army life. While he has still not fulfilled his dream of joining the air force, he has found a use for himself in painting army equipment in bright colours. He is happy in his endeavour. Despite Donald being one of the biggest complainers in the Disney character family, his morale is high now he is in the army.

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<sup>347</sup> *Motion Picture Daily*, Vol. 52, No. 6, 7 Dec 1942, pp. 15

Pete spots Donald and confronts him, asking what he is doing. Donald explains he is a camouflage painter. Pete is infuriated, exclaiming that he has to paint the weaponry so no one can see it. Donald, ashamed, says he didn't know. He sneaks into the Camouflage Corps of the army



Fig. 4 From *The Vanishing Private* (US, 1942, dir. Jack King)

where he dips his finger in an army experiment: invisible paint. Donald, impressed with the effects of the paint, takes it and paints the large army canon in the invisible paint. Pete, believing that the canon has been stolen, starts to panic. When he discovers Donald has painted the entire canon with invisible



Fig. 5 From *The Vanishing Private* (US, 1942, dir. Jack King)

paint, he blows into the end of it. Donald goes head first into the bucket of invisible paint. The audience sees Donald's footprints moving away from the scene. (Fig. 5) He runs to a nearby lake and is chased into a field by Pete. He soon becomes covered in flower blossoms, giving away his position.

Pete quickly catches on and scatters petals around to try and locate him. Donald then begins to sing, '*Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush*,' providing yet another link to the nationalistic cartoons of the late 1930s, celebrating American musical culture.

While Pete tries to locate Donald by throwing petals, he is stopped in his tracks by the arrival of the General. The General, adorned with war medals and sporting the American eagle on his hat, strikes a particular likeness to General Carl Spaatz.<sup>348</sup> When Pete explains he's looking for a little guy that he

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<sup>348</sup> General Carl Spaatz was the first Chief of Staff of the American Air Force. A General of German descent, Spaatz directed the Allied bombing effort against Nazi Germany. He was a well-known, high profile figure and his efforts in the war in Europe are well recorded in the

can't see, the General looks at him quizzically. Donald sneakily puts a cactus into Pete's trousers. Donald runs rings around Pete through the army camp and the audience see men standing to attention, tanks and the weapons' arsenal. Donald simply skips away, continuing to sing. Sergeant Pete, determined to find Donald, begins to throw grenades through the camp, trying to locate Donald. The General tries to calm a seemingly hysterical Sergeant Pete. As a result, the cartoon closes on Pete in a cell, restrained by a ball and chain and a strait jacket, while Donald sneakily marches past, with a cheeky look at the audience.

This cartoon provided a morale boost for the audience, based around Donald's escapades in the army. Pegleg Pete, an associated villain from the 1930s cartoons, fits well into his role as the authoritative but cruel sergeant who continues to torment Donald. The short also reveals the grand authority within the army, the General. He commands a great deal of respect and wishes to promote peace within the camp among the soldiers. Interestingly, the cartoon also places Donald among the men serving within the army. They are explicitly shown to be fighting the same war. This cartoon provides a careful setting for Donald's wartime experiences; whatever Donald experiences, the audience too can imagine their own loved ones experiencing.

### ***Fall Out, Fall In* (US, 1943, dir. Jack King)**

Audiences next encounter Donald in a war time setting in the 1943 cartoon, *Fall Out, Fall In*. Again, the short opens with Donald wearing his US army hat, instantly alerting the audience to the military nature of the cartoon. However, this opening shot is suggestive that Donald's military antics simply constitutes an ordinary day. The war time setting of animation is now seen to be normal. While the constraints of the war on the Home Front were anything

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press of the time. For more information on Spaatz's significance for Americans during the war, see also 'Spaatz Stresses Joint Offensive', *The New York Times*, 18 August 1942, pp. 5; 'Spaatz in Africa to Step Up Air Raid,' *The New York Times*, 6 December 1942, pp. 56. See also, D.R. Mets, *Master of Airpower: General Carl A. Spaatz* (Novato, Presidio Press, 1988), R.G. Davis, *Carl A. Spaatz and the Air War in Europe* (Washington, Centre for Air Force History, 1993)

but ordinary, the charting of Donald's exploits in the army came to be part of a regular cinematic context for cinema goers.

Noticeably, the enthusiasm and patriotism of 'The Army's not the Army any more' is absent from this animated production. As with the Treasury short subject *Spirit of '43*, the Disney Studios recognised that the initial enthusiasm for the war was rapidly fading, given that the Allies were bogged down in the North African Offensive in Europe. As the conditions of the war changed for the American people, so too did the experience of the animated characters living the war *for* the American audiences.

The short opens on the army, participating in a military drill. Donald is shown at the end of the company, struggling to keep up with the quick pace of the men he is fighting with. (Fig. 6) Donald, while at the back of the company, enthusiastically charts that they are five miles from the army camp. His tail even drums the back of his army pack in time to the march he is participating in. In a flash, we soon discover that the army company is now ten miles from the camp. Again this demonstrates that the army training that Donald is participating in is in the United States. The journey Donald takes with the rest of the soldiers showcases some beautiful animated landscapes, tapping into the national pride of the audience, animating the best of the country they are fighting for. Again, this was a tried and tested technique utilised in the late 1930s to instil nationalism into audiences.

Donald shows that the journey is tiring him but still continues to march. The company hits bad weather and Donald plods on through the rain and snow, charting the number of miles they have all travelled on the back of his comrade's pack. The company then reaches the desert, where Donald's white fur is catastrophically exposed to sunburn. (Fig. 7) When the company finally halts, Donald collapses with exhaustion, however, soon gets to his feet when dinner is announced. He pulls his pack open, revealing many pictures of Daisy Duck and assembles his cooking utensils. However, the sergeant tells him that he must fix his camp first. Noticeably, to enhance the feeling that Donald is training with and fighting alongside men, Pegleg Pete is no longer

featured as the sergeant of the camp. Instead, as his replacement, the audience simply hears a faceless voice who gives Donald his orders.



Figs. 6 & 7 From *Fall Out, Fall In* (US, 1943, dir. Jack King)

While the other soldiers help themselves to food, Donald fixes his camp but finds that his tent is not secure and will not protect him from the elements. (Fig. 8) Donald is still trying to fix his tent, having had no food or water when the rest of the company is asleep. Fed up, Donald covers himself with a small blanket. He is interrupted by the snoring of his comrades who make the noises of drums, rifles and trumpets as they sleep. Donald sports huge shadows under his eyes by the time the company is ordered to begin marching again in the morning.

In this short, Donald leaves the comfort of the training camp and experiences the rough terrain and terrible conditions of the army company out in the field. While the company is still in the United States and thus does not participate in any combat, Donald seriously suffers with



Fig. 8 From *Fall Out, Fall In* (US, 1943, dir. Jack King)

exhaustion from the terrible conditions he is made to experience. Donald's enthusiasm for the army life rapidly wavers throughout the short, particularly when he is unable to put up his tent and is denied any food or sleep until he does so. What is more, the formerly selfish member of the American citizenship has to learn to tolerate the bad habits of others, which Donald



discovers through their snoring and eventually has to literally bury his head in the sand, in order to get some peace and quiet.

True to the historical context under which it was released, *Fall Out, Fall In*, is an accurate reflection of the rigorous nature of army life.<sup>349</sup> Donald struggles day by day. And yet, true to the struggles of the Allied powers, on no sleep and no food, Donald is ready to carry on marching with his company when called to order in the morning. While he complains to himself about his situation through his traditional grumble, 'Phooey', he never complains to the sergeant or to any of the other soldiers in his company. Donald thus exemplifies the perfect patriot in this cartoon. Despite his failed attempts, all his actions are to attempt to keep him in line with the community of soldiers. His actions are all for the greater good and his tribulations throughout the short demonstrate the OWI inspired sacrifice.

Despite the fact that this short makes perhaps the most negative commentary on life in the army, audiences still responded well to Donald's trials and tribulations. A review of the cartoon in *Hollywood Spectator* noted that, 'Donald's sufferings are an inspiration... the Disney studio continues to unite audiences under the banner of war.'<sup>350</sup>

### ***Victory Vehicles* (US, 1943, dir. Jack Kinney)**

In an interesting twist on the regular Disney personalities fronting the United States war effort, *Victory Vehicles* constitutes the first ever Disney cartoon with Goofy as the leading personality. An association is immediately made with the Allied 'V for Victory' campaign on the title page of the short as the car featured is adorned with patriotic stickers, including the blue 'V for Victory' symbol.

In an attempt to induce the audience to action with another war spirited song, the animation opens with a convincing ditty aimed at reducing

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<sup>349</sup> For more information on the day-to-day life of an US army recruit, see S.E. Ambrose, *The Victors: Eisenhower and his boys: The men of World War Two* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1998) and M.K. Wells, *Courage and Air warfare: the Allied aircrew experience in the Second World War*, (Essex, Portland, 1995)

<sup>350</sup> *Hollywood Spectator*, Vol. 17, No. 6, pp. 67

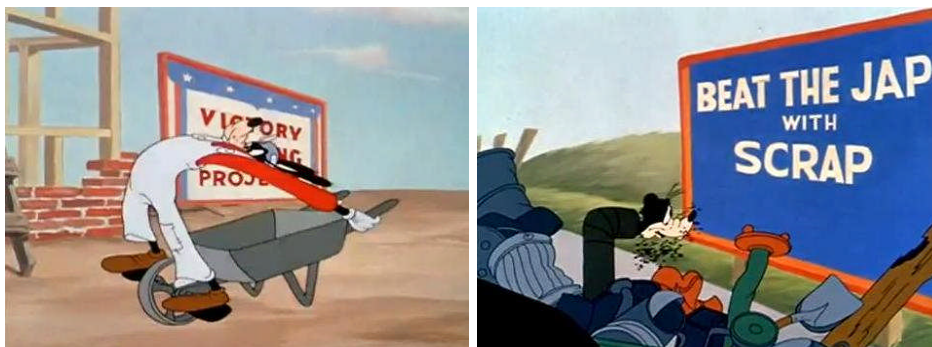
the amount of fuel consumption by the general public. The lyrics state, 'Who needs a limousine that's always out of gasoline. Jump on your pogo stick and laugh your cares away.'

The short opens with the familiar narrative of the educational war time shorts, Fred Shields.<sup>351</sup> The narrative charts the development of towns and cities since the invention of the motorcar and the subsequent highways. However, the narrator explains the problems that come from a heavy reliance upon cars and gasoline. This is demonstrated by the technique of the animap. The animap charts the various journeys needed to be made by different people and the struggles they face with a gasoline shortage.

The narrator then explains that thousands of people tried to come up with a solution to the gasoline shortage, inventing different kinds of vehicles that operated without gasoline. Many of these blueprints are shown to the audience; some are nothing more than bathtubs with wheels. Goofy demonstrates these ideas for the audience, representing the patriotic spirit of the many citizens who submitted ideas to the Government. One of these ideas, for example, involves Goofy cycling on a wheelbarrow to transport his building materials around site. This would be to no avail, were it not for the fact that his actions are part of the 'Victory Housing Project', shown in the background of the animation in red, white and blue. (Fig. 9) Many of the other ideas showcased by Goofy pass into the realms of the ridiculous, however the presence of red, white and blue throughout the animated short indicates that all the ideas are done in the service of the country and are motivated by patriotism. Goofy even plays the part of an exhausted air raid warden (again, his patriotic motives are indicated by the presence of a red, white and blue emblem on his armband and own his helmet.) Even his idea of moving himself along by holding a magnet close to his helmet is proved in the interests of patriotism. Goofy attracts a heap of scrap metal to his person with the magnet and crashes into a red, white and blue sign, reading 'Beat the Jap with Scrap!' (Fig. 10).

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<sup>351</sup>Frederick Shields contributed his voice talent to many Disney productions, the most famous of which was The Great Prince of the Forest in the Disney animated feature film, *Bambi* (US, 1943, dir. David Hand)



Figs. 9 & 10

From *Victory Vehicles* (US, 1943, dir. Jack Kinney)

The narrator explains that not all the ideas were as successful as the ones demonstrated by Goofy but then reveals that the answer to society's gasoline shortage lies primarily in an object regarded by many as a children's toy: the pogo stick. Indeed, the pogo stick's association with the national effort is also demonstrated. The toy is light with a white light, places on a blue pedestal with red ledges for the feet of the one riding it. Goofy emerges from his house with the stick, labelled as a defence worker, automatically linking him with the war effort. Despite riding a pogo stick, explains the narrator, he is able to continue with his normal day to day tasks. For example, we see Goofy reading his newspaper whilst on his pogo stick. Goofy arrives at work, invigorated by his morning exercise and ready to start a day's work. As Goofy makes his way on the highway, the narrator suggests that the country could save on concrete if everyone took to using the pogo stick for transportation instead of their cars. The saving on concrete, he enlightens the audience, could be dropped on Tokyo or Berlin. The narrator then explains some further benefits of the adoption of pogo sticks and the audience witnesses the entire animated world utilising them for transport.

