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HISTORY OF THE  
AMERICAN CINEMA  
CHARLES HARPOLE, GENERAL EDITOR

6  
BOOM AND BUST:  
THE AMERICAN  
CINEMA IN THE 1940s

Thomas Schatz

**Charles Scribner's Sons**  
Macmillan Library Reference USA  
Simon & Schuster Macmillan  
NEW YORK

Simon & Schuster and Prentice Hall International  
LONDON MEXICO CITY NEW DELHI SINGAPORE SYDNEY TORONTO



*Betty Grable, one of 20th Century-Fox's leading stars, whose ubiquitous pinup served the World War II cause offscreen as well as on.*

The Cinema History Project and the  
*History of the American Cinema*  
 have been supported by grants from the  
 National Endowment for the Humanities and the  
 John and Mary R. Markle Foundation.

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## Acknowledgments

This volume is indebted to the efforts of Charles Harpole, General Editor of the History of American Cinema series. At Scribners, John Fitzpatrick and his assistant, Leroy Gonzalez, provided invaluable editorial support as well.

While researching and writing this book, I received crucial support from the University Research Institute at the University of Texas at Austin and also from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The Humanities Research Institute at the University of California—Irvine also provided valuable assistance in the form of a research fellowship (and a place to work with a number of top film scholars from various UC system schools). I am especially grateful to Nick Browne of UCLA, who organized the UC—Irvine research project.

I also wish to acknowledge the numerous archives, libraries, and special collections used in conducting the primary research for this book, and to thank the many individuals who assisted in that research. Chief among these sites in terms of my own research were the Department of Special Collections at USC; the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin; the Margaret Herrick Library at the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences; the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theatre Research at the University of Wisconsin—Madison; and the Theatre Arts Library at UCLA.

Locating the many images and illustrations for this book was a challenging task and would not have been possible without the help and expertise of Mary Corliss of the Museum of Modern Art, Marc Wanamaker of Bison Archives, Ron and Howard Mandelbaum of Photofest, Mike Mashon of the Broadcast Pioneers Museum at the University of Maryland, and George Barringer at the Georgetown University Library.

I also want to thank my contributors—Chris Anderson, Tom Doherty, Mary Beth Haralovich, Hap Kindem, Clayton Koppes, Lauren Rabinovitz, and Janet Staiger—whose efforts and support as colleagues and collaborators are most appreciated.

Many other individuals contributed to the project in various ways, ranging from casual but highly valuable conversations about my research to close readings of the manuscript as it developed. I am especially grateful to Ed Buscombe, Carol Clover, Garth Jowett, George Lipsitz, Michael Rogin, Vivian Sobchack, and Linda Williams. I'd also like to thank several of my colleagues at Texas, particularly John Downing and Horace Newcomb, for making my life easier during the course of this long-term pro-

PART 2



The War Era



## *The Motion Picture Industry During World War II*



CASABLANCA (Warners, 1942).

World War II was the best of times and the worst of times for the American film industry. It was a period of challenge and change, of anxiety and accomplishment, of intense focus on the task at hand and growing uncertainty about Hollywood's own long-term prospects once that task was completed. Within days of Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt commissioned Hollywood to "emotionalize" the conflict and to mobilize public awareness and support by continuing to do what it did best—making and selling motion pictures, primarily feature films. But producing movies during the war was scarcely business as usual; on the contrary, it required a massive transformation of virtually every phase of industry operations.

Hollywood managed that transformation remarkably well, and its support of the war effort was successful by any number of criteria—by the overall quality of its films, by the well-regulated delivery of diversion, information, and propaganda to receptive civilian and military audiences, by the enormous revenues and profits for all concerned. This last point was of considerable consequence: World War II was indeed the best of times financially for the movie industry, and especially for the Hollywood studio powers. The prewar defense buildup initiated the economic upturn, with the Big Eight's combined profits surging from about \$20 million in 1940 to \$35 million in 1941. Those figures were far surpassed during the war: the Big Eight's combined profits neared \$50 million in 1942 and then exceeded even pre-Depression totals, holding a sustained peak of some \$60 million in each of the next three years.

While business was booming, however, the war also brought confusion and dislocation to the movie industry. In 1942, there were deep concerns about the war overseas, which was going badly for the United States and the Allies. Those concerns were compounded by severe problems at home due to wartime restrictions and shortages affecting every sector of the film industry, and due also to Hollywood's increasingly complex dealings with the government and the military. By 1943, as the tide of war began turning in both Europe and the Pacific, Hollywood was coming to terms with its role in the war effort and was stabilizing wartime operations. And as the Allies pressed toward victory in 1944–1945, Hollywood's concerns began to shift to the postwar era, which it faced with a mixture of unbridled optimism and genuine dread. Industry discourse at the time was rife with questions and doubts about the international marketplace, about

the end of the war economy and the subsequent "reconversion," about urban relocation and population shifts away from the all-important first-run theaters, about the threats from commercial radio and television. At the same time, two serious prewar threats which had been subdued but continued to fester during the war—the government's antitrust campaign and Hollywood's internal labor discord—resurfaced in the late war years and reached crisis proportions in 1945, even before the war ended.

Whatever the immediate and impending problems facing the industry during the war, however, Hollywood never lost sight of its primary commitment to the national war effort, or of its unique and crucial role in that effort. In many ways, World War II was the best of times for the movie industry not because of its unprecedented economic prosperity, but because of its social and cinematic achievements. Hollywood made significant on-screen advances during the war in both features and nonfiction films. Established genres and stars were "converted to war production," while Hollywood steadily refined two distinctive narrative formulas, the combat film and the home-front melodrama, to dramatize the war effort. Many top filmmakers turned to the documentary form, which took on new significance during the war—and encouraged a new realism in fiction filmmaking as well. By 1944–1945, fictional and documentary treatments of the war had reached a remarkable symbiosis, creating an on-screen dynamic utterly unique to the war era. Meanwhile, a stylistic countercurrent developed in what came to be termed *film noir*, which explored the darker side of America's wartime psyche.

As long as the war lasted, the moviegoing experience remained the central, unifying wartime ritual for millions of Americans, from the war-plant worker in Pittsburgh to the foot soldier in the Pacific. Through it all, the movies effectively conveyed wartime conditions and gave shape to the sentiments of the vast Allied populace. "There was a day when it was considered smart to be cynical about Hollywood," wrote the war correspondent Robert St. John for *Look* magazine in 1944. "That was before the war." Like many observers of the U.S. motion picture industry, St. John felt that Hollywood came of age during World War II, and indeed that period may have been Hollywood's finest hour as a cultural force and a social institution.

### *America and the War Effort*

Hollywood's wartime role can only be examined and understood in terms of the larger social, economic, and material conditions at home during that era, as well as the military developments overseas. The retooling of the motion picture industry that accompanied the nation's entry into the war was simply one facet of a massive conversion of American industry and labor—indeed, of the American way of life—that began within days of Pearl Harbor and would extend not only through the war years but for years and even decades afterward.

From the moment the Japanese surprise attack was reported in Washington, D.C., on the afternoon of Sunday, 7 December (the attack actually began in Hawaii at 7:55 A.M. local time), the government kicked the defense buildup into high gear. The buildup was orchestrated through a network of agencies, principally the War Production Board (WPB), the civilian agency that coordinated the wartime economy and the production of war goods; the War Manpower Commission, which coordinated and allocated the overall human resources required for military, industrial, agricultural, and other civilian needs; the War Labor Board (WLB), which handled all labor-management disputes in



WAR ACTIVITIES COMMITTEE of the MOTION PICTURE INDUSTRY

defense-related industries; the Office of Price Administration (OPA), which controlled prices and regulated the production and availability of civilian goods, including the rationing of virtually all the necessities of day-to-day life; and the Office of War Information (OWI), which handled all government news releases to the press, served as liaison between press and government, and supervised the dissemination of information and propaganda through the media, notably motion pictures and radio. Scores of other agencies and subagencies were created during the war, in addition to the myriad government and military organizations set up during the Depression and the prewar defense buildup.