What is of particular interest in this cartoon is not its basic premise of replacing motorcars with pogo sticks. It is simply the startling evidence of the extent to which total war has hit the animated world. For the first time, much like *Out of the Frying Pan and Into the Firing Line*, the link is made between the animated home front and the war in the Pacific and Europe. The patriotism of each idea, as mentioned, is demonstrated by the recurrence of red, white and blue throughout the short. The narrator's references to Tokyo and Berlin as

well as the sign 'Beat the Jap with Scrap' links the home front's efforts directly to victory on the battlefields.

This short also promotes the OWI directive on the unity in the civilian war effort, the 'total' nature of war and on the purchase of war bonds. The backgrounds in *Victory Vehicles* all show evidence of involvement in the war effort, showing the commitment of the animated world to the cause of the Second World War. Goofy's encounter with the newspaper salesman shows a poster for the sale of war bonds in the background (Fig. 11) A shot in the centre of Goofy's town shows the Rationing Board and a poster in a shop window for citizens to 'Sign up and Serve' (Fig. 12). Everything within the animated world is geared towards the war effort, making it an accurate reflection of the nature of the Home Front in 1943 America.



Figs. 11 & 12 From *Victory Vehicles* (US, 1943, dir. Jack Kinney)

### ***Sky Trooper* (US, 1944, dir. Jack King)**

As the war moved into its final years, so did the experience of Donald Duck in the army. *Sky Trooper*, two years after Donald's initial conscription into the army, he finally makes it into the air training base he has dreamed of since 1942. Bombers emblazoned with red, white and blue, stars and stripes, zoom past Donald's window as he longingly looks outside. He is in the kitchens, peeling potatoes. He cries out that he wants to fly and even carves a plane out of his potato skin. Absent minded as ever, Donald accidentally peels Sergeant Pete's hat into the shape of many aeroplanes. Noticing his enthusiasm, Pete teases Donald and releases thousands more potatoes. He tells Donald that once he has finished peeling all those potatoes,

he will be allowed to fly. Thrilled, Donald gets to work. Finishing quickly, he reports to the Air Sergeant's office. Donald is subjected to a series of ridiculous tests to judge his suitability to fly, including pinning the tail on the aeroplane while he is blindfolded.

Spotting a sign for parachute troops, Pete calls Donald who boards the plane with the other troops. Donald excitedly puts on his pack, not knowing that he is carrying a parachute. Once the soldiers line up to jump off the plane, Donald exclaims that they must be on the ground, clueless that he is going to have to parachute off the plane at great height. Scared of heights, Donald clings on to Sergeant Pete to stop himself from leaving the plane. However, Pete eventually loses his own grip and the two cling to the weapon aboard the plane. They explode into the general's headquarters and are both sentenced to potato peeling. A large potato is stuck onto Donald's nose and he squeals, 'Am I mortified?!'<sup>352</sup>

Noticeably, as the war enters its final years, the tone of the animated shorts becomes distinctly more optimistic. In this short, while it doesn't have a particularly positive ending, Donald is able to go up in an aeroplane for the first time in his life. This is what attracted him and many other army recruits to the forces in the first place and after two years' service, his wish is almost granted. The seriousness of the conditions of war is also eliminated in this short. While Donald suffered greatly in *Fall Out, Fall In*, here, his only suffering in this production is his need to fulfil his dream of flying. He is not put through any physical duress, apart from the ridiculous tests he is made to do by Sergeant Pete. The reappearance of Sergeant Pete is also of interest. The dialogue between Pete and Donald makes for an amusing tone to the cartoon. There is also an absence of animated men which were present in the earlier 1943 cartoons. This short thus sees the beginning of the physical separation of the animated world from the real world as the Allies moved towards winning the war. The introduction of old gags found in the 1930s cartoons also signals

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<sup>352</sup>'Am I mortified?!' was the well-known catch phrase of comedian Jimmy Durante who was enormously popular with Hollywood audiences during the 1930s. For more information on Jimmy Durante, see G. Fowler, *Schnozzola: The Story of Jimmy Durante* (New York, Viking Press, 1991)

the move towards normality, for example, the play on Jimmy Durante's nose at the end of the short.

### ***Commando Duck* (US, 1944, dir. Jack King)**

While many of the 1942 and 1943 Disney cartoons featured a direct attack on the Nazi regime and its ideology, no such treatment was placed upon the Hirohito regime. Similar to the situation within Hollywood, an effort was made within animation to separate the German people from the evils of the ideology of Nazism. However, the Japanese were simply depicted as a cruel, barbaric race of people, led only by their animal instincts. Their appearances were ridiculed and caricatured throughout animation. Interestingly, while the Warner Brothers cartoons featured extensive caricaturing of the Japanese race, Disney only really tackled the Japanese race alone through the last battle themed short of the war: *Commando Duck*. In previous shorts, the threat from the Japanese was secondary to that faced by Hitler's Nazi regime, reflective of Roosevelt's 'Europe First' policy.<sup>353</sup> However, with the threat of the Axis powers in Europe fading quickly during 1944, the enemy in the Disney cartoons shifts to the Japanese.

Donald fights the Nazis in his dreams in *Der Fuehrer's Face* (US, 1943, dir. Jack Kinney), accurately to an extent, as the American soldiers, at that time, did not experience any battle in Germany itself. However, in the final years of the war, when the American army focused its strategy on the Japanese, Donald is put directly into the Pacific war zone.

The short opens aboard an aircraft. Donald is heavily burdened with weaponry and equipment but having seemingly conquered his fear of jumping from planes, he receives his war assignment to find an enemy airfield with

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<sup>353</sup> Roosevelt's 'Europe first' policy sparked controversy in American society. Due to the attack on Pearl Harbor, many wanted to see the Japanese as the first target of the armed forces during the war. However, in combination with Churchill, Roosevelt believed that tactically, attacking the Axis Powers through mainland Europe was the better course of action. The policy was widely reported; see, for example, A. O'Hare McCormick, 'First Blow in Europe,' *The New York Times*, 18 June 1942, pp. 20. For more information on this policy, see specifically, C.C. Tansill, *Back Door to War: Roosevelt's Foreign Policy, 1933-1941*, (Chicago, H. Regnery, Co., 1952) and R. Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*

pride but also demonstrates his fear for what is about to happen to him. He jumps from the plane and lands safely, launching his emergency boat. Visibly displaying caution, Donald sets sail on the river. On the banks, however, the audience sees two Japanese snipers aiming for Donald. They are hidden in trees but upon hearing their accents and seeing them bow to each other, they are immediately identified as the Japanese enemy. The short then shows many Japanese rifles pointed in Donald's direction. While we don't yet see the faces of the men, one refers to the Japanese custom of always 'shouting a man in the back.' The audience are not left in doubt. Donald is in Japan and he will soon be facing the Japanese enemy.

Donald is soon under Japanese fire but manages to escape being hurt. He paddles away quickly, only to come across a dangerous waterfall. He throws a rope over a nearby rock to try and pull himself to safety. However, in the bushes, we are given our first shot of a Disney animated Japanese soldier. The soldier manages to shoot at the rope holding Donald to safety. Donald's raft fills with water and eventually bursts on him. He runs quickly to escape the cascading water. Upon reaching the edge of a cliff, he catches sight of the enemy Japanese airbase. In a saddening twist, Donald looks at the oncoming water cascade, full of dangerous rocks heading towards him, accepts his fate, and salutes, ready to die for his country. However, the force of the water cascades him upwards, leaving him hanging from a nearby tree. The water falls down the cliff edge, destroying the enemy air base. Donald happily sends out the message that he has 'washed' away the base.

In its depiction of the Japanese enemy, this Disney cartoon was relatively tame by comparison to its Warner Brothers counterparts. However, there are several things of interest. Firstly, with regard to the Japanese, no attempt is made to separate the Japanese people from the soldiers as is accomplished in the earlier Disney cartoons with the German enemy. While only one Japanese soldier is shown, all are depicted as equally stupid. The brutality of the Japanese is only shown in so far as he is responsible for Donald falling to his death, however, no blood is shed and Donald is ultimately not

hurt by the soldier's actions. On the contrary, with hindsight, the Japanese soldier is ultimately responsible for the destruction of his own airbase.

The animation also constitutes the epitome of Donald's contribution towards the American war effort. From undergoing rigorous training, fighting the Nazi threat within his dreams, paying his taxes whilst at home, peeling potatoes for the soldiers, Donald is finally able to assist in destroying the enemy for his country. His actions are direct and under command. However, notably, to maintain his goodness and morality, Donald is never shown actually destroying the enemy or even pointing a gun. In this way, Disney characters maintain a violent innocence kept out of the live action films.<sup>354</sup>

### **Bugs, Daffy & the Nips – Warner Brothers' contribution to the war effort**

The Warner Brothers producer Leon Schlesinger was somewhat resentful of the fact that Disney was awarded all of the Government contract work. However, this did not stop the Studios from producing some of the most ideologically focused animated shorts of the entire war time period. Unlike Disney, due to the harsh and anti-realist nature of Warner Brothers animation, the productions of the Schlesinger studio developed license to handle harsher and cruder subjects, notably in their depiction of the Japanese threat. However, again this animation capitalised on techniques used within the 1930s. Many of the stereotypes for the Japanese and for war subjects during these animated shorts were laid upon the foundations of the short subjects that handled international relations in the 1930s. Furthermore, the shorts handling the American armed forces and the importance of the Allied ideology lent heavily from the patriotic material of the late 1930s.

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<sup>354</sup>While the Disney cartoons were clear to show the fact that their animated characters would never hold a gun to an animated man or woman, Donald was no stranger to toting weaponry and threatening to use it against another. In the 1939 short, *Donald's Penguin* (US, 1939, dir. Jack King) Donald holds his penguin up at gun point.



### ***The Ducktators* (US, 1943, dir. Norman McCabe)**

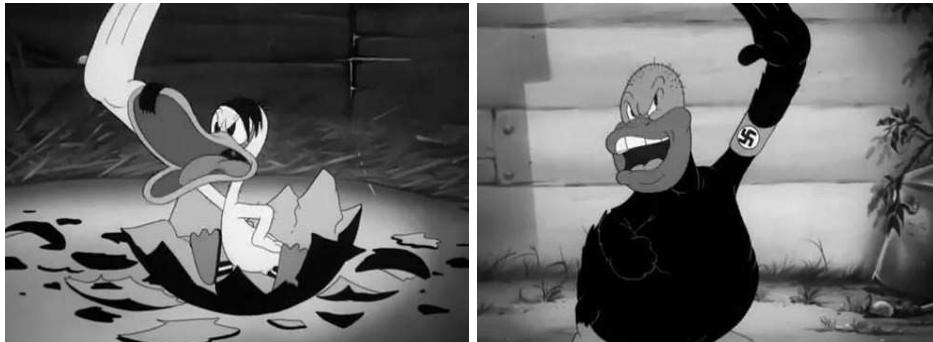
*The Ducktators* constitutes an explicit commentary on the rise of Hitler and his relationship with the Axis powers. Its closest Disney counterpart is, arguably *Der Fuehrer's Face*, as both use simple animated concepts in order to relay complex ideas to the audience. However, unlike Disney, who animates the men Hitler, Mussolini and Tojo, *The Ducktators* leaves the dictators in their animal form. The threat they pose is therefore restricted to the animated world. Far from taking place in Germany, as Donald's dream working life in Nutziland does, the action in *The Ducktators* is strictly confined to the traditional farmyard setting of the animated world. Warner Brothers animation, in its anti-realist stance, in this way, separates the conflict of the animated world from the real world. In many ways, the short utilises similar techniques to those found in the 1933 short *Confidence*. As the impact of Hitler's rise to power grows, so too does the impact on the farmyard setting.

The short opens in the same way as many of the 1930s Looney Tunes shorts, showing an idyllic farmyard landscape. We are shown many of the geese and ducks waiting to smoke their cigars as 'Mr. and Mrs. Duck were expecting.' We hear the chirps of an unhatched egg and Mrs. Duck rushes to see her newborn hatchling. The egg, however, is black and rotten, indicating from the outset that perhaps something is amiss with this newborn. The parents crowd around the egg, waiting for it to hatch. The father duck asks the mother duck, 'Was ist los?' implying the first diversion from the traditional Warner Brothers' cartoon: the animals are German. The egg finally hatches and a baby Hitler chick is born (Fig. 13).