Roosevelt and his colleagues in Washington well realized that Allied victory was essentially a matter of effective utilization of their military and industrial resources. As the historian R. A. C. Parker has noted in his study of World War II, "Superior resources won the war; the victors had greater numbers of men and women and made more weapons."<sup>2</sup> Initially, the government's prime objective was to assemble a national war machine by creating new industries and, to a far greater extent, by converting existing industries to war production. This effort required additional workers and increased productivity, and both of these areas saw enormous growth during the war. In 1939–1940, 8 million people—nearly 15 percent of the workforce—were unemployed in the United States, and the average factory was in operation for forty hours per week. The defense buildup sharply increased employment rates. By early 1942, as the government began awarding war contracts (which eventually would total \$240 billion) and pumping \$2.3 billion per month into the economy, unemployment had fallen to 3.6 million. By 1944,



"Rosie the Riveter": OWI photo of women working in war plants.

the U.S. workforce had increased by 18.7 million and unemployment bottomed out at 800,000. A total of 64 million Americans were at work, including some 10 million in the armed services. By then, the average factory was in operation for ninety hours weekly, and the United States was producing 40 percent of the world's armaments. The productivity of American workers was unmatched throughout the world—roughly twice that of Germany in 1944, and fully five times that of Japan.<sup>3</sup>

Millions of those factory workers were women, and in fact the war had a greater impact on the employment and economic status of American women than any other event in this century. More than 6 million women took jobs during the war, increasing the female workforce by more than 50 percent. Much of the work was in traditionally male roles, particularly factory work. Female employment in the aircraft industry increased from only 1 percent in 1941 to 39 percent in 1943, for example, while women came to comprise 15 percent of the workers in the previously all-male shipbuilding industry. Another one million women went to work as civil servants for the government, where they were hired at a rate four times greater than men.<sup>4</sup>

The most rapid and significant conversion to war production involved the automotive industry, which retooled by government mandate to produce aircraft, artillery, tanks, heavy trucks, and jeeps. On 10 February 1942, the last new civilian car (a Ford) rolled off the assembly line in accordance with a government order to halt all civilian automobile production. Within weeks, all of the major automotive companies had converted operations and were producing war-related materiel. Ford's new Willow Run plant, 50 miles from Detroit, for instance, was redesigned to mass-produce B-24 Liberator bombers. The plant covered 67 acres, employed 42,000 workers, and by the end of the war would produce 8,654 bombers, eventually turning them out at the rate of one per hour.<sup>5</sup> The Saginaw division of General Motors was retooled to produce Browning machine guns; by March 1942, it was cranking out over 7,000 per week. Pontiac, meanwhile, was producing anti-aircraft guns at the rate of 1,250 per month. The auto industry continued to produce trucks as well, turning out more than one million light and heavy trucks in 1943–1944—more than all of the other Allied and Axis powers combined.<sup>6</sup>

Parker has argued that "production of aircraft is the best single measure of industrial achievement in the war," and here the U.S. conversion and output were particularly impressive. In 1939, Roosevelt set a production target of 5,000 planes, and that total was surpassed by some 800 aircraft. In 1941, the defense buildup took off and over 26,000 planes were produced. That output was nearly doubled in 1942 and then doubled again in 1943, with production leveling off in 1944 at 96,000 planes—over twice the output of the two next-largest producers, Russia with 40,246 and Germany with 39,275. Between Pearl Harbor and D day in June 1944, U.S. aircraft production averaged 5,700 planes per month, a rate roughly equivalent to the nation's entire output during all of 1939.<sup>7</sup>

Conversion to a war economy boosted salaries, of course, with total wages and salaries increasing from \$52 billion in 1939 to \$113 billion in 1944. Under government-imposed salary limits on raises, average weekly earnings in manufacturing rose 65 percent during the war, from \$32.18 in 1942 to \$47.12 in 1945. Meanwhile, the production of civilian goods fell by about one third as U.S. workers found themselves with greater purchasing power but increasingly less available for purchase. Shortages and restrictions became a way of life, and as the war progressed virtually everything that Americans wore, ate, drank, drove, or otherwise used was rationed by the OPA.<sup>8</sup>

The war effort also required massive relocation of the civilian population. During the war, over 15 million persons, some 10 percent of the population, relocated in different



counties, with about half that number moving to another state. Industrial centers in all parts of the country saw sizable population increases, particularly on the West Coast; San Diego, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, and Portland were all among the top ten cities in terms of population gains between 1940 and 1944. (The Los Angeles population increased 15 percent during that period, with an influx of about 440,000.)<sup>9</sup> Some of the population relocation, however, was neither voluntary nor related to war production. Soon after Pearl Harbor, Japanese and Japanese Americans were systematically removed from their homes and confined in internment camps. The total number of persons interned reached 110,000, roughly two-thirds of whom were U.S. citizens; 80 percent of those were from California.<sup>10</sup>

Not only were Americans moving in record numbers, but they were marrying and reproducing at a higher rate as well, despite the millions of men going into the service. Indeed, the early 1940s saw something of a "marriage boom" and a mild "baby boom" as well owing to various war-related factors: the prosperity of the period in the wake of the Depression, the prospect of separation due to military service, and no doubt the prospect of draft deferments as well. From 1940 to 1943, one million more families were formed than would have occurred under normal conditions, while the birthrate rose about 15 percent.<sup>11</sup> The number of family households increased by about two million during the war, despite a sizable countertrend toward "merging households" due to shortages of housing and consumer goods. The number of households with married women at the head and husbands absent increased from 770,000 in 1940 to 2,770,000 in 1945.<sup>12</sup>

While war production brought millions into the labor force and created real prosperity for the first time since the 1920s, the mobilization of millions of Americans into urban-industrial centers also brought labor conflicts, racial and ethnic discord, battles for women's rights, a surge in juvenile delinquency, and various other problems. Union membership grew along with the war plants, although both the unions and the factories experienced an erosion of authority and leadership. Despite the unions' no-strike pledges, labor strikes became a fact of life during the war, especially after 1942. The period saw record numbers of wildcat strikes—short-term, sporadic, unauthorized work stoppages within a limited labor arena. As Nelson Lichtenstein points out in *Labor's War at Home*, "The proportion of all American workers who participated in wartime strikes quadrupled after 1942, reaching an eighth of the workforce by the time of the surrender of Japan in September 1945." And in industries that suffered major strikes, such as mining and aircraft, the proportion of the workforce participating in strikes was 50 percent or higher per year.<sup>13</sup>

The surge in war-related employment of women and blacks in industry also was a source of conflict. Women suffered routine discrimination in terms of salary scales, work assignments, and limited advancement (especially into the growing supervisory and management ranks), but women rarely mounted any organized action to protest this treatment. Male coworkers tended to tolerate their invasion of the factories so long as women produced and remained within the newly defined arenas of "women's work"—aircraft riveting, welding, and wiring, for example.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, Rosie the Riveter became not only an accepted but an idealized figure during the war, best evidenced perhaps by Norman Rockwell's May 1943 *Saturday Evening Post* cover.

Black workers were given no such romanticized treatment, however; in fact, black workers were decidedly more militant and met with much greater resistance in their

pursuit of equal opportunities in the workplace. Among the bleaker of these episodes were the Detroit "hate strikes" involving white workers who walked off the job to protest black integration of traditionally white shops. These strikes reached a climax of sorts in June 1943, when 25,000 workers at Packard staged a weeklong strike after two blacks were promoted to long-segregated machinist positions.<sup>15</sup> The conflicts spilled out into the streets of Detroit, which soon became inflamed in weeks of violent race riots, culminating on 21 June, when 25 blacks and 9 whites were killed and another 800 were injured.<sup>16</sup>

June 1943 also saw racial violence erupt in Los Angeles as white servicemen battled Latino youths in the "zoot-suit riots"—referring to the oversized, brightly colored jackets and trousers sported by Latino youths (and by blacks and whites as well). This kind of disturbance was not confined to Los Angeles, although the problem was particularly severe there because of the sizable Mexican-American population and the large numbers of servicemen passing through that city. Actually, the zoot-suit riots were also related to another wartime social problem: juvenile delinquency. During the war, teenage violence and vandalism were a problem in virtually every major city, particularly the war centers with their urban crowding, unchecked prosperity, late-night revelry, and general lack of parental supervision due to work schedules. Movie theater owners were among the more vocal critics of the situation, complaining about raucous disruptions of screenings, slashed



Teenage smoking and drinking in "Youth in Crisis," a 1944 "March of Time" newsreel on the wartime surge in juvenile delinquency.

theater seats, and the like. Nighttime curfews were imposed on teenagers in many cities, while the media constantly challenged parents to assume greater responsibility for their children's behavior.