Instantly recognisable as the animated duck form of the German leader, the chick constitutes a ridiculous character. In showing the hatchling Hitler as inherently evil and 'rotten' due to the black egg, *The Ducktators* deals with a sophisticated level of ideology. It implies that the Axis leaders were born evil. There is no room for the middle ground of social conditioning in the animated world. This is also in keeping with the lack of grey area in the portrayal of the Nazis and the Japanese in Hollywood during the war. There is no such thing as the good Nazi or the good Japanese. Disney, however, does make these

distinctions. The Mother and Father of the child Hans in *Education for Death* seem innocent in comparison to the Nazi soldier who threatens to take their child away when he becomes ill.

The narrator then tells us that time passes and with his artistic efforts spurned, the Hitler chick found talent elsewhere. We see the grown up Hitler duck giving a speech on a ‘soft soap’ podium in the barnyard to some eager geese, stuffing their faces with corn. The narrator states that there were ‘some gullible ones who listened.’ While this does imply a negative portrayal of the German people, the narrator quickly diverts attention from the German citizens to the ‘most gullible goose.’ This is a caricature of Mussolini. (Fig. 14) Mussolini is importantly viewed as a Nazi. Their shared ideology of fascism is broken down simply into Nazism through the display of a swastika armband on Mussolini’s arm as though he was simply another Nazi soldier. All the Warner Brothers’ audience need to know, as far as this cartoon demonstrates, is that Mussolini is simply another Nazi, supportive of Hitler’s ideology.



Figs. 13 & 14

From *The Ducktators*, (US, 1942, dir. Norman McCabe)

Demonstrating its self-awareness in a way that always separated Warner Brothers’ animation from Disney, a disclaimer appears from the management, apologising to ‘the nice Ducks and Geese who may be in the audience.’ Using this extra layer of self-aware narrative, breaking the fourth wall between the confines of cinematic narrative and the audience, Warner Brothers also shields itself from any offence it may cause with its crude caricaturing.<sup>355</sup> If the

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<sup>355</sup>The ‘fourth wall’ is a cinematic term used to describe the effect when the presence of the audience is acknowledged within the narrative of a film production. This is usually done in mainstream film by an actor or actress looking directly at the camera, showing an awareness of

caricaturing of Mussolini and Hitler brought the action of the animation too close for comfort to the real world, the Warner Brothers' animators step in to remind the audience that they are *only* watching an animation. Due to the realist nature of Disney animation, this extra layer of audience directed narrative never exists.

Watching the developments of the Ducktators unfold, the Mussolini goose appears ever more ridiculous, shouting "Tutti Frutti and all kinds of whipped cream and nuts!" to one tiny chick who is held in place with a ball and chain and made to applaud when Mussolini goose holds up a sign reading, 'Applause.' We also see the animated version of the Nazi storm troopers, who literally take a storm with them as they march through the yard.

High above the farmyard, we see the dove of peace, watching sorrowfully at the militaristic marching movements of the duck storm troopers. We are then taken to the farmyard peace conference, where Hitler duck

signs the Treaty in front of many other ducks and geese. The Treaty is put into



Fig. 15 From *The Ducktators* (US, 1942, dir. Norman McCabe)

a letter box labelled, 'For filing sacred pledges,' which at its base, is a 'Treaty tearer upper.' (Fig. 15) The Treaty comes out as confetti. Again, through its natural simplification of everyday objects and concepts, much like the vat of confidence injected into the farmyard animals in *Confidence*, animation invents its own physical objects to simplify complicated concepts. To explain Hitler's intentions at Munich, which is obviously under scrutiny here, *The Ducktators* simply shows Hitler putting the peace treaty into a shredder straightaway, demonstrating that he never intended to stick to his 'sacred pledges.'<sup>356</sup>

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its existence. For more information on the 'fourth wall,' see D. Bordwell & K. Thompson, *Film History: An Introduction* (New York, McGraw-Hill, 2002)

<sup>356</sup>The Munich Conference was held in September 1938. Hitler made demands upon Britain, France and Czechoslovakia for an annexation of the Sudetenland in northern Czechoslovakia. When an agreement was made for the land, British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain stated that the Munich Agreement would bring 'peace for our time.' Just five months later, Hitler went back on the Agreement and invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia. The Conference was

From the West, explains the narrator, comes another power. The newest addition to the *Ducktators* constitutes a caricature of the Japanese Prime Minister, Tojo. Similar to the Disney interpretation in *Der Fuehrer's Face*, Tojo's appearance is heavily caricatured as he makes his way across a nearby pond to join the other two ducktators. So there is no mistaking his nationality or his ideological allegiance, Tojo, like Mussolini, is also wearing a Nazi swastika armband and carries the Japanese flag. To signify his plans for expansion, whilst swimming over the pond, the Tojo duck sticks a sign on what he believes to be an island but what turns out to be a tortoise, which reads, 'Japanese Mandate Island.' Animation again simplifies Japan's foreign policy with signage. He even tries to trick the tortoise into thinking he is Chinese, by pointing to a simple badge on his torso which reads, 'I am Chinese, Made in Japan.'

Frustrated, the Dove of Peace decides to take action against the Axis powers. He leads the charge against the three ducktators, which breaks out into total war within the farmyard. Amid the conflict, he passes a poster, reading 'Buy United States war bonds'. A soldier within the poster hops out into the farmyard and begins shooting at the ducktators. This constitutes the first indication of United States involvement in the fight. Interestingly, while this is a man involving himself in a barnyard re-enactment of World War Two, the distance between the real life conflict and the animated conflict is maintained as the man returns to the poster at the end of the short.

Following the victory of the Dove of Peace over the ducktators, the audience is addressed once more through a textual narrative. Showing the three heads of the ducktators on the wall of Peace's cabin, the text reads, 'If you would like to make this true, all you have to do is buy war bonds.' The man from the poster who contributed towards victory is shown once more and the audience are encouraged to purchase war bonds.

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believed, at the time, to have been very successful and its outcome had a positive effect on America's economy. See 'Stocks Here Leap In A Dramatic Day,' *The New York Times*, 29 September 1938, pp. 7. For more information on the Munich Conference, see R. Overy, *The Dictators*, (London, Penguin Group, 2004) pp. 91-104 and L.C. Gardner, *Spheres of Influence: the partition of Europe from Munich to Yalta*, (London, Murray, 1993)

As well as the ideological concepts already mentioned, there are a few other points of interest within this particular animated short. Firstly, with the exception of the soldier who leaps from the War Bonds poster to shoot at the ducktators (which isn't even shown to the audience) there is no Allied involvement whatsoever in the conflict that unfolds within the barnyard against the dictators. In their place, what develops is an interesting one sided interpretation of the morality play we encounter in the Disney cartoons *Donald's Better Self* and *Donald's Decision*. The Dove of Peace is instantly recognisable as morally right and his position far above the farmyard setting also implies a link to heaven, suggesting an angelic status. The Allied powers, clearly defined at this point within the war, find their voice only through the Dove of Peace. This in itself constitutes heavy ideological weighting. The Dove of Peace does not want to fight the Axis powers and only fights when provoked, suggesting that the Allies were forced into war.

Furthermore, if one compares the treatment of the Nazi threat here to, for example, *Education for Death* and *Der Fuehrer's Face*, a serious distinction can be made. The Warner Brothers cartoons, anti-realist in nature, ridicule the Nazi threat and their Allies. Donald is afraid of the Axis powers and is physically threatened by their presence on a day to day basis. While the dictators in each of the Disney treatments warrant ridicule, their position as animated men makes the physical threat of their presence seem more substantial. The dictators in *The Ducktators* are all farmyard animals and never seriously threaten the position of any of the other animals. There is no battle, weapons are fired not in conflict but in chaos.

### ***Fifth Column Mouse* (US, 1943, dir. Isadore Freleng)**

While many of the war time Warner Brothers cartoons simply dealt with lampooning the Nazi, Japanese and Italian threats, equally many dealt with themes inherent within Hollywood movies of the time, for example, spies and infiltration of the enemy. As Blum has argued, in the absence of a direct threat to the homeland of America, false threats had to be created in the

movies, particularly in support of Roosevelt's 'Europe First' strategy.<sup>357</sup> *Fifth Column Mouse* was one such animation.



Fig. 16 From *Fifth Column Mouse* (US, 1943, dir. Isadore Freleng)

It opens in an idyllic community, where mice live together in harmony. They are even singing the popular 1920s song 'Ain't We Got Fun.' One of the mice spots the cat observing them at the window and fears for their lives. He is told not to worry as they are safe inside. However, the cat soon finds his way in to disrupt the mice. An authoritative mouse rises up and cries 'The cat! Lights out!' As though mimicking an aerial bombing, the mice are plunged into darkness and run for their lives into their hole. Tricking one mouse by holding up an artificial mouse hole, the cat manages to trap him. He implores that he will not hurt him and tempts him with cheese. The cat whispers that the mouse can have all the cheese he wants and then whispers a temptation to him in German. The animated short instantly identifies the enemy cat as German. Similar to the Disney characterisation of the Big Bad Wolf, this association thus has the power to carry to all subsequent cat and mouse variations. Indicatively, once the cat has finished giving his demands to the mouse, the mouse gives a Nazi salute to the cat, making the instant connection with Hitler's regime. (Fig. 16)

The mouse is released from the cat back into the community where he attempts to convince his peers that the cat is not as bad as they think he is. An association with Nazi propaganda methods can be made here. The mouse speaks in song, almost attempting to hypnotise the mice to accept his point of view. He gestures wildly, inducing the mice into a trance which can easily be compared to the power of Hitler's spoken word. He also uses much of the

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<sup>357</sup>J.M. Blum, *V was for Victory*, pp. 15

same national protectionist rhetoric used by the Nazis in order to arouse fervour within the community of mice.<sup>358</sup>

In the next shot, we see that the fifth column mouse was successful in his vendetta as the mice are acting as slaves to the cat, clipping his nails, grooming him and fanning his face. When browsing the menu for his evening meal with many mice waiting to tend his every need, the cat announces that he wants a 'fat tender mouse' for dinner. Fleeing in fear, the mice retreat to the hole. However, they soon group together and under leadership, decide to 'get rid of that cat.' The mice, in soldier formation, march out for their final battle with the cat. (Fig. 17) Helmets are placed upon their heads and they develop secret weapons in mass community projects.

Indicative that the battle they face is on a scale with the one faced in the barnyard against the ducktators, a clear shot of the 'V for Victory: Buy War Bonds and Stamps' is visible, with the animated human soldier replaced by a mouse soldier in similar dress. (Fig. 18) Due to the clear connection made to the war against the Axis powers through the propaganda posters, his German accent and the methods he uses in order to trick the mice, an immediate association is made between the cat and Hitler.

Having built a large animal contraption to rival the cat, the mice easily manage to scare off their enemy. Once victorious, the mice sing of the fact that they 'did it before and they did it again.' Through music, animation is able to forge another layer of meaning complementing the short's content. The reference to a previous battle is made. While on the surface, this could refer to a previous dual the mice fought with the cat, due to the associations made between the cat and Nazi Germany throughout, it seems clear that the short is actually referring to the First World War fought against Imperialist Germany from 1914 to 1918, who roused similar nationalistic sentiments among the German nation.<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>358</sup>For more information on the Nazi regime and its propaganda methods, see D. Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema*, D. Welch, *Nazi Propaganda: the Power and the Limitations* (London, Croon Helm, 1983) I. Kershaw, *The Hitler Myth: Image and Reality in the Third Reich* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1987) and R.Evans, *The Third Reich In Power 1933-1939* (New York, Penguin Press, 2005)

<sup>359</sup> W. Carr, *A History of Germany, 1815-1990*, (London, Arnold, 1991) pp. 187-211



Figs. 17 & 18

From *Fifth Column Mouse* (US, 1943, dir. Isadore Freleng)

### ***Tokio Jokio* (US, 1943, dir. Norman McCabe)**

*Tokio Jokio* is now widely regarded as one of the most racially offensive animated shorts ever made.<sup>360</sup> In stark contrast to Disney animation, Warner Brothers were not afraid to use heavy and offensive caricature of the Japanese. In doing so, they laid upon the foundations laid down in the early 1930s Buddy animation and late 1930s Porky Pig cartoons. While live action films lent themselves to explore the bestial quality of the Japanese threat, animation took up the cause of exaggerating and playing upon the supposed stupidity of their enemy in the Pacific.

Several advanced propagandistic techniques are used in the making of *Tokio Jokio* which separates it from many of the other animated shorts of the period. While still operating within the paradigm of the animated world, framed typically by the opening short of Porky, Daffy and Bugs, the short does not open in a rural or stereotypical city setting. The audience is exposed to static, and the narrator announces that the footage has, in fact, been captured from behind enemy lines. Adding this fourth wall to the narrative, enabling the familiar self-aware connection with the audience facilitates the feeling of truth from within the exaggerated framework of the animated world.

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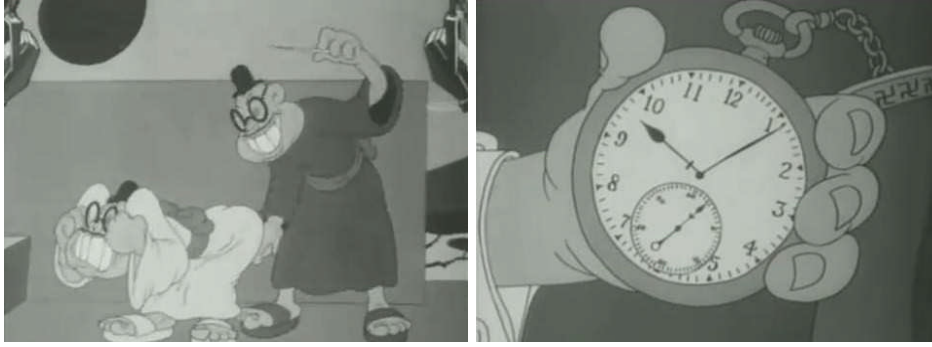
<sup>360</sup>K.F. Cohen, *Forbidden Animation: censored cartoons and blacklisted animators* (Jefferson, McFarland & Co, 1997) pp. 54 and T. Engelhardt, *The End of Victory Culture: Cold War America and the Disillusioning of a Generation* (New York, Basic Books, 1995) pp. 48



The cockerel who opens the news swiftly transforms into a buzzard, caricatured to look like the Japanese Prime Minister, Tojo. Again, the character of the buzzard already has negative connotations for audiences of Warner Brothers cartoons. In *Porky's Poultry Plant*, it was the buzzard that threatened the peace of Porky's farm and that launched an aerial attack against him, provoking a terrible conflict between them.

Using text credits to separate the scenes of the animation, much like an official newsreel, the narrator explains that the audience is now to witness the Japanese air raid siren which contributes towards the defence of its civilians. The shot pans to the right and we see that the siren is simply the cry of a Japanese man, being prodded by another Japanese man with a needle so he winces in pain. Both men are heavily caricatured with glasses and buck teeth. (Fig. 19) Not only does this give the impression of Japanese stupidity, but it also creates the impression that Japan's civilian defence is easily penetrated. This idea is continued with the Listening Post, as another caricatured Japanese man simply listens to a post; the airplane spotting division (a man who paints spots on planes) and the fire prevention headquarters, a village which is now up in flames.

The next section of the short deals with 'Incendiary bombs' and the audience are shown a Japanese man who is instructed not to approach the bomb for five seconds. The connection between Nazi Germany and the Japanese regime under Hirohito is made here, as the man's watch reveals a swastika symbol (Fig. 20) Using the simple iconography of the early 1930s cartoons, animation is able to forge a meaning without explaining the inner details of the alliance between Japan and Germany. *Tokio Jokio* also makes light of the lack of resources within Japan, hoping to boost morale by drawing a comparison with the United States. The 'club' sandwich, as prepared in Professor Tojo's cooking class, consists of a stack of ration cards, finished with Tojo hitting himself on the head with a club.



Figs. 19 & 20 From *Tokio Jokio* (US, 1943, dir. Norman McCabe)

Interestingly *Tokio Jokio* also draws a direct comparison with United States culture with its references to headline ‘poisonalities’ and sports. These make references to ice hockey, polo and American football. Poisonalities, as presented in this manner on a newsreel, draw comparison with the glamour of Hollywood. The best of the United States culture was celebrated in the patriotic shorts of the late 1930s and to a certain extent, in the patriotism of the Bugs Bunny Treasury short by its references to history. By invoking such memories within the confines of the animated world, *Tokio Jokio* restores morale to the United States while at the same time, ridiculing its enemy. Its headline ‘poisonality’, Admiral Yamamoto, has his sights set on the White House, however, the editors note that the only room reserved for him is one containing the electric chair.

Using the powerful symbol of the White House and its relationship to the President, animation plays on the emotional connection of the American people to their ideology in order to make an equally powerful and suggestive response to Japan’s aspirations. This suggestion of the use of lethal force is interestingly one of the most sinister treatments of the enemy broadcast by Hollywood during the war period. While many of the war films such as *Bataan* (1944) do involve heavy violence against the Japanese threat such a suggestion has been rendered ‘off limits’ for treatment by animation. However, this was not the first time that animation had suggested the use of lethal force. *What Price Porky*, another Warner Brothers cartoon released in the 1930s authorises the use of violence against an aggressor. Therefore, it can be concluded that this violence was not just confined to the war time productions.

Reaching outside the confines of Japan to its neighbours within the Axis, *Tokio Jokio* reveals a donkey caricature of the radio personality William Joyce, who broadcasted a Nazi propaganda programme to people of the United States and Britain.<sup>361</sup> The donkey reveals that the Fuehrer has just received a postcard from a friend, vacationing abroad, revealed only to be Rudolph Hess who abandoned the Fuehrer and fled to Scotland.<sup>362</sup> (Fig. 21) The postcard shows a caricatured Hess in a concentration camp. The message reads, 'Wish you were here.' This allows audience to take away the impression that the Fuehrer himself is low on allies, isolating him and demeaning his worldwide influence. Elsewhere, in Rome, Mussolini sits in his ruined capital, playing with a yo-yo (Fig. 22)

Interestingly, this shot constitutes the first indication of the impact of the Allied forces in the Mediterranean. Considering the historical context of this short, while animation did not accurately predict the outcome of the war, the short certainly is suggestive of the direction of the troops. During the period of production for this short, the Allies were emerging victorious in the North African campaign.<sup>363</sup> Following this, in hindsight, were the invasions of Sicily and Italy, pre-empting the Italian surrender in September, through which Rome was negotiated to safety from the Germans.<sup>364</sup> While the ruins of Rome never actually came to pass, the short is shockingly accurate in its assumption of the proximity of Italian defeat which happened only months after *Tokio Jokio's* release in May 1943.

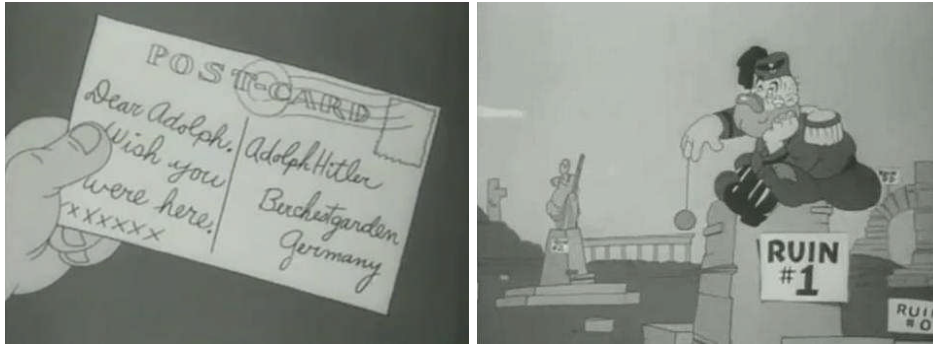
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<sup>361</sup>Lord Haw-Haw's activities were well known to the American people and were widely recorded in the press. See, for example, 'Lord Haw-Haw Now In Open,' *The New York Times*, 28 September 1942, pp. 7. For further information on William Joyce, see F. Selwyn, *Hitler's Englishman: the crime of Lord Haw-Haw* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987) and P. Martland, *Lord Haw Haw: The English Voice of Nazi Germany* (Lanham, Scarecrow Press, 2003)

<sup>362</sup>See A. Read, *The Devil's Disciples: The Lives and Times of Hitler's Inner Circle* (London, Pimlico, 2004) pp. 685-687

<sup>363</sup>T. Brighton, *Masters of Battle: Monty, Patton & Rommel at War* (London, Penguin, 2009) pp. 103-126 and see also

<sup>364</sup>H. W. Baldwin, 'Hitler's Europe Shaken by Italy's Surrender,' *The New York Times*, 12 September 1943, pp. E4



Figs. 21 & 22

From *Tokio Jokio* (US, 1943, dir. Norman McCabe)

While criticising the military might of the Axis powers, *Tokio Jokio* also pokes fun at the production of Japanese submarines. The audience are shown a submarine half-finished at the bottom of the ocean. Japanese engineers are still constructing the vessel underwater. It is still being painted but is finished three weeks ahead of schedule. Swiftly moving to ridiculing the air force, Japanese planes are launched into the air with a large catapult aboard an aircraft carrier.

The power of *Tokio Jokio* lies primarily in its ability to capitalise on powerful United States symbolism and channel it into evoking hatred within the audience for their enemy as well as ridiculing their defence efforts, lampooning the enemy, ensuring that they do not provoke fear within the audience. It is also of interest that this animated short leaves the traditional animated world of animals alone. It is a direct caricature of the Japanese state. Humans are animated. The implication is that these ridiculous figures are the direct enemy of the audience. Warner Brothers' continuous narration and 'notes' for the audience forge this connection from the outset. The threat here goes beyond that experienced by the geese and ducks from the ducktators. This justifies both the threat of the electric chair (a decidedly human punishment) and criticism of the strength of the Japanese military.

### ***Scrap Happy Daffy* (US, 1943, dir. Frank Tashlin)**

This short, much like the Disney shorts *Victory Vehicles* and *Out of the Frying Pan, Into the Firing Line*, draws a direct link between the contributions of the characters in the animated world to the conflict against the Axis powers in

the real world. Daffy Duck draws the audience in with music, forging a connection between his efforts and their own, singing, 'We're in to win, so let's begin to do the job with junk.' He goes on to sing that this action will 'conquer 'freedom's foes.' This is directly in line with the directive from the Office of War Information regarding the sort of pictures to be made in Hollywood to contribute towards the war effort.

While Daffy sings his song, there is a direct utilisation of the Disney technique in *The New Spirit*, which features Donald dancing in front of the mirror to *Yankee Doodle Spirit*. (Fig. 23)



Fig. 23 From *Scrap Happy Daffy* (US, 1943, dir. Frank Tashlin)

This demonstrates the interchangeability of animation's techniques during the

war period. As each were promoting similar messages, the techniques they used to channel this ideology were readily used and reused between animated medium. However, Daffy's reflection is altered upon the lyric, 'freedom's foes' to indicate the three Axis leaders.

Once Daffy is finished listing all the many bits of junk that American people can save to help the Axis powers, he addresses the rear end of a horse,



Fig. 24 From *Scrap Happy Daffy* (US, 1943, dir. Frank Tashlin)

which quickly fades to a shot of Hitler's head. This constituted one of the first effective uses of editing within animation in order to convey a political message. Tashlin, well known as a director for shooting his animated shorts as though they were live action,

borrowed from a tried and tested technique within the live action feature

film to create effect in the animated world.<sup>365</sup> The shot to Hitler unfolds as he reads a newspaper. The headline is 'Mussolini in Scrap Heap, now let's junk Hitler' (Fig 24). Again, this short requires placing within its specific historical

<sup>365</sup>M. Barrier, *Hollywood Cartoons*, pp. 464-465

context. The animated productions provide an explicit commentary on the direction and promise of the war, simply through the use of animated newspaper headlines. However, this technique was used in the 1930s to convey a sense of historical context to the cartoons. Many of the Porky Pig and Disney shorts feature headlines discussing Roosevelt. However, this is developed during the war to great effect. Daffy becomes one of Carr's new 'symbols' for the war effort by fronting the scrap campaign in the animated world, as advertised in the newspaper and witnessed in the reality of the animated world.

While such symbolism was not attached to the Warner Brothers' characters within the 1930s to the same extent as the Disney characters, their potential to become symbols for national unity was recognised and built upon. The short also shows the physical effect of Home Front initiatives such as the scrapping campaign on the Axis powers.<sup>366</sup> The caricatured Hitler is so enraged by Daffy's campaign, he demands that all Nazi scrap piles be destroyed and eats his carpet in frustration. As his message finally reaches the German navy, a bomb is fired at Daffy's scrap pile but as the German navy is seemingly out of ammunition, the only firepower that emerges from the bomb is a goat who goes to work to eat all of Daffy's scrap pile. Daffy quickly locates the goat who is wearing a swastika round his neck.