Although the war industries disrupted urban life, they also energized American cities in more positive ways. Perhaps no city in the United States was as lively during the war as Los Angeles, owing to three factors: the booming aircraft industry; L.A.'s status as a point of embarkation for the Pacific war theater; and the movie industry's efforts, especially through the USO and the legendary Hollywood Canteen, to entertain troops en route to the Pacific. Los Angeles, like most other large cities, also saw a tremendous wartime boom in nightclubs and restaurants, in live music and dancing, and in various other forms of entertainment. While entertaining the troops had its place, entertaining the workers who stoked the war machine was crucial as well.

Complementing the assembly of America's industrial war machine was the buildup of its armed forces. By December 1941, the peacetime draft had increased the military to about 1.5 million men, and the total surpassed 2 million immediately after Pearl Harbor. This number, however, represented only a fraction of the required force, which eventually would peak at 11.7 million American servicemen.<sup>17</sup>

The first year of U.S. involvement in the war was devoted primarily to recruiting and training troops and to building the domestic war machine. But 1942 did not go well for the Allies: Japan won decisive victories in the Pacific, while the Nazis scored victories in the Atlantic and in North Africa. By late 1942 and early 1943, the tide began to turn, thanks in large part to the steady supply of American aircraft and warships. In the summer of 1943, the Allies had taken the offensive on all fronts, and by late 1943 there was little question of whether the Allies would prevail; it was simply a matter of how long it would take and at what cost.

At that time, U.S. troop strength overseas was only about 1.6 million, but that number increased dramatically as the Allies dug in for the long haul both in the Pacific and in Europe. American military forces were deployed to two major theaters of action: the Pacific, where primarily navy and marine forces battled the Japanese; and Europe (and North Africa), where army and air force contingents fought the Nazis. The Russian-German theater to the east represented a veritable war unto itself, waged from June 1941 (when the Nazis invaded Russia) to May 1945. In the span of only a few months in early 1944, the number of U.S. troops in the two theaters reached about 3.6 million; this period also saw the American war machine reach peak productivity.<sup>18</sup>

In the summer of 1944, Allied victory was assured with D day and the invasion of Europe and with a series of major victories over the Japanese in the Pacific. But Germany and Japan still fought fiercely, and casualties mounted as Roosevelt challenged the war-weary populace in early 1945 to upgrade the effort, issuing a "work or fight" mandate to increase both troop and war-plant strength.<sup>19</sup> Roosevelt's death in April preceded Hitler's suicide by only a few weeks as the war in Europe finally ended. Germany surrendered on 7 May; the following day was declared V-E Day (for "victory in Europe"). By then, the Allies had secured the Pacific (at an enormous cost in lives lost) and the United States was conducting regular bombing raids over the Japanese mainland in preparation for a November invasion. That invasion was precluded by Japan's unconditional surrender following the American atomic bombing of Hiroshima (6 August) and Nagasaki (9 August). The official Japanese surrender took place on 2 September, which President Harry S Truman proclaimed V-J Day.

### Hollywood and Washington

On 17 December 1941, ten days after Pearl Harbor, Roosevelt appointed Lowell Mellett—an ardent New Dealer and Roosevelt aide who was a former editor of Scripps-Howard's *Washington Daily News*—to serve as coordinator of government films, acting as a liaison between the government and the motion picture industry and advising Hollywood in its support of the war effort. In his letter of appointment, FDR told Mellett: "The American motion picture is one of the most effective mediums in informing and entertaining our citizens. The motion picture must remain free in so far as national security will permit. I want no censorship of the motion picture."<sup>20</sup>

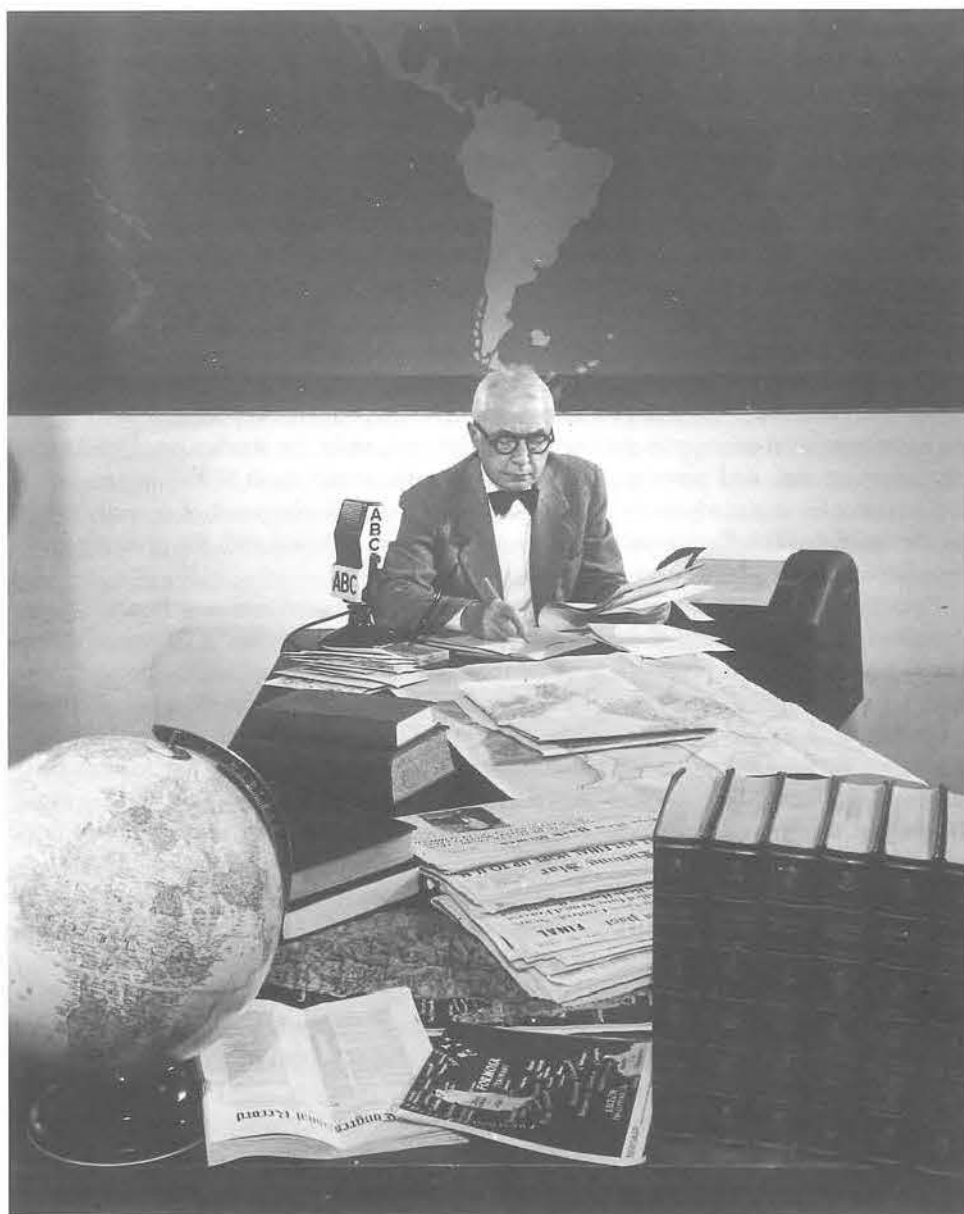
Roosevelt's message was of tremendous importance to the movie industry, indicating as it did that Hollywood would be allowed to continue commercial operations during the war, and without heavy interference from Washington. The motion picture industry, in other words, was not subject to the wholesale "war conversion" that was transforming other major U.S. industries such as steel, auto manufacturing, and construction. Many in Washington argued for conversion of the movie industry, similar to such conversions in Germany and Italy. Civilian production could be suspended, they argued, leaving distributors to rely on existing inventories (i.e., reissues), while the studios produced training, informational, and propaganda films. There was some merit to this argument, in that training films already were proving crucial to rapid deployment of recruits, while the movie-starved civilian population seemed generally satisfied with the growing number of reissues already in release.<sup>21</sup>

Roosevelt opposed conversion of the movie industry, however, realizing the importance of motion pictures as a form of diversion for civilians and soldiers alike. FDR realized, too, that the most effective propaganda often took the form of "mere" entertainment. The British government's ill-advised and much criticized closing of theaters and curtailing of production in England after the war broke out in Europe, along with the Britons' voracious appetite for Hollywood films in the interim, provided ample support for this view. Moreover, Hollywood already had demonstrated its willingness to produce training films, war-related shorts, and newsreels, while its feature films had begun to support FDR's unofficial interventionist policies—as the Senate's recent propaganda hearings had indicated. Considering the industry's proven ability to inform and entertain, along with its avowed commitment to assume a more aggressive propaganda role now that the war was at hand, FDR was confident that the government's political and military agenda and Hollywood's deep-seated commercial interests could be brought into workable alignment.