After a duel, Daffy emerges beaten and tired. However, leaning on the nationalistic techniques of the 1930s to inspire a similar fervour in war time, reference is made to the Mayflower voyage of 1620. Daffy's Uncle Gillingham sings 'Did I cry spinach when I stood a duck on Plymouth rock?' Daffy draws on the history of his ancestors and thus the history of the United States in order to give him the strength to win his fight with the Nazi goat. Furthermore, Daffy's Uncle Gillingham appears before Daffy as an apparition in the clouds. Showing similarity with both the Disney Treasury films and with the Warners' Treasury film *Any Bonds Today*, the moral righteousness of the American is emphasised through the appearance of an animated figure in the clouds. Consequently, a connection can be made between Daffy's Uncle

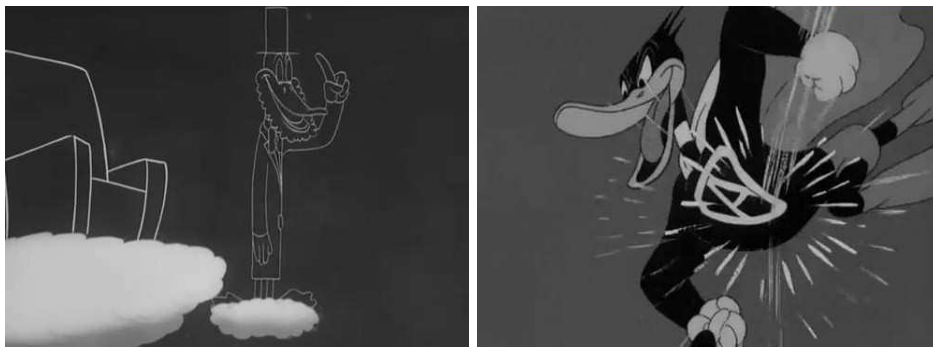
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<sup>366</sup> See 'Campaign Widened for Scrap Metal,' *The New York Times*, 14 September 1942, pp. 23 and 'Industry will Push Campaign For Scrap Metal,' *The New York Times*, 25 October 1943, pp. 23

Gillingham and heaven. Drawing on further from American history, many of Daffy's relatives who fought in significant battles, coach Daffy on his mission to defeat the goat. This sequence closes with a caricature of Abraham Lincoln who tells Daffy that, 'Americans don't give up.' (Fig. 25)

These apparitions firmly situate Daffy as an American citizen with a firm family grounding in most of the seminal events in American history. Not only does the animated world recognise the depth of the commitment and the historicity of the Second World War, Daffy is made a *part* of that history. The caricatured Duck forms of many of the major personalities in American history forging a real connection between Daffy's history and the history of the American people. This shared history is thus used as a tool to bridge the gap between the animated world and the real world, as was the case in the 1930s cartoons.

Daffy announces to the audience that he is an *American* duck and takes on the form and uniform of a superhero, ready to conquer the Nazi goat. Daffy, whilst flying after the goat, is hit at many times by Nazi soldiers aboard a submarine but the bullets simply fly off his new superhero costume. (Fig. 26)



Figs 25 & 26

From *Scrap Happy Daffy* (US, 1943, dir. Frank Tashlin)

*Scrap Happy Daffy*, while originally taking on the guise of a simple education film showing the merits of saving scrap metal actually translates a deeper ideological meaning which was noticed by its American audience. Daffy, thus far pushed into the background by the overriding popularity of Bugs Bunny, took on his own symbolic significance following this cartoon.<sup>367</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> 'Bugs Bunny Carrot Crunching Comic', *The New York Times*, 22 July 1945, pp. 43

Through his experience with the goat and his fierce protectiveness over his position as Salvage Warden, an important link is made between the work being done on the Home Front and the battle American armed forces faced on the front lines. As previously mentioned, Daffy also finds strength from within his American heritage. Through references made to pivotal points in American history, Daffy embraces the kind of patriotism discovered by Porky Pig in *Old Glory*.

### ***Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* (US, 1944, dir. Isadore Freleng)**

Much like the focus of the 1944 Disney cartoon, *Commando Duck*, following the successful invasion of occupied France in 1944, the direction of the principal enemy in the animated world noticeably shifted. While *Tokio Jokio* showcases the stupidity of the Japanese race and explicitly refers to the depth of hatred between the two nations, *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* depicts the Japanese as a ridiculous, beatable foe, well within the animated character's strength to defeat.

The cartoon opens on the Pacific Ocean, where Bugs is inexplicably inside a crate, singing. Upon spotting an island, he quickly swims to shore. He remarks how peaceful and beautiful the island is, however, he soon comes under gun fire and seeks cover in a haystack. He comes face to face with a



Fig. 27 From *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* (US, 1944, dir. Isadore Freleng)

Japanese soldier, whom he addresses with his target line, 'What's Up, Doc?' Unlike the caricature featured in the Disney cartoon *Commando Duck*, a full caricature of a Japanese man is displayed. (Fig. 27) The ruthlessness and cruelty of the Japanese is highlighted as the soldier immediately swings for Bugs Bunny with a knife.

Bugs runs for cover and the soldier throws a bomb down the rabbit hole after him. In order to save himself from execution, Bugs poses as General Tojo. In



an interesting twist, the Japanese soldier whispers to the audience that he recognises Bugs Bunny for who he really is – a cartoon character. His cover blown, Bugs pretends to take to the sky, hotly pursued by the soldier, however Bugs ties his enemy's plane to a tree so the Japanese soldier has to parachute from the plane. To 'help' the soldier on his way, Bugs gives him some scrap metal, ensuring he is weighted down sufficiently to have a 'happy landing.'

Later, Bugs does battle with a Sumo wrestler and manages to fool him by dressing as a geisha. However, he soon spots an army of Japanese soldiers heading in his direction. Disguising himself as an ice cream man and selling bombs, disguised within ice cream cakes, he soon eliminates the threat, whilst dealing out fond insults to the soldiers such as 'monkey face' and 'slant eyes.' Happy with his work, Bugs declares that he hates the peace and quiet of Japan. In the distance, heralded into shot by the blowing of trumpets, he spots an American warship. He calls for help quickly but soon changes his mind about leaving the island upon sight of a pretty lady.

Using Bugs Bunny as a point of unity for the American people, the upcoming confrontation with the Japanese is played out in the animated world. Reflecting the militaristic tradition of Hollywood in 1944 with films such as *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo*, (1944) Bugs emerges in this animated short as the militaristic hero. He is assertive and decisive in each of his encounters with the Japanese men. Here, it can be deduced that not only does animation lean on techniques from the 1930s, but also takes from the cinematic traditions of the Second World War in order to put across its ideological message. In forming a line of resistance against the Japanese threat, Bugs presents himself as a civilian soldier, fighting the war in the Pacific. Animator Bob Clampett reflected on Bugs Bunny in an interview with animation historian Michael Barrier, stating that; 'Bugs Bunny was a symbol of American resistance to the fascist powers... In both instances, [the war and the Depression], we were in a battle of our lives, and it is most difficult to comprehend the tremendous emotional impact Bugs Bunny exerted on the audience back then.'<sup>368</sup> Bugs Bunny was not viewed simply as a comical character highlighting the weaknesses of the Japanese. He

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<sup>368</sup>Interview with Robert Clampett, 'Funnynworld Magazine, No. 12 (1970)

took on a greater symbolic meaning to the American people which, according to Clampett, was emotional and significant.

### ***Plane Daffy* (US, 1944, dir. Frank Tashlin)**

Following over ten years in the animation business, Leon Schlesinger sold his studio to Warner Brothers on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 1944 for seven hundred thousand dollars.<sup>369</sup> *Plane Daffy* constitutes one of the very first cartoons to be released through Warner Brothers Productions and is also the last ever cartoon Tashlin ever completed for the studio before he left in September 1944. Released on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, *Plane Daffy* focuses on the activities of the animated air force. The commanding officers of the animated air force are waiting on the return of Number Thirteen, Homer Pigeon, who, it is revealed by the narrator, is not 'doing his duty.' He is seen lying on the lap of a voluptuous woman, Hatti Mari, who is an Axis spy and a stereotypically morally ambiguous femme fatale (Fig. 28). The woman tips alcohol down Thirteen's throat, trying to get some information out of him. He quickly tells all about the fleet's proposed movements. The woman switches on the television in the corner and the narrator states that Thirteen has told all to 'you know who.' The television images Hitler with his hand to his ear, gladly taking in all of the information. (Fig. 29) Realising he has betrayed his country, Thirteen takes a gun offered to him by the woman in order to commit suicide.

Back at the air force base, the commander concludes that Homer has been tricked by the 'queen of the spies' and shows the officers what they are up against. While they are taken aback by her beauty, Daffy arrives and announces he is a 'woman hater' and that he will not be fooled by her charms. Setting off, however, he is quickly taken captive by the spy. She seduces Daffy with an explosive kiss and asks him to hand over his military secrets. However, rather than be a traitor to his country, Daffy eats the paper containing the secrets. Hatti Mari shoves Daffy in an x-ray machine, anxious to get to the secret. Under the machine, the secret is revealed to be 'Hitler is a stinker.' On a

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<sup>369</sup>WBA, Document Reference USC/WB/DOC 7704, Memorandum from Warner Brothers Cartoons Incorporated entitled 'Acquisition of Leon Schlesinger Productions.'

nearby television screen, Goering and Goebbels conclude that ‘everybody knows that,’ and shoot themselves in the head upon receiving Hitler’s disapproving glare.



Figs. 28 & 29 From *Plane Daffy* (US, 1945, dir. Frank Tashlin)

This animated short is worthy of interest from scholars for many reasons. The first is simple. *Plane Daffy* constitutes the first wartime cartoon to link Nazism to promiscuity. Hatti Mari, incidentally a reference to the World War One German spy Mata Hari, is brazen in her seduction of both Thirteen and of Daffy.<sup>370</sup> Wearing sexually revealing clothing and drinking alcohol, her persona links the Axis powers to sexual and moral ambiguity. Here, the Carr memorandum of 1942 written for the productions of the Disney studios also seems to apply. In opposition to the creation of a ‘Pan Americana’ who is described as a ‘noble female figure, subtly suggesting both the Virgin Mary and the Goddess of Liberty’, Warner Brothers created the Axis equivalent.<sup>371</sup> Hatti Mari seems representative of the ideology of the Axis powers. Hatti is violent and promiscuous, which again seems to target the anti-religion angle the Disney animation proposed in the Carr document. She is deceptive and cunning, in stark contrast to the frankness and honesty demonstrated by Daffy.

Also of interest to scholars is the depiction of the Nazi elite. Untouched in such detail since perhaps the Disney treatment in *Der Fuehrer’s*

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<sup>370</sup> American audiences would have immediately recognised the caricature of the German spy. Famous 1930s actress Greta Garbo played the German dancer and spy in a successful film adaptation of her life entitled *Mata Hari* in 1932. See ‘Greta Garbo Gives a Brilliant Portrayal,’ *The New York Times*, 1 January 1932, pp. 31

<sup>371</sup> MHL, Motion Picture Society for the Americas Records, f.22, R.S.Carr ‘The Creation of New Symbols,’ pp. 37

*Face, Plane Daffy* not only caricatures the Nazi elite but also makes a statement about the stability of the Nazi regime at that point during the war. In 1944, as the Russians moved through Poland, the British continued its heavy bombing campaign in Berlin, causing the morale of the German people to reach new lows.<sup>372</sup> In this short, this low morale is depicted within the elite. When the military secret, 'Hitler is a stinker' is revealed, both Goering and a green looking Goebbels both agree with the statement. The short thus puts across the message that there is disunity among the leaders of the Nazi state, making the enemy look all the more defeatable for the American audience.<sup>373</sup> Following the heavy ideological commentary of the Disney regime, Warner Brothers simply pokes fun at the state with all the confidence the historical context allowed.

The short also gives a somewhat shocking commentary on the importance of loyalty to the state in the animated world. Thirteen shoots



Fig. 30 From *Plane Daffy* (US, 1944, dir. Frank Tashlin)

himself once he realises that he has allowed himself to be tricked into spilling military secrets to Hatti Mari. The dishonour of betrayal is too heavy a burden for an officer in the air force, even in the animated world. This

explicit reference to suicide within these cartoons needs to be taken

seriously as a form of commentary on the military context of the time. While the Allies were confidently making advances into occupied Europe during the year this cartoon was under production, nonetheless, the officers within the animated armed forces still remain on their guard. Duty and honour to their country are as important as ever and complacency is viewed as a weakness

<sup>372</sup> See 'Berlin Gets First US Bombing,' *The New York Times*, 5 March 1944, pp. 1

<sup>373</sup>The depiction of the faltering loyalty of Goering and Goebbels in this short is ironic, considering that these two members of the Nazi elite were in fact, the most loyal to Hitler. Goebbels and his wife committed suicide after Hitler himself had passed away, after poisoning their own children. Goering, too, committed suicide at the Nuremberg trials after being sentenced to death by hanging. See 'Guilt is Punished,' *The New York Times*, 16 October 1946, pp. 1

punishable by death. The scenes in *Plane Daffy* are shocking even when analysed in the context of the explicit nature of modern animation.

### ***Russian Rhapsody* (US, 1944, dir. Robert Clampett)**

*Russian Rhapsody* is unique amongst the wartime animated shorts in that it opens with a physical commentary of the war. Through the use of a narrator, the short refers to the German army's failure to capture Moscow in the winter of 1941-1942.<sup>374</sup> Moscow, however, remained important to Hitler and to Stalin in terms of its symbolic meaning for the Russian people.<sup>375</sup> Its importance is thus highlighted within the narrative of this animated short. It is highly significant that this short was released in 1944. Confident of success against Germany, the lack of progress of Hitler's armies against Stalin's Red Army drives this animated short.

A heavily caricatured Hitler screams at the German people, telling them the importance of Moscow. He states that he will send 'the best bomber in the Reich' in order to ensure that the job is done properly. However, as an unseen civilian comments, the only person that satisfies Hitler's criteria, is Hitler himself. Much like *Plane Daffy*, such a twist in the narrative only serves to highlight Hitler's present isolation with the Nazi regime. He no longer even trusts his best pilots to do the job for him. Furthermore, as newspaper headlines state, the importance of Moscow warrants the personal attention of the Fuehrer himself.

However, whilst in the air, Hitler's plane is attacked by 'gremlins from the kremlin' that all work together to ensure Hitler is removed from the plane and the threat from Moscow is removed. The short also includes an animated version of Stalin, the first in any animation over the war period. Given the fact that Russia did not officially join the side of the Allies until June of 1941 when they were invaded by the Wehrmacht, its absence from treatment within

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<sup>374</sup>R. Overy, *The Dictators*, pp. 493-495

<sup>375</sup>R. Service, *Stalin: A Biography*, (London, Macmillan, 2004) pp. 423-424

animation is of interest, particularly since animation willingly passed comment on the Communist threat during the Cold War.<sup>376</sup>

This short is particularly interesting for historians as it constitutes an interpretation of sorts, from the point of view of the United States on a conflict they were not directly involved in. The war on the Eastern Front between Germany and Russia thus receives its first treatment in animation with *Russian Rhapsody*. Again, it is of interest that in order to convey its ideological treatment, many of the techniques mentioned within Carr's memorandum are utilised within this Warner Brothers' animation. The 'animap' is used on the short's opening in order to establish a sense of time, place and location.

In addition, the cartoon does not lose the self-awareness evident in ideologically charged 1930s animation such as *Bosko in Person*, *Confidence* and to a certain extent, *What Price Porky*. After the Hitler makes a particularly animated speech, referring, amongst other things, to 'sauerkraut in dein delicatessen,' a human hand holds a board up for the audience which reads, 'Silly, isn't he?' establishing a shared bond and experience between the animators and the American people. Crucially, by discouraging the realism demonstrated by the Disney cartoons and maintaining its own levels of exaggerated and crude humour, Warner Brothers forges its own self-contained pantomime out of the Fuehrer's mannerisms.

### ***Herr Meets Hare* (US, 1945, dir. Isadore Freleng)**

Released just four months before Hitler's death and the surrender of Berlin on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 1945, *Herr Meets Hare* constitutes a 'final battle' between the animated symbol for the United States, Bugs Bunny, and the Nazi high command.

The short opens with a radio transmission discussing the end of Germany and pondering over the whereabouts of 'Fatso' Goering. The short then cuts to an overweight Goering in traditional dress, marching through the

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<sup>376</sup>S. DelGaudio, 'If Truth Be Told: Can "Toons Tell It?' *Film History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (1997) pp. 189-199

'Black Forest' in Germany. We then see Bugs, burrowing his way through the woods. He is held at gunpoint by Goering and enquires the way to Las Vegas. Soon discovering he is no longer in America, Bugs is spooked and runs away from Goering. Goering soon begins to share with Bugs his unhappiness with the Nazi state, calling his Fuehrer a 'schwein.' Bugs quickly styles his hair like Hitler and paints on a moustache to scare Goering who flees the scene on sight of the Hitler-Bugs (Fig. 31) and dresses in his military uniform, adorned with medals and the swastika. After dressing and dancing to the Wagnerian opera *Tannhauser*, Bugs is captured by Goering. Proud of his catch, Goering takes Bugs Bunny to the Fuehrer. Before Hitler can pass judgement, Bugs pops out of the bag, dressed as Joseph Stalin and the pair flee in fear.

*Herr Meets Hare* was one of the last significant war cartoons to be released by the Warner Brothers studio. Unlike Disney, who thereafter focused mainly on their production of feature animation, Warner Brothers continued to make short subject animation their strongpoint. However, despite their differences, there is a noticeable link between the two studios' contributions to the animated propaganda effort during this particular animated short. During Goering's marching scenes, the music accompanying his movements is uncannily similar to Oliver Wallace's *Der Fuehrer's Face*. Indeed, reference is made to a lyric of the song as Goering states, 'I kiss right in der Fuehrer's Face.' This demonstrates recognition of Disney in Warner Brothers cartoons, as a celebration of their work over the war years.

In this short, Warner Brothers also shows recognition of the fact that the war, soon to be over, was ultimately a war of ideologies. Goering and Hitler run scared at the sight of Bugs dressed as Stalin. While the alliance of the United States and the Soviet Union does constitute an uneasy ideological and cartoon hybrid (demonstrated by Bugs, the symbol of America, dressed awkwardly as Stalin, the head of the Soviet Union) (Fig. 32) it is ultimately the combination of these two ideologies that allows the Allies to triumph over the Axis Powers. Animation, through the union of Bugs and his own caricature of Stalin demonstrates an awareness of these ideologies and the role they had to play in the Second World War. It also uses this use of caricature in order to

simplify the difficult political consequences of the alliance for the American people, a technique used throughout the 1930s when dealing with complex subjects.



Figs. 31 & 32

From *Herr Meets Hare* (US, 1945, dir. Isadore Freleng)

### Conclusion

By the time of the Japanese surrender in September 1945, the ability of animation to deal with advanced political subjects was extraordinary. Building upon the work carried out for the Treasury and in Disney's case, through its work for the Office of Inter-American Affairs, animation was able to make an explicit case for the continuation of the war against the Axis powers by making animated shorts in line with the OWI's directives for Hollywood. Each film produced by each of the animation studios showed an awareness of the international situation. It did this by making its characters, narrative and music embrace the key concepts of nationalism, freedom and determination to bring the United States to victory.

For audiences, following the antics of their favourite animated characters, most of whom, had come to hold a particular emotional significance to them, was a source of comfort. The connections made between the real world and the animated world are most explicit in the shorts explored in this chapter they demonstrate a shared experience of war. Donald fights in the United States Army with animated human soldiers. Donald, Daffy and Bugs Bunny all take up arms against the Nazi elite. The fight is taken from the animated world straight to the enemy in the real world. This enemy, as the war continues, becomes easier to defeat for the cartoon characters, and therefore,



seems easier for the United States audiences to overcome. Following the war, animation was seen as an important idealistic forum in which these characters could overcome obstacles difficult to face during the real world. Walter Wanger's article of 1950, entitled, 'Donald Duck and Diplomacy,' suggests that these characters and indeed, Hollywood, had taken on a special international importance during the war and that this should thus be recognised on an international scale.<sup>377</sup> This thesis has sought to uncover the reasons for this significance which has, thusfar, remained unexplored.

What is more, it is impossible not to read these cartoons ideologically. They did not have the subtleties of many of the 1930s animated productions. The explicit propagandistic messages of each of the shorts studied in this chapter, and many more besides, made it impossible for the audience *not* to notice the ideological messages woven into their narratives. And yet, as has been the central premise of this thesis, such cartoons did not represent animation's only commentary on political, social and economic conditions. During the War, animation simply used the techniques it had used throughout the 1930s in order to forge meaning to audiences. Essentially, the only thing that had changed was the historical context.

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<sup>377</sup>'Donald Duck and Diplomacy,' *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol.14, No. 3 (1950) pp. 452



## Conclusion

And yet, as he said this, Disney's eyes darkened and he pointed to a series of identical plaques in the trophy jammed anteroom of his office. The plaques all read, 'For the Best Children's Picture.' For an instant, the old frustrations seemed to return as he spluttered, 'They persist in giving me that blasted award every year. I don't make children's pictures. Why do they do it?'<sup>378</sup>

On the surface, Disney's animated shorts of the 1930s look innocent enough. Donald Duck, Mickey Mouse, Minnie Mouse, Pluto and Goofy were all colourful creations, stumbling around comically in a fanciful caricatured version of reality. Due to their comical misdemeanours, childlike fighting and grossly exaggerated romances, they were categorised as harmless by the Hays Office. Disney's reputation for producing outstanding quality animation did not alleviate him from Hays pressure, for the shorts produced by the Schlesinger Studios, too, did not fall at the hands of 1930s movie censorship. And yet, these productions developed into a highly politicised medium by the Second World War.

The main obstruction to scholars wishing to engage in an analysis of Disney or Warner Brothers' animation in this period is the lack of primary source material surrounding production. The Warner Brothers Archives hold little by way of information on the formation of plotlines and gags of the animation produced by the Schlesinger Studios and the Disney Archives are closed to all but internal researchers. However, through careful excavation of internal memoranda and trade press reviews in combination with qualitative analysis of the shorts, this thesis has uncovered the techniques consciously employed by the Disney studios to convey ideology through their animated storylines. However, it would be a mistake to confine the application of this ideological framework to the wartime cartoons only. As this thesis has shown, the techniques outlined in Carr's early war memoranda had their origins in the cartoons of the mid to late 1930s. The connections made by this thesis to the techniques applied in wartime animation to those applied in peacetime

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<sup>378</sup>B. Davidson, 'The Fantastic Mr. Disney,' *The Saturday Evening Post*, 3 November 1964

animation prove the existence of ideologically focused animation prior to the war.

In the early 1930s, both Disney and Schlesinger's animation harnessed the popular mood through symbolism and caricature. FDR's ascension to the Presidency brought with it an intense feeling of community spirit. Using FDR's wartime rhetoric of unity against a common enemy, the cartoons embraced the battle American society faced against the Depression and against the lethargy and despair associated with President Hoover. Optimism and a new embrace of family values found a home in early animation. Even FDR himself made the odd appearance in the cartoons as the signal that a new day had dawned and that things were changing for the American people, even in the animated world. For the very first time, an intrinsic connection was made between the world of Mickey Mouse, which had seemed nothing but a fairy tale creation, to the world that the American people were living in. This connection was recognised by the American people as early as 1933 due to the success of the Disney Silly Symphony *The Three Little Pigs*. The battle between the Pigs and the Big Bad Wolf resonated with the American people. They too, were doing battle with a dangerous foe. Regardless of Disney's intentions with this short, people identified with the animated world. And yet the Hays Office did not regard these productions as ideologically significant.

Animation moved swiftly from populist sentiment to the development of social and political commentary. Using its popular characters as psychological markers, the animated productions of Walt Disney and the Schlesinger Studios found themselves facing the same moral dilemmas as the American people. How should one react in a situation where the choice between simple individualism and a tiresome communitarianism are the ideological paths laid out for action? These animated characters provided the answer for the American people, creating their own models for social action. This intrinsic moral guidance was present in the Hollywood films of the time. However, these live action films were censored by the Hays Office, the animation was not. In this way, animation was able to develop as an unhindered ideological force within Hollywood. Hidden beneath the childlike

characters and colourful fairy tales of the animated world lay a very serious vehicle for very serious social and political commentary.

Mickey, Donald and Porky Pig were by no means immune from the economic pressures of Depression America. Shorts such as *Moving Day* and *Milk and Money* are explicit in their engagement with financial worries. Their narratives are an all too serious reminder of the difficulty faced by FDR in rebuilding a broken America. However, these shorts did not only engage with its audiences economic woes, they reflected the political frustrations inherent within society. *Self Control* and *Porky's Road Race* contain explicitly negative identifications with the FDR administration. They contain a political commentary that in the world of the live action feature film, would have been discarded by the Hays Office. And yet it remained unchanged.