Thus, the costs and difficulties of full-scale conversion were averted, and indeed Hollywood was quite ready to embark on its own distinct form of war production. As the *Wall Street Journal* noted in a page-one story in January 1942: "The movie industry is fortunate in that its production facilities were ready for immediate utilization in the war effort. There was no problem in enlarging its 'plant capacity.' The industry is lucky, too, in that its chief 'raw material' is talent."<sup>22</sup>

Mellett informed all studio heads that there were six war-related subject areas which the government hoped to see treated in feature films, newsreels, shorts, and documentaries: the issues ("why we fight"), the enemy, the allies, the home front, the production front, and the U.S. armed forces. To facilitate Hollywood's treatment, Mellett set up an office on the West Coast under Nelson Poynter. Like Mellett, Poynter was a journalist-turned-bureaucrat and liberal New Dealer with no experience in the business or the





Elmer Davis, head of the Office of War Information.

production of motion pictures. It appeared that such experience would be unnecessary, since Poynter's role was to be purely advisory—which indeed it was, at the outset at least. Throughout the spring of 1942, Poynter and his staff devoted most of their efforts to meeting with studio executives, producers, and writers to outline and reinforce the government's strategy.

Hollywood's relationship with Washington assumed a more formal and bureaucratic dimension in June 1942 with the official creation of the Office of War Information (OWI), which amalgamated several related government agencies. Headed by Elmer Davis, a print journalist and broadcast news analyst, the OWI's function was to enhance public understanding of the war at home and abroad, to coordinate government information activities, and to serve as a liaison with press, radio, and motion pictures. With both a domestic and an overseas branch, the OWI handled virtually all domestic information and propaganda while sharing its overseas responsibilities with the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs (CIAA), under Nelson Rockefeller, as well as the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), under William "Wild Bill" Donovan. Mellett's outfit, now the Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP), was situated within the OWI's domestic branch.<sup>23</sup>

The BMP had three objectives: to produce war-related informational and propaganda films, primarily shorts; to review and coordinate the filmmaking activities of various other government agencies, which were substantial; and to act as liaison with the motion picture industry. This last objective involved securing optimal distribution for government films and assisting the studios in their war-related efforts.<sup>24</sup> Distribution of government shorts soon became routine, thanks largely to the Hollywood-based War Activities Committee (WAC), run by the former RKO executive George Schaefer. Formerly the Motion Picture Committee Cooperating for National Defense, the WAC worked with the BMP in lining up commitments from over 10,000 theaters to show government films—a total which would grow to over 16,000 by war's end.<sup>25</sup>

While the OWI-WAC handling of government film distribution ran quite smoothly, the BMP's efforts to work with Hollywood filmmakers on war-related pictures proved to be a far more complex and difficult task. Clayton Koppes traces these efforts in detail in chapter 8, but several points should be underscored here. First, while Mellett and Poynter generally abided by FDR's assurances that there would be no government censorship of motion pictures, the BMP did take an increasingly active role in analyzing and evaluating movie projects, promoting story subjects and plot lines, and applying various pressures on studio personnel to cooperate. During 1942, the BMP became highly critical of Hollywood's war-related filmmaking efforts and fashioned something of a second production code and a PCA-style review process to rectify the situation. Not surprisingly, this was not a welcome development in the movie industry.<sup>26</sup>

A second point is that the BMP and the PCA (and their respective codes) were politically and ideologically at odds, not only on the treatment of the war but on various other issues as well, from their respective conceptions of a "good" society to their notions of what constituted a good movie. The PCA's extreme conservatism and obsessive concern over moral and sexual issues was fundamentally at odds, as Clayton Koppes and Gregory Black point out in *Hollywood Goes to War*, with the OWI's ethos of "mild social democracy and liberal internationalist foreign policy."<sup>27</sup> Moreover, the PCA had considerably more experience than the BMP in dealing with studio executives and filmmakers, and it also had a much clearer understanding of how to work social and political themes into motion pictures. Thus, the OWI and the PCA often gave the studios conflicting and even contradictory input on the making of war-related films.

The OWI's ideological bent also created problems in 1942 with the newly elected, conservative-leaning Congress, which viewed the agency in general and the BMP in particular as blatantly pro-Roosevelt and dangerously liberal. Thus, in 1943 Congress cut off almost all funding for the OWI's domestic operations, resulting in Mellett's and Poynter's resignations and leaving the BMP with little to do on the home front except cooperate with WAC in the routine distribution of government shorts. That did not mark the end of the BMP in Hollywood, however. On the contrary, the agency actually gained a stronger hand by shifting its liaison activities to the still-active overseas branch under Ulric Bell, a former Washington correspondent for the respected *Louisville Courier-Journal* and head of the prewar interventionist group Fight for Freedom; he had developed a strong accord with the Office of Censorship. This shift raises a third important point: with its control over film exports, the Office of Censorship effectively put teeth into the BMP's advisory role, providing a post hoc threat to deny export to those films made without adequate regard for the BMP's input before and during production.<sup>28</sup> By 1945, the BMP's input was related not only to the war but to the anticipated postwar era as well, as the OWI steadily expanded its concerns to include the selling of democracy and free enterprise overseas.

Thus, the OWI, in cooperation with the Office of Censorship, exercised considerable influence over the wartime movie industry. As Koppes describes in chapter 8, the OWI significantly affected Hollywood's depiction of America's social and political issues, its allies and enemies, and its role in the envisioned postwar world. And as Richard Lingeman suggests, "FDR's promise of no censorship was not given cynically, but never in our history was the government to assume, albeit temporarily, such tacit power over a medium of mass communication."<sup>29</sup>

Beyond Washington's direct influence on the movie industry via the OWI, the government also had considerable indirect impact through the myriad war-induced regulations, restrictions, and shortages. Among the more severe of these was the drain on filmmaking talent, as the so-called manpower shortage seriously impaired every phase of the industry, particularly production. By late 1942, roughly 4,000 individuals, an estimated 22 percent of studio employees, had joined the armed forces.<sup>30</sup> The Screen Actors Guild reported in January 1943 that 900 actors had withdrawn to join the service; the Screen Writers Guild reported 168 withdrawals, and the Directors Guild 104. Another 40 or so had left the studio executive and producer ranks.<sup>31</sup> The most significant losses in terms of top feature filmmaking were male stars and directors. Clark Gable, James Stewart, Henry Fonda, Alan Ladd, Robert Taylor, and many other stars left for the military, as did such top directors as John Ford, Frank Capra, William Wyler, George Stevens, and John Huston. A tally in late 1944, when the number of studio employees in the service peaked, indicated that over 6,000 had entered the armed forces, including 1,500 actors, 230 writers, and 143 directors. Metro lost 1,090 to the service, Fox 755, Warners 720, Paramount 525, Universal 418, Columbia 289, RKO 224, Republic 134, and Monogram 129.<sup>32</sup>

The distribution and exhibition sectors lost more employees to the military (and the factories) than the production sector, although these were somewhat easier to replace. During the first year of the war, distribution lost 4,500 employees to the service, and exhibition some 18,000. The latter figure amounted to about 12 percent of all theater employees, and 29 percent of male workers in the motion picture industry.<sup>33</sup> These vacancies often were filled by women, and in fact the exhibition end of the business saw



Hollywood writer-director Garson Kanin (seated at Moviola editing machine), actor Granville Scofield, and Disney animator Ambrozi Paliwoda, in training with the Signal Corps.

pronounced changes as women moved out of ticket windows and usherette outfits and into projection booths and management offices. In March 1943, Warners reported having the first theater in the United States staffed entirely by women, and in June 1943 Loew's reported that sixty-two of its theaters, roughly half, were being run by women.<sup>34</sup>

Other wartime shortages and restrictions affected the availability of raw film stock, construction materials (especially steel and lumber), and transportation. The film stock restrictions were imposed by the War Production Board, primarily to help meet government requirements of raw stock for training films. These restrictions initially set allotments, per studio, at about 25 percent below 1941 usage; they gradually eased as government and military requirements diminished. Despite ongoing complaints about needing film stock both for production and for release prints, the industry quickly adjusted by cutting down on the amount of stock allotted for each picture, and also on the number of prints in circulation. The production cutbacks led to more careful pre-production planning and to fewer takes of individual scenes being shot and printed. And as seen in more detail later, the restrictions also gave companies a rationale for producing fewer features, increasing the length of runs, and stockpiling finished films—all of which helped boost the studios' enormous wartime profits. Thus, the film stock



restrictions, as *Variety* put it in early 1944, "turned out to be more of a bookkeeping nightmare than an actual drawback to production and distribution" and in fact brought increased efficiency to production.<sup>35</sup>

Restrictions on construction also were mandated, by the WPB for the most part, and applied primarily to set construction and to theater building and remodeling. In 1942, the WPB imposed a limit of \$5,000 on material expenditures for sets, and \$200 on materials for theater construction.<sup>36</sup> The studios devised methods of recycling and constructing new sets within these guidelines and also increased location shooting in 1942 (Hitchcock, for example, shot *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* entirely on location). Exhibition, however, saw theater construction come to a virtual halt, and remodeling limited to the bare necessities. Theater owners also were hurt by curtailments of projection equipment (and parts) and were forced to rely on systems sorely in need of repair or replacement.

Transportation restrictions had an enormous impact on the movie industry in many ways, from the Office of Price Administration's pervasive gasoline rationing and its 1943 ban on pleasure driving to tire shortages, lowered speed limits, and the general dearth of civilian vehicles. After the brief surge in location shooting in 1942, travel restrictions late in the year made it almost impossible to leave the back lot. Distribution and the circulation of prints were hampered by the Office of Defense Transportation's cuts in truck delivery schedules—giving a literal meaning to the "bicycling" of prints from theater to theater. Most significantly, moviegoing underwent wholesale changes during the war owing to the combined effects of population relocation and travel restrictions: outlying theaters, especially small-town and rural movie houses, generally lost business, while major urban theaters thrived.<sup>37</sup>

Another government restriction which created a tremendous furor for a short period was a \$25,000 salary ceiling decreed by the director of economic stabilization in October 1942, scheduled to take effect on 1 January 1943.<sup>38</sup> The announcement sent shock waves through the movie industry, whose top talent earned well over that maximum on individual pictures, and whose term contracts carried built-in pay hikes. (According to the Internal Revenue Service, eighty individuals at MGM alone earned over \$75,000 in 1942.)<sup>39</sup> The studios dispatched a contingent of lawyers and executives to Washington to lobby various officials and agencies, including the Treasury Department, as cries of "Why work?" circulated among the Hollywood elite. The government backed off, and eventually Congress overruled the plan altogether, relying on the personal income tax codes to divert "excessive" earnings to the government. Thus, the high salaries in Hollywood continued, with an estimated 250 employees earning over \$100,000 in 1944.<sup>40</sup>

### *Entertaining the Troops*

Films, stage shows, and other diversions it provided for the men and women in uniform, both at home and abroad, were also a significant aspect of Hollywood's support of the war effort. This was yet another area where the government, the military, and the movie industry developed an efficient and successful working relationship. The crux of Hollywood's effort came via WAC cooperation with the War Department and the army to create the largest distribution and exhibition circuit in the world—and one that eventually encompassed the entire globe. In February 1942, the WAC delivered its first shipment of 16mm films (versus the usual theatrical film gauge of 35mm), free of charge, to soldiers in combat areas. Typical of the hundreds of regular shipments of gift

films that followed, this first shipment comprised eighty prints of twenty different programs, each of which included one feature and one or two shorts and ran between ninety minutes and two hours.<sup>41</sup>

In the coming years, the OWI overseas branch and the WAC routed these packages to troops at every U.S. military base, command post, battlefield, and outpost. Films were delivered by jeep, parachute, PT boat, and any other conveyance available and soon became part of the everyday military routine.<sup>42</sup> Often referred to as a "two-hour furlough," these screenings were one way of keeping in touch with conditions back home; they also were considered crucial to morale and one counter to the critical problem of battle fatigue. It is worth noting, though, that the soldiers' tastes did not run simply toward escapist fare, particularly in the early war years. According to the *Motion Picture Herald*, the five most popular films in army theaters in 1943 were *GUADALCANAL DIARY*, *CRASH DIVE*, *DESTINATION TOKYO*, *AIR FORCE*, and *SAHARA*.<sup>43</sup>

In 1943, the system was well in place; that year the studios shipped 218 features to the War Department, delivering a total of over 6,100 16mm prints.<sup>44</sup> Many of these films were released to the military one to two months (and occasionally much earlier) before their general theatrical release. Warners' Capra-directed comedy *ARSENIC AND OLD LACE*, for example, enjoyed its world premiere in military theaters overseas in January 1943, more than a year before its U.S. release.<sup>45</sup>

This time lag was due in part to the majors' heavy backlog of unreleased features—the



Troops in the South Pacific enjoy a "two-hour furlough."





Military screening of ARSENIC AND OLD LACE (Warners, 1944) for troops in the China-Burma theater of action.

Hollywood version of "hoarding" in the face of anticipated war shortages. Another very different reason had to do with the publicity advantages of these releases. Early in the war, Hollywood publicized the deliveries, hoping to get some mileage out of stunts like holding the May 1942 world premiere of TARZAN'S NEW YORK ADVENTURE on a base in Iceland, where the film was delivered by parachute.<sup>46</sup> As the system developed, however, the studios came to realize that servicemen writing home about films they liked provided even better publicity. *Variety* in April 1943 indicated that this unique form of word-of-mouth promotion generated "considerable pre-selling value," and the advance release setup with the army was "developing into an important merchandising channel."<sup>47</sup>

The sheer number of theaters, screenings, and servicemen involved underscores this point. In mid-1944, operations in North America (including Alaska and parts of Canada) stabilized at over 1,100 theaters and an attendance of 17 million per month.<sup>48</sup> By January 1945, the overseas service was estimating its weekly attendance at 7.7 million, with pictures shipped and screened daily "wherever men are fighting or are stationed."<sup>49</sup> In October 1945, the army set up five improvised 16mm theaters aboard the *Queen Mary* and the *Queen Elizabeth* for returning servicemen. By that time, Hollywood had delivered 43,189 prints of 1,941 features to the War Department, plus 33,189 prints of 1,050 shorts. The estimated number of showings per day, worldwide, was 3,500, with daily attendance of about 1.5 million.<sup>50</sup>

While the WAC coordinated 16mm film shipments to the service, the Hollywood Victory Committee coordinated live performances by film, radio, stage, and vaudeville personalities for the armed forces and related services. Formed three days after Pearl Harbor, the Victory Committee included representatives of the various talent guilds and unions who arranged everything from one-night stands (single performances) in the States to extended overseas tours. On the civilian front, the Victory Committee orga-

nized shows for various government agencies, notably the Treasury Department for its war-bond drives. But most of the committee's efforts involved entertaining the troops on several USO circuits: the Victory Circuit with 600 venues, most of them theaterlike facilities on army posts or naval stations which could accommodate full-scale revues, plays, and concerts; the Blue Circuit, where smaller troupes played, comprising some 1,150 limited base facilities; the Hospital Circuit, mainly wards and auditoriums in military hospitals; and best known perhaps, the Fox Hole Circuit with its impromptu performances in makeshift facilities at or near battlefronts.<sup>51</sup>

The Victory Committee's overseas operations did not pick up steam until late 1943, when the number of U.S. troops heading for the European and Pacific theaters increased sharply. By April 1944, there were 80 units touring overseas, with 38 of those in the British Isles. Between Pearl Harbor and V-J Day, the Hollywood Victory Committee booked 119 overseas tours, 2,700 hospital tour events, 3,050 camp tour events, and 2,500 bond tour events. All told, over 53,000 appearances were made during and just after the war by over 4,100 individuals.<sup>52</sup>

Two other methods of entertaining the troops on the home front also are worth mentioning. One was giving free passes to men and women in uniform, a practice that began before Pearl Harbor and became fairly routine during the war, owing in part to WAC



The indefatigable Bob Hope and Frances Langford work the USO's "Fox Hole Circuit," providing live entertainment for troops at the front.



*Bette Davis serves dinner to the troops inside the Hollywood Canteen.*



*Soldiers from all branches of the military outside the Hollywood Canteen.*

lobbying of exhibitors. Accurate records were not kept, but one estimate put the number of free admissions to New York City theaters as of September 1943 at 2.4 million, with another 2 million passes given to servicemen in Chicago during the same period.<sup>53</sup> The second notable form of wartime entertainment on the home front was the legendary Hollywood Canteen, a refurbished livery stable just off Sunset on Cahuenga Boulevard. Inspired by the Stage Door Canteen in New York City, the Hollywood Canteen was created and run by a group of movie industry volunteers, many of them top stars—including its hard-driving president, Bette Davis. The Canteen opened in October 1942 and soon became a requisite stop for the hundreds of thousands of servicemen passing through Los Angeles en route to the Pacific. Every night at the Canteen, “the boys” enjoyed free refreshments, the company of stars, and the music of top bands.<sup>54</sup> Within a year of its opening, some 350 industry personnel had volunteered to dance, sing, serve Cokes, or simply wash dishes, and the Canteen had entertained its one millionth serviceman—who was honored with kisses from Marlene Dietrich, Deanna Durbin, and Lana Turner.<sup>55</sup>

### *America's Wartime Movie Marketplace*

While Hollywood and the government cooperated to create the world's largest distribution-exhibition circuit during the war, the domestic motion picture market underwent a massive war-induced transformation of its own. With each successive year during the war, as American theaters set new box-office records, the very nature of movie exhibition changed rather dramatically—albeit temporarily. During the war, theaters took on a community role and import altogether different from any they held in any period before or since, and a role that was scarcely anticipated in the chaotic early months of the war.

In the first few months of 1942, despite Roosevelt's edict that the movie industry continue commercial operations, theaters were plagued by war-related problems and disruptions. Blackouts and “dimouts” were ordered for theaters on the coasts and in major war production centers. Air-raid orders from the Office of Civilian Defense required theaters to train personnel and install special equipment in the event of air attack.<sup>56</sup> The rationing of gasoline and other fuel affected theater operations, delivery of prints, and patronage. All theater construction and remodeling was suspended, with the burgeoning drive-in movie industry abruptly halted.<sup>57</sup> The drafting of young men into military service limited available theater employees, bringing not only women but more teenagers and older workers into the exhibition field. A momentary shock went through the industry when, in April 1942, government officials suggested that one-third of American movie houses be shut down.<sup>58</sup> That never occurred, but the WPB continually warned exhibitors that theaters might be closed owing to severe shortages.<sup>59</sup> Movie exhibition flourished despite these problems, even in that trying first war year. As a January 1943 *Variety* story concluded after presenting a litany of exhibitors' woes: “Offsetting the troubles is the turnaway business enjoyed by thousands of theaters from coast to coast.”<sup>60</sup>

That first war year also saw movie theaters become war-oriented community centers, owing to the cooperative efforts of the WAC and the nation's exhibitors. The WAC's Theatre Division had two main tasks: to facilitate the distribution and exhibition of government films, and to facilitate the sale (in theaters) of war bonds and victory





Sign of the times: a poster for a German film is removed from a theater in "Little Germany" in Yorkville, New York, on 11 December 1941, after war was declared.

bonds. As mentioned earlier, the WAC managed by war's end to get nearly all the movie houses in the United States to pledge to screen government films—totaling over 77,000 prints of 171 films in the course of the war. Meanwhile, bond drives became a regular feature in movie houses, particularly in first-run theaters near defense plants. Perhaps the best indication of the importance of movie theaters to the government's bond-selling efforts was the role played by Ted R. Gamble. An exhibitor from Portland, Oregon, Gamble had been recruited before the war to advise the Treasury secretary on the role of movie theaters in government fund-raising. With the government's subsequent decision to keep bond-buying voluntary, Gamble was appointed head of Treasury's war finance division.<sup>61</sup>

During the various war bond sales campaigns, U.S. theaters held some 30,000 "bond premieres" and over 40,000 free movie days on which admission was free with the purchase of a war bond. Over one-third of the theaters participating in bond drives became official issuing agents for the U.S. Treasury, and they sold literally billions of dollars in war bonds in the course of the war. In fact, government estimates credit motion picture exhibitors with selling 20 percent of all "E" bonds (those issued to individual investors) during the war. Besides the Treasury Department, other agencies used movie theaters for various drives and initiatives, including the Red Cross, the March of Dimes, United Nations Relief, and Army-Navy Emergency Relief. Theaters also became collection centers for various "critical materials"—blood plasma, rags and paper, copper, rubber,

and other needed items in short supply. A nationwide "Get in the Scrap" campaign also filled theater parking lots with tons of scrap metal.<sup>62</sup>

The war economy had a tremendous impact on theater trade, of course, and particularly in the downtown first-run houses that traditionally had been the chief source of box-office revenues. A typical trade press story appeared in April 1942 under the headline "Downtown Areas Boom"; the article noted that "business at the boxoffice has shifted markedly to the extent that the downtown theaters are cleaning up and the neighborhood or suburban houses are standing still or not doing as well as they did."<sup>63</sup> Losses of male patrons due to the draft were easily offset by increased business from defense plant workers; indeed, many downtown theaters were soon forced to expand their schedules. In Detroit, for instance, a United Auto Workers request induced the 5,000-seat Fox Theater to offer pictures from 1:00 A.M. to 5:30 A.M. for swing-shift workers—a contingent of at least 100,000, by UAW estimates.<sup>64</sup> By late 1942, midnight shows were becoming commonplace in theaters in defense plant areas, where exhibitors tried, as *Variety* put it, "to catch the trade piling into downtown zones at the late hour."<sup>65</sup>

By 1943, the development of another war-related trend not only added to the downtown exhibition surge but indicated a significant shift in production and distribution strategies. In July, the *Motion Picture Herald* reported that "customers are leaving the neighborhood second and subsequent run theaters for first run houses downtown," and



West Coast opening of Warners' AIR FORCE in 1943. Note sign for "swing shift show" beginning at 1:30 A.M.

it suggested two principal reasons. First, patrons had more spending money and were willing to pay the increased admission price at downtown theaters. And second, first-run pictures were taking longer to move out of the downtown houses and into the "nabes" (neighborhood theaters). The latter point was crucial, as films were enjoying increasingly longer runs and thus generating more money for all concerned—even the subsequent-run exhibitors, who also ran top features longer than ever when they finally were able to get them.<sup>66</sup>

The penchant for holdovers and longer runs began before the war, of course, but it escalated sharply in 1942 and continued at record levels throughout the war. One well-publicized example was the run of MGM's *MRS. MINIVER* at Radio City Music Hall. That June 1942 release ran for a record ten weeks at Radio City, surpassing the six-week record held by three other recent upscale woman's pictures: *REBECCA*, *THE PHILADELPHIA STORY*, and *WOMAN OF THE YEAR*. In its ten-week run at Radio City, *MRS. MINIVER* played to a record 1.5 million persons and grossed \$1.03 million, returning roughly half of the picture's production costs in that single venue. The picture continued at a record pace after ten weeks but was pulled owing to a contractual commitment to Disney for *BAMBI* (1942).<sup>67</sup> While few pictures did as well as *MRS. MINIVER*, the number of holdovers continued to increase. During 1943, a record low of 163 films played in New York City's first-run houses. Again Radio City provides an illuminating example of changing wartime distribution patterns. From 1936 to 1938, Radio City played thirty to thirty-two features per year; in 1939, the total fell slightly to twenty-eight and then held at twenty-six in 1940 and 1941. Then came the war years: Radio City played only sixteen pictures in 1942 and then played just ten or eleven in each of the next three years.<sup>68</sup>

Holdovers and long runs created serious booking problems for subsequent-run exhibitors, who turned increasingly to reissues to satisfy demand. By late 1943, exhibitors were actually requesting that the studio re-release old hits, and the companies readily complied. MGM announced plans to reissue pictures for the first time ever; Columbia planned to bring back its Capra hits, while RKO planned an elaborate re-release for *SNOW WHITE*.<sup>69</sup> Many of the reissues did excellent business; *SNOW WHITE*, for example, returned another \$1.3 million in reissue.<sup>70</sup> The governing wisdom was that star vehicles released from two to ten years previously were the best candidates for reissue; the *Motion Picture Herald* reported that these pictures routinely returned \$400,000–600,000 at the box office—a tremendous unexpected windfall for the studios and exhibitors alike.<sup>71</sup> Thus, Warners, Fox, and Paramount began re-release campaigns as well. By 1944, business for reissues was so strong that the studio-distributors began selling them at higher rates—even sometimes in percentage deals, a practice traditionally restricted to first-run features. MGM, responding to criticism by theater owners, announced that its reissues for 1944–1945 would be priced in a lower bracket, but only "in those areas where [exhibition] operations are suffering due to the big bottleneck in key situations."<sup>72</sup> By the summer of 1945, the trend was set, with dozens of reissues in circulation and another twenty announced for the beginning of the upcoming season.<sup>73</sup>

Because of the overheated first-run market, the success of reissues, and decree-related selling policies, the majors all but eliminated low-budget production during the war. But B pictures remained in demand, with the number of theaters playing B's and double bills actually increasing during the war.<sup>74</sup> Columbia and Universal continued to turn out B's at roughly the same rate as before the war, as did Republic, Monogram, and PRC

(Producers Releasing Corporation), although all these companies produced occasional top features as well.

Thus, the entire movie market was surging during the war era, with an increase in gross box-office receipts in each successive year. After previous highs of around \$730 million during the pre-Depression talkie boom of 1929–1930, the total U.S. box-office take finally surpassed that record level in 1940, reaching \$740 million. That total would double by the end of the war, as these figures indicate:

Table 5.1  
U.S. BOX-OFFICE RECEIPTS, 1940–1945 (\$ BILLIONS)

1940	0.74
1941	0.81
1942	1.02
1943	1.28
1944	1.34
1945	1.45

SOURCE: Joel Finler, *The Hollywood Story* (New York: Crown, 1988), p. 32; Christopher H. Sterling and Timothy R. Haight, *The Mass Media* (New York: Praeger, 1978), p. 188.

There were several key reasons for this wartime surge. One was a steady climb in admission prices, which rose from an average of 25¢ in 1942 to 30¢ in 1945.<sup>75</sup> (These figures do not include the federal admissions tax of 10 percent, which increased to 20 percent in 1944.) Another key reason was an increase in overall admissions, which, according to MPPDA figures, rose from around 85 million in 1941 to around 95 million by 1944–1945.<sup>76</sup> These figures were the subject of interminable debate, and they were challenged by an April 1944 Gallup/ARI study, which gauged weekly attendance at 62 million, plus another 10 million servicemen per week in military theaters.<sup>77</sup> More conservative estimates put admissions at 80 million before the war and 85 million by 1944–1945.<sup>78</sup>

The real key to the wartime box-office surge was the first-run market, which enjoyed a higher proportion of paying customers during the war than ever before, and also a higher proportion of moneymaking pictures. In 1942, 101 pictures (representing about three-fourths of all A-class releases) returned rentals of at least \$1 million to their producer-distributors and took in a total of \$182 million.<sup>79</sup> In 1943, 95 pictures did at least \$1 million in rentals, returning a total of \$211 million; 55 of those hits returned over \$2 million.<sup>80</sup> By 1944, million-dollar rentals were altogether commonplace. It was becoming difficult by then to produce a top feature for less than \$1 million, owing to inflation and other factors, but the first-run market was so hot that these releases were routinely recouping production costs within the first twelve weeks of general release.<sup>81</sup>

Despite higher first-run admission prices, as well as the numerous road shows and special engagements which pushed prices even higher, moviegoers flocked to downtown theaters as never before during the war. They enjoyed other entertainment forms as well, with radio, music, and theater also doing record business in the later war years.<sup>82</sup> Historians have argued that the American public grew war-weary in 1944–1945 as the Allies struggled toward victory and the U.S. war machine cranked away at maximum output. This may have been the case, but it scarcely diminished the public's appetite for diversion, relaxation, and the collective ritual of mass-mediated entertainment.





Premiere of *GOING MY WAY* (Paramount, 1944) in New York's Times Square, and playing at the Plaza Theater on Regent Street in London.



### Foreign Markets

Hollywood's foreign trade during World War II focused primarily on the United Kingdom and Latin America, just as it had in 1940–1941. This orientation did not prove to be a serious liability, however, owing to the tremendous wartime moviegoing boom in England once the tide was turned against the Nazis in 1941–1942. In fact, Hollywood's wartime revenues from England far surpassed prewar totals, to a point where, by 1944–1945, the distributors again saw foreign markets providing about one-third of their income—a remarkable fact considering the record revenues at home. While the lion's share came from Great Britain, Hollywood continued to cultivate markets in Central and South America, with assistance from Rockefeller's Office of Inter-American Affairs, the State Department, and other government agencies. Persistent political and economic conflicts undercut this Latin American effort, but the studios and the government persevered, anticipating a more positive postwar situation. The State Department and the OWI intervened in other overseas markets as well, particularly in neutral Europe and in the Axis nations toward the end of the war. And as the government became more sensitive to America's image abroad, it became more concerned about Hollywood's role in projecting that image.

Canada, deemed simply an extension of the U.S. market by the studios (which included Canadian revenues in the "domestic" U.S. market figures), was, of course, a foreign market and thus warrants mention here. Undergoing an economic surge of its own during the war and, like the United States, untroubled by fighting on its own soil (or in its skies), Canada also enjoyed a motion picture boom. In 1939, according to government figures, paid admissions in Canada's 1,350 theaters totaled 138 million (versus about 4 billion in the United States), generating gross box-office revenues of \$34 million.<sup>83</sup> By 1943, attendance had topped 200 million and receipts surpassed \$50 million; those figures increased slightly in 1944 and 1945.<sup>84</sup> During that time, 95 percent of features screened in Canada were Hollywood product—including pictures dubbed into French for release in Quebec that the studios hoped to release later in France.<sup>85</sup>

Britain, too, was something of an extension of the U.S. movie market, although it was both more profitable and more complex. Early in the war, frozen assets continued to plague the U.S. companies, as they had in the prewar period. But late in 1942, Britain remitted nearly \$50 million to the studio-distributors and effectively thawed the bulk of U.S. movie revenues for the duration, largely in response to the American lend-lease program and to heavy lobbying from the U.S. government.<sup>86</sup> Britain also eased its quota restrictions in late 1942, thus allowing U.S. product to occupy more screen time and cutting the requirement of U.S. production in England. The main reason for easing the quota restrictions was the general scarcity of British film product due to material and manpower shortages.<sup>87</sup> After turning out two hundred or more features per year before the war, British production fell drastically in the 1940s. The Board of Trade registered only forty-eight features in 1942, and between sixty and seventy in each of the next three years, when British-made product occupied only 15–20 percent of screen time in British theaters. Still, attendance climbed in England, surpassing 30 million in 1944 and 1945—25 percent above prewar figures.<sup>88</sup>

Wartime rentals for U.S. product in England in late 1944 were reportedly running over \$90 million annually, with three-fourths of that total remitted to the distributors and the balance remaining in England as motion picture investments. As the war wound down, virtually all of the major U.S. companies began setting up production units

or coproduction deals in England. (A few, like MGM and Warners, had had similar setups before the war. *GOODBYE MR. CHIPS*, for instance, was produced by the "MGM-British unit" in 1939.) These arrangements in the later war years were intended to provide, as *Variety* noted, "a hedge against possible postwar currency restrictions and not merely for quota-production purposes."<sup>89</sup>

While production in England was down, a number of British pictures did exceptional business in the United States during the war and held their own against Hollywood product in other foreign markets, especially in Europe and the Middle East. War films were particularly successful, notably Noël Coward and David Lean's *IN WHICH WE SERVE* (1942), Carol Reed's *THE WAY AHEAD* (1944; U.S. title *THE IMMORTAL BATTALION*), Anthony Asquith's *THE WAY TO THE STARS* (1945; U.S. title *JOHNNY IN THE CLOUDS*), and several by the London Films team of Emeric Pressburger and Michael Powell, including *49TH PARALLEL* (1941; U.S. title *THE INVADERS*), *ONE OF OUR AIRCRAFT IS MISSING* (1942), and *THE LIFE AND DEATH OF COLONEL BLIMP* (1943; U.S. title *COLONEL BLIMP*). Most of these films featured a deft blending of wartime propaganda (with much speechifying), comedy, and action, and many incorporated war-related documentary footage as well.<sup>90</sup> Coward, Lean, and Reed were among a new generation of British talent that emerged during the war, along with the actors Trevor Howard, James Mason, and Rex Harrison—all of whom eventually would work in Hollywood.

The producer Alexander Korda remained an important figure in both England and the United States, as he had been in the 1930s, but J. Arthur Rank was without question the key individual in British cinema during the war. Heir to a flour and milling fortune, Rank had been in the industry since the mid-1930s as a producer, and by the war era he was building a massive film empire—and one that certainly was turning (and worrying) heads in Hollywood. By 1943, Rank owned or controlled both the Odeon and Gaumont theater circuits in England (totaling 650 theaters); he owned Eagle-Lion, a distribution company; he was chairman of the Gaumont British organization, which included Gainsborough Pictures and Gaumont British News, as well as the Denham and Pinewood studios, two fairly modest operations. In 1944, Rank had about \$20 million tied up in nineteen of his own productions, resulting in such 1945 hits (in the United States as well as England) as *BLITHE SPIRIT*, *A WALK IN THE SUN*, *THE SEVENTH VEIL*, *BRIEF ENCOUNTER*, and Olivier's *HENRY V*.<sup>91</sup>

In 1944–1945, Rank made a number of cooperative deals with U.S. individuals and companies, including a five-year coproduction and global distribution deal with 20th Century-Fox; a two-picture production and distribution deal with RKO; a two-year, seven-picture distribution deal with UA; and a coproduction deal with David Selznick.<sup>92</sup> Rank's ultimate coup came in late 1945 with the creation of United World Pictures, a coproduction and global distribution setup with a major U.S. independent, International Pictures, as well as Universal Pictures. By then, his holdings had spread to Canada, Australia, and India as well as the United States, and he directly or indirectly controlled 80 percent of the film industry in Great Britain.<sup>93</sup>

Besides England, Hollywood's most significant wartime foreign markets were Mexico and Argentina. But unlike the booming British market, the two Latin American countries were notable more for Hollywood's efforts and their enormous potential than for producing revenues. While Britain was returning \$70–80 million annually to U.S. distributors in the later war years, all of Central and South America combined generated only about \$15 million per year. This level of revenue was deemed worthwhile in



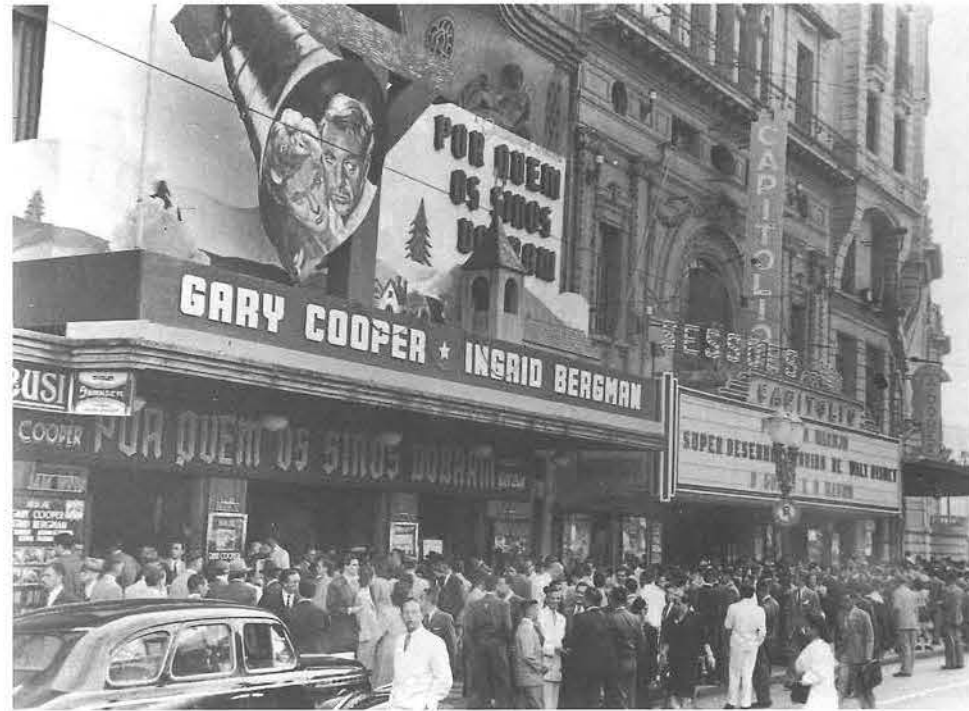
*Britain's dominant film moguls of the 1940s, J. Arthur Rank and Alexander Korda.*

Hollywood for two reasons, both of which had to do with the political economy of the hemisphere. First and foremost, Latin America was a huge market within the U.S. "sphere of influence" and had only recently begun to develop a modern urban-industrial system. Much of the population was illiterate, only an estimated 10–15 percent were moviegoers (versus 80–90 percent in the United States and England), and there were only about 7,000 movie theaters in all of Central and South America. Nevertheless, these areas represented excellent postwar prospects for Hollywood.<sup>94</sup> Second, enormous pressure was applied by the U.S. government, and particularly by Nelson Rockefeller, the coordinator of inter-American affairs and architect of the good neighbor policy, who deemed movies an important means of advancing U.S. ideology in Latin America.

Although Mexico officially entered the war against the Axis in May 1942, it was not a principal participant and did not undergo a massive defense buildup or war economy as such. Still, its economic and industrial development during the war was substantial, including the rapid expansion of its own movie industry. Mexico produced eighty features in 1942, its highest since the coming of sound. Production fell below sixty in 1943, owing mainly to film stock shortages, then increased again in 1944–1945 despite recurring strikes and labor disputes in the production sector.<sup>95</sup> But by 1944, as Charles Ramirez Berg has pointed out, Mexico was becoming a film production and distribution power in Central America and something of a paradox vis-à-vis Hollywood. While relying heavily on Hollywood for imports, especially for its first-run theaters in Mexico City, Mexico exported its own productions to other Latin nations.<sup>96</sup> In 1944, Mexican films were occupying up to 60 percent of screen time in the major cities of Panama, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua, and even higher percentages in outlying towns and rural areas.<sup>97</sup>

Hollywood developed various strategies to enhance its fortunes in Mexico. Several studios entered into cooperative deals with Mexican producers to make Spanish-language films for the Latin American market, and some studios brought Mexican stars to





FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS (*Paramount, 1943*) playing at Pathé's Capitolio Theater in Rio de Janeiro, October 1944.

Hollywood. Most significant, perhaps, was the decision to begin dubbing rather than subtitled Spanish-language versions of Hollywood films (shorts and newsreels as well as features). This practice suited Mexican audiences, who apparently preferred dubbed versions, and it also overcame the illiteracy problem. Metro was the most aggressive company in this regard, creating a special dubbing facility in New York City with about one hundred actors, directors, and technicians, forty of whom were of Latin origin. MGM opened the facility to all the other studio-distributors and itself prepared eighteen features in the first year of operation for release in Latin America.<sup>98</sup>

Argentina presented Hollywood with a very different set of problems and possibilities during the war. Although officially neutral until March 1945, when it finally declared war against the Axis, the Argentine government was fairly sympathetic toward both Germany and Japan. Meanwhile, American and British pictures were routinely banned, newsreels were seized by the government on court orders for including captured German or Japanese footage, rentals were frozen and taxed at exorbitant levels (up to 50 percent), excessive quotas were set, and so on. Problems reached a peak in 1944, when Argentina began to censor Hollywood films as a means of pressuring the U.S. government to provide more raw film stock. The United States responded in August by banning all film and raw stock shipments to Argentina, effectively breaking diplomatic relations with that nation. That same month, strikes and film shortages closed down all

production in Argentina.<sup>99</sup> Trade resumed a few months later, although relations remained strained at best. In fact in March 1945, the same month that Argentina declared war on Germany and Japan, it also banned all Spanish-language imports in an effort to stem the growing tide of U.S. and Mexican product. Two months later the ban was lifted by the Argentine courts, as were various other restrictions on U.S. products and revenues. So as the war wound down, prospects for Hollywood in that massive Latin nation began looking up.<sup>100</sup>

The postwar prospects in Nazi-dominated Europe were even better. By 1945, the estimated number of movie theaters worldwide was 60,000; one-third were closed to Hollywood product, and most of those were on the Continent.<sup>101</sup> (According to prewar figures, there were 15,000 theaters in Germany, Italy, and France alone.)<sup>102</sup> Hollywood began planning its postwar recovery in Europe in early 1943 and actually began implementing those plans later that year after Allied victories in North Africa, Sicily, and Italy.<sup>103</sup> Robert Riskin of the OWI did much of this planning, in