This unchallenged ideological drive is perhaps more explicit in the world of international relations. Hollywood was taken to charge over the interventionist sentiment of its productions during the late 1930s and early 1940s. The furor over Warners' *Confessions* sparked an inquest. Animation, through subtle use of symbolism, provided a commentary on the way its characters felt about conflict. Through the caricature of the rise of the fascist leaders, it facilitated an explicit and radical analysis of the rising tensions within Europe. It is in these highly sophisticated politicised cartoons that scholars can identify the origins of the sophisticated wartime animated propaganda. The techniques used in these cartoons draw on the ideological associations of their characters in the early 1930s. The wolf was the overriding enemy, Mickey was a force for good, Donald was a reluctant hero and Porky was a hardworking pacifist. These characters are cast into their roles in the rapidly unravelling military drama of the 1930s, rehearsing for the main production. One cannot ignore the explicit ideological messages of cartoons such as *Three Little Wolves* and *What Price Porky*. Audience reviews from trade press reveal these cartoons were read in a political way and yet Hays still did not censor them.

The explicit patriotic undertones of the cartoons of the late 1930s, in response to the threat from Europe and the strong isolationist and pacifist undertones within society cannot be mistaken for anything else. These

animated shorts were read ideologically by their audiences. The cartoons released just before the Second World War display pride in American national institutions, its geographical landmarks and its history. Through animating these ideas, a very real connection is forged between the animated world and the real world. Audiences celebrated the greatness of their country through the cinema in this period in Hollywood's history. This celebration was also evident within the animated world. The techniques used within these animated productions were again utilised in the wartime productions in order to raise morale on the American Home Front and for the struggles of the United Nations. These were drawn into direct contrast with the ideology of the Axis powers in order to demean the enemy forces.

Scholars can only guess at the reasons why animation was thought as ideologically unharmed by the Hays Office. It is likely that the categorical rejection of animation as a serious cinematic medium that plagued its treatment by scholars for many years was at the heart of this decision. How could the antics of mice, ducks and pigs be at the heart of any serious ideological rebellion? And yet, as proven by the reviews in the trade press, the American audiences identified ideologically with these cartoons. Contemporary film analysts viewed Mickey Mouse as an important cultural symbol. Donald was interpreted as a personification of the violent spirit of the times, as a characterisation of people's consistent frustration with their lot. And yet his eventual acceptance of the realities of war made it all the more significant when he was the first to sign up to pay his income taxes. These characters had a psychological significance for audiences.

It is also likely that the natural hyperbole and caricature of most animation made the Hays Office consider the medium generally, as opposed to looking at individual cartoons. It is true that not all of the animation produced by Warner Brothers and Disney was ideologically significant. Most weren't. However, it is the collective effect of these cartoons over the period under study that is significant.

The formation of Donald Duck's character throughout the 1930s until the outbreak of war made him all the more important as Disney's war hero. He

was lazy at the beginning of the 1930s and a charter member of the Idle Hours Club. He struggled with his rent and he was reluctant to adopt the community spirit exemplified by the New Deal. He was frustrated by the administration's constant reminders for him to 'keep calm and carry on.' His better self favoured intervention in Europe. But through this ideological journey, he emerged as Disney's poster child for war, employed by the Treasury to spur on the American people. Donald pays his taxes selflessly, joins up for armed service and fights the Nazis and the Japanese, emerging victorious. Similarly the transformation of the Big Bad Wolf from figurehead for the Depression, to a dangerous German passing on his appetite for destruction to a naïve youth, to his evolution as a Nazi was also an important ideological journey. This journey happened well before United States involvement in the conflict in Europe. In a similar vein, the Pigs, through their interaction with the villainous Wolf came to symbolise patriotic, triumphant American citizens long before the attack on Pearl Harbor.

In combination with the ideological direction of its principal characters, animation was also able to use music to its advantage when conveying its messages throughout the 1930s and 1940s. Through the innovative cartoon, *Steamboat Willie*, the Disney studio was the first to use synchronised sound in its productions and quickly realised that music was as powerful as any other dimension within the animated production. *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf* and *Confidence*, became anthems for the American people. They united behind these animated characters through music. This became all the more powerful when such anthems were harnessed for a different cause. The Wolf turned into the Nazi enemy. Donald was given his own theme tune to rally people behind his efforts to pay his income taxes. Daffy sang that they were 'in it to win it.' These characters were living the war, along with their audiences and kept their spirits high.

It is the premise of this thesis that this transition from entertainment to political commentary found its origins in the animated shorts of the mid-1930s. Capitalising on the techniques developed by these cartoons in this period to represent ideology, animation was then more than ready to take on the

challenges of propaganda presented in wartime. As yet, no academic study has analysed this journey in the level of depth the cartoons warrant. Scholars speak of the cultural importance of the Disney cartoons without really giving mind to *why* they became culturally important. They speak of the popularity of Donald without explaining *how* his character became popular. Through charting the journey of animation in relation to the political, economic and social context through which these cartoons were released, this thesis is able to explore, in depth, the historical importance of this animation and more importantly, *how* the ideas were channelled through the simple paradigm of the animated world into a sophisticated ideological commentary.

This research, unlike any other study of Hollywood cartoons has demonstrated the historical significance of animation. Extending upon the work of animation historians such as Michael Shull and David Wilt, through a combination of archival material, contextual research and internal analysis, it charts just *how* animation was able to convey its ideas. Ultimately, animation did not change the way it told its stories during the Second World War. The techniques it used were tried, tested and successful. In the Second World War, audiences had come to expect a certain type of animated production from the Disney studios and the Warner Brothers studios. They had come to expect animation to fulfil their ideological needs. Cartoon characters became emotional markers for their experiences of the Depression. Audiences expected them to fulfil the same ideological roles once the country was fighting another war. However, this time, the enemy was not domestic but international. What changed was the context into which these stories were received. The Government, now at war with an international enemy, called upon the animation studios of Walt Disney and Leon Schlesinger to make their contribution, ignorant to the fact that animation had already been interpreting the decade's political, social and economic problems.

It was from the experiences of the Second World War that animation came to be seen and recognised by the Government as a vehicle for education and interpretation; however, audiences and the studios themselves had recognised this from the mid-1930s. Indeed, Sybil DelGaudio has begun work



on animation's interpretative potential as a link is forged between animation and the context in which it is produced. However, as yet, there is little work done on the animated shorts produced after the war during the Cold War period.<sup>379</sup> Disney's early feature films also remain relatively untouched in terms of their historical context. Byrne and McQuillan seem content to analyse Disney films only from the 1990s onwards.<sup>380</sup> Herein lies a plethora of untouched animation, rich in history and contextual references which has not yet been fully excavated by historians.

This thesis thus sets the bar for future work to be done in the medium of animation, particularly in how it conveys its historical ideology. How does Disney *do* history? How are the boundaries of animation transformed to make a traditionally uncomplicated medium translate inherently complex ideas? This thesis has merely scratched the surface of animation's interpretative potential. Disney saw animation, in the future, handling increasingly complex subjects. Through the lessons learnt throughout the war, it was recognised that in fact, there were few boundaries to what the medium was able to convey. He stated, 'Animation can explain whatever the mind of man can conceive. This facility makes it the most versatile and explicit means of communication yet devised for quick mass appreciation.'<sup>381</sup> The potential for animation is limitless. Thus, the levels of interpretation for historians are also limitless.

Disney felt animation was capable of handling the intricacies of social, political and economic commentary as well as providing a simple way to educate and inform. He did not feel the content of his animation was for children. He fought for the recognition of animation to the level of the live action feature film. However, the medium he propelled to the level of historical significance explored within this thesis remains inherently marginalised from discussions of film history. This thesis has sought to uncover untreated animated shorts and shed new light on the cultural significance of well-known productions. It has presented the interpretation of the Depression and the War of both the Disney studios and by comparison,

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<sup>379</sup>S. DelGaudio, 'If Truth Be Told, Can Toons Tell it?' *Film History*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (1997)

<sup>380</sup>E. Byrne & M. McQuillan, *Deconstructing Disney*

<sup>381</sup>L. Krasniewicz, *Walt Disney: A Biography*, (Santa Barbara, Greenwood Press, 2010) pp. 24

the Schlesinger Studios. While due to the nature of animation, it is impossible to find a single author of this interpretation, through the techniques outlined in the Carr memoranda and further advancement of his ideas, these cartoons have left a deep impact on the landscape of history.

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## Appendix One:

### **Ideas for a New South American Film Program**

#### **Lists of Suggested Subjects**

**Robert Spencer Carr, January '42**

#### 1 - Principles Governing Selections

In choosing the picture-ideas catalogued in this report, the following general principles were kept in mind. By listing these criteria here, in advance, I avoid many explanations later on.

1. These films must be utterly and delightfully different from all other types of screen propaganda being sent to South America. To do this, not only must our methods of presentation be distinctive, but we must attempt unusual, even amazing subject matter which other media are unable to handle successfully.
2. All films are intended primarily for theatre release. This means that the educational subjects will have to be presented in an entertaining way. At first glance, it may seem impossible to do this with some of the formidable subjects I have suggested. A few many prove difficult, but in general I followed the line that Disney story men, backed up by imaginative research, can make almost anything interesting. The very novelty and boldness of some of the subjects will enhance their popularity.
3. When a complex subject is mentioned, such as 'Hemisphere Defense', please understand that I do not mean we should attempt a detailed study. Instead, we should do that for which the animation medium is uniquely suited: GIVE ONLY THE SIMPLEST FUNDAMENTALS.

If anyone wants details, let him buy a book.

It is often difficult to compel experts to boil down their vast knowledge into two or three simple, clear, general principles, yet all great teachers have succeeded in doing this, and we must do it in these new films which may revolutionise teaching for decades to come.

4. Whenever possible a series has been suggested on one general theme.

This is extremely advantageous for speed and economy of production, for the cumulative effect on the audiences, and for the printed by products.

5. Animation, being a magical medium, has profound potentialities for evoking sentiment and awe. 'Ave Maria' in Fantasia was only a beginning. We should make full use of this quality in many of the 'big' subjects suggested, creating a deeply religious feeling, and associating this with political ideals. We can have beautiful and reverent scenes in which the Christ of the Andes is seen in the background, or a huge Cross fills the sky; or, more subtly, when the voice, the music and the artists' style of painting suggests a religious atmosphere... as when we see the Spirit of Pan –America, or of Victory, standing behind our weapons. This will put over certain ideas impossible to present otherwise.

## 2 – Methods of Presentation

The 49 subjects suggested in this report will require the use of every known animation technique – and some as yet unknown. However, the important thing is not so much how certain inconceivable visualisations will be accomplished, but rather to make certain that the subjects chosen are politically right.

Here are a few of the imaginative methods by which animation can accomplish the difficult tasks set for it in the pages which follow.

1. Personifications, by which abstract factors or general ideas are brought to life by actual creatures or beings. 'Hitlerhito' can be a two faced monster. 'Rumor' is an evil little goblin who flits about, pouring poison into people's ears. Soap, sunshine and vitamins make charming little characters, while mosquitos, hookworms and flies make fantastic little villains.
2. Animated posters. This term is used to describe those rapid fire, single scene presentations of disconnected ideas or tableaux, in which

animation excels. The latter half of the first Treasury film is an example of animated poster work.

3. Animated statistics are vivid, visual analogies conveying clear conceptions of quantity, of comparative amounts, of rates of production – but without the necessity of revealing any actual figures.
4. Animaps of an improved, new type – not flat geographic maps, but miniature landscapes, in full color, with tiny mountains, cities, rivers etc. as if scene from an immense altitude. The opening sequence of Dumbo and the fade out scene of the Treasury film, in which Donald Duck runs across the United States, show such maps.
5. Word visualisations – animated reincarnation of the good old fashioned lantern slide, by which phrases sung or spoken are literally illustrated in sync. For instance, if our commentator says, ‘Hands across the sea’, we simply show a pair of hands clasped across the sea. The propaganda value of this simultaneous audio visual impression is very high, for it standardises thought by supplying the spectator with a ready made visual image, before he has time to conjure up an interpretation of his own.

This deceptively simple animation device should be borne in mind while trying to imagine how some of the following suggestions can be realised. However, no one film would make use of one method alone. Instead, that will probably happen is that every film will use all of them!

### 3- Music as Propaganda

The musical score plays a much more important part in an animated cartoon than in any other type of motion picture.

The Disney studio has valuable musical resources, as well as artistic resources. The contemplated films should make full use of original scores and songs.

For example, why not immediately put composers to work on a Pan-American anthem – a secular hymn which could be sung at Pan-American gatherings, instead of the national anthem of any one particular country.

A special musical film could then introduce this international anthem, given visual interpretations of the words.

This song, plus many popular Pan-American tunes, are counted on to help the film short subjects suggested. The idea here is that the music track on all these

pictures should not be merely ‘appropriate’ music – but should consciously be made part of the propaganda.

#### 4- Narration and Narrators

The surface has not even been scratched in the art of dramatic narration.

Some grandiose subjects should be treated as screen oratorios, with a chorus. Others require poetic treatment. Remember ‘The River’. Often a mixed treatment of several different voices should be used. A mere newsreel commentator is not enough for some of the big subjects listed.

In this connotation, the dramatic devices of leading radio programs should be carefully analysed. The reason why I am compelled to bring this matter up is that almost all short subjects, and of course, all newsreels (except ‘The March of Time’) skimp very badly on production value in their sound tracks – usually for economic reasons.

This frugal practice is so widespread that paucity of showmanship, in narration, has become almost an unbreakable convention in the short subject field.

More specifically, I recommend that important South American celebrities, politics, and educators be used as narrators on many of the films – if they can talk at all.

A great and famous man, speaking in an ordinary way, carries more conviction than an anonymous radio announcer, however, eloquent.

In some cases, we might even consider opening on a brief live action shot of the famous speaker addressing the audience, and then go into the cartoon as an illustration of his words.

#### 5 – Printed By-Products



Every film produced would of course be accompanied by a full line of printed by products, flip books, pocket manuals, school readers, picture books for various ages, souvenir programs, and posters.

To a limited extent, existing comic strips might be pressed into service, or new comic strips created.

These typical Disney by-products could, in some cases, extend as far as character merchandise, particularly propaganda wall pictures and statuettes, which the governments of Russia and Japan have made extremely popular among the masses of the people by placing these agitational symbols on sale everywhere at low prices.

#### 6 – Direct Propaganda Films

1. 'The Charter of Rio de Janeiro' (of January 26,1942). We dramatise the main points of this document in tableaux and poster like scenes, backed up by an eloquent script and a stirring musical score. Such statements as 'All peoples shall choose the form of government under which they live' and 'all nations should have ready access to raw materials' lend themselves beautifully to visualisations so simple and clear that any illiterate can understand them. Perhaps this ought to be first in the series, and released with all possible speed.
2. 'Arsenal of Liberty'. Suggested in an editorial in the Saturday Evening Post on January 10<sup>th</sup> 1942. We would show, in vivid visual images, such impressive facts as 'Behind each worker in American industry, you will find five horsepower of engine, which means that each worker is assisted by mechanical slaves equal to fifty of himself. This is the highest use of mechanical energy per works anywhere in the world, twice as high as either Germany or Great Britain. In 1941, the US output of machine tools was increased to seven and one half times its normal volume,' And above all, we of the Americas have 'the spirit that inhabits the weapons.'
3. We show the spirit of Victory actually entering into a ship, a plane, as in a religious miracle.
4. 'We have more food.' Supremacy of the UN in Agriculture. Show on a grand scale the immense agricultural resources of our hemisphere, and our allies. Draw sharply unfavourable comparisons with the Axis. Arouse pity and anger at the deliberate Nazi starvation of occupied countries, especially France. But draw a distinct moral at the end, almost a warning: 'Food, for what? Not for itself, but food for

- strength, and strength for victory.’ Emphasise the importance of the Latin American countries in agriculture.
5. ‘We have more men.’ Supremacy of the UN in man power. Compare the armies and navies of our hemisphere, and of our overseas allies, with the Axis man power. Emphasise the frightful Nazi losses in the war up to now. Make visual comparisons between the total populations of the UN, the number of men under arms, and our vast reserves. Hammer away at the fact that Germany’s reserves are about gone, that Japan has a few left, and Italy, none. While essentially a simplified visual lesson in demography, underlying this film would be a warm feeling of inter racial friendship and solidarity, aimed at counteracting the Axis propaganda about Uncle Sam’s racial prejudices.
  6. ‘We have more steel.’ Supremacy of the UN in Industrial Potential. Using steel as the theme, the symbol, we show the industrial potential of our hemisphere and of our allies, emphasising the importance of the Latin American countries mineral resources. Draw unfavourable comparisons with the Axis. ‘Wars are won with steel. We have the steel to win this war, and the steel spirit to wield our weapons.’ This subject is so huge that there would be no duplication of material used in subject #2, ‘Arsenal of liberty’. The themes of the two films are quite different. ‘Arsenal of liberty’ would be a super advertising film exclusively about the US, told in terms of energy and rates of growth. ‘We have more steel’ would be an encouraging report on the armament producing potentials of all the UN, with perhaps a little extra attention given to South America’s importance.
  7. ‘We are in the right’. Supremacy of the UN in Moral Armament. This is the fourth and last in a series which should be released in rapid succession. In this picture, we would briefly summarise the other three: we have the food, we have the men, we have the steel, and we are in the right. We show the symbols of the four freedoms, of the family, of the church. And with these symbols, we transfigure our earlier symbols of food, men and steel into one great symbol of victory. ‘Bless these bombers, sanctify these ships.’
  8. ‘All for one, one for all.’ This film would give dramatic visual expression to the Join War Production Plan proposed at the last Rio conference. We would hand at least one bouquet to every Latin American country by telling and showing what each is contributing towards victory. Even is some small country produced only medicinal herbs, it would be mentioned, with the narrator stressing the importance of this contribution.
  9. ‘Wings of victory.’ This film would glorify American Air Power, not as a military threat, but by showing how American air lines in South America are helping the defense effort and thus helping our Latin neighbours to defend themselves. Demonstrate the difficulties of communications in South America, then show how our air lines solve this for them. Stress our safety record. Show huge freight planes under construction here, for them to use... ‘Ships of the sky that bring you not bombs and death and destruction, but peace and reciprocal trade.’ Show US transports being loaded with S.A. products, and stacks of

money representing the sums that our air lines spend annually in each South American country – and as the climax, what we plan to spend next year. Dramatise the incredible saving of time and shortening of distance our planes make possible... ‘thus bringing us all much closer together – closer together for Victory, and for the lasting peace that shall follow our Victory.’ Pan Air probably ought to pay for this film, and could certainly furnish most of the material.

10. Hemisphere defense. This film could be made extremely effective in a direct political sense. We show the ring of steel defense which USA is forging around the hemisphere, with special emphasis on what each S.A. country has done for itself. Canada should be included. As if from god like heights, we see fleets of tiny planes patrolling north and south American coasts. Island bases bristle with guns. We could then go on, if advisable, and point out what still remains to be done to make our hemisphere impregnable. We could even show from whence the attack is most likely to come, and against whom it will be directed. This picture could end on the note ‘Hemisphere defense is indivisible. What helps one, helps all. What harms one, harms all.’ A film like this, making strategic considerations vividly clear, could be used to soften up recalcitrant minorities opposed to necessary US bases.
11. ‘Hitler the Anti-Christ’. This would be a powerful appeal for the defeat of Hitler on religious grounds. Exploit documentary proof of Nazi acts and edicts against the Roman Catholic Church. Re-enact atrocities. Show bombed churches, imprisoned priests, teaching of atheistic heresies to little children and the looting of convents. The blistering commentary should be voiced by high Catholic dignitary. ‘But here, here we have the Four Freedoms and we must preserve them.’ We close on the Cross triumphant over the Swastika.
12. ‘Hitler, destroyer of the Home.’ This is a companion piece to Hitler, the Anti-Christ.’ Again, we cite documentary proof for each accusation, such as the well known fact that illegitimacy is officially encouraged, and that children are taught to obey the Nazi party leader in defiance of their fathers and mothers. Perhaps a prominent woman should voice the indignant commentary.
13. ‘You can’t do business with Hitler.’ Based on the best selling book by the same name, this could be a strong argument aimed at those Latin-American businessmen susceptible to Nazi economic blandishments. Theatre audiences could be made to howl with laughter at our burlesque of Hitler’s barter system, whereby you are apt to receive shiploads of unwanted gadgets in exchange for your good what, coffee or beef, and then have to sell those gadgets at sacrifice prices to get any return at all.
14. ‘Hitler, the tyrant.’ This is a direct political attack on the Nazi regime, to hit those SA audiences not reached by the religious family or business angles. In a series of shocking scenes, we re-enact Hitler’s mass executions, oppressive laws, and especially the purges and distrust among the high command. Every charge is based on known, proved facts long ago published in the papers. What we do is put these facts into burning visual images on the screen.

15. 'The war of nerves.' Exposing Goebbels' technique of spreading lies, doubt and suspicion among Good Neighbours. We show how ideas can be more dangerous than bombs. We show South America being 'shelled' by Axis radios, show the 'propaganda bombs' landing and bursting like real bombs, throwing harmful rumours far and wide. Backed up with sufficient facts about Axis propaganda activities in South America, this should be an effective counter stroke.
16. 'Flags of the Americas.' A brilliant musical fantasy in which, to a medley of national anthems, the flags of each of the American republics is magically formed out of the shape of the country on the Hemispheric map, out of the natural colours or products of the country, and, when possible, revealing some of the symbolism behind the flag. A different voice could speak for each country, accompanied in every case by the national anthem. The film should have much of the lyric quality of 'Aquarello do Brazil' now in production. This is, of course, sheer flag waving raised to the N-th degree, but when an obvious idea is carried to the absolute extreme, it often becomes new and refreshing. We end on all the flags waving harmoniously together to the tune of our new Pan American anthem.
17. 'Pan American trade.' Properly handled, this could be an incredibly stimulating and fascinating subject for any audience. It could have terrific effect in upsetting prejudices and lies both in South America and in this country. We show our two continents, what each produces, what each needs. Then we show the great trade routes, over which these commodities are exchanged. Next, the percentage of foreign trade of each country which goes to US and elsewhere, and the percentage of US foreign trade which goes to them. We show why we are all one big economic unit. And more than in any other film of the Direct Propaganda Series, we should dare to show, in 'Pan American Trade', what is wrong and what remains to be done. This short film could be more provocative than the strongest issue of 'The March of Time.' It takes imagination to make commodities and trade come to life in an entertaining way, but after our successful experiments along these lines in the Lend Lease film for the Department of Agriculture, we will have no difficulty in making this subject the climax of the whole series.

'Singing shorts' are another series in which I have great faith as good will builders. These would be illustrated songs for community singing. The words move across the screen in sync. Popular South American songs could be thus treated, and also some popular North American songs. By releasing these singing shorts both here and there, we could get the two continents to singing each other's songs. We should also engage South American composers to write special propaganda songs on Pan-American unity, and popularise them on the screen via the Singing Short technique, starring popular S.A. vocalists and musicians. Sheet music, records and radio would follow. 'We care not who writes the laws of a nation – so long as we write its songs.'

Singing shorts could be produced quickly and cheaply. The animation would be of the simplest sort, yet beautiful. The writer is firmly convinced that if you would make one sample, a whole new fad or craze would swiftly ensue. War is a time when strangers sing together.

‘History of a hemisphere.’ – The British made an all cartoon film called ‘Atlantic’ in which they attempted to show England’s role as coloniser and organiser of the Atlantic world. The animation was bad, but the idea was engrossing. My suggestion is that we make a much better, livelier film telling the true story of the discovery, colonisation and final independence of the Western hemisphere with special emphasis on how the Latin American Republics revolted against European tyranny and how we Americans have always fought for our freedom. As a crude sample of this geo political propaganda, see ‘Atlantic.’

‘Wealth under foot,’ A geological cross section of S.A. with spectacular scenes of the formation of oil, coal, mineral deposits.

Walt Disney Insignia for American Armies and Navies

Walt Disney has created insignia for virtually every branch of the armed forces, land, sea and air, for US, England, China, Free France, and others, but we have never been asked to make a single insignia by any South American country. These fighting insignia, painted on planes and tanks, are no frivolity. Hard boiled personnel officers assure us our insignia have high morale value.

Hence, the writer suggests that some pro US officers in Brazil or the Argentine be prompted to ask Walt Disney to design insignia for them.

Flow of Disney insignia to South American armies and navies would be distinctly an indirect propaganda ‘film’ and would be part of our general program.

The Creation of New Symbols

Above all, we, the Rockefeller Committee and the Disney Studio, must create symbols.

We need a whole glossary of new characters to express today's new conceptions, characters to take their place alongside such familiar and effective simplifications as Uncle Sam.

For example, right now we need to create 'Pan Americana' a noble female figure, bearing a torch and a cross, subtly suggesting both the Virgin Mary and the Goddess of Liberty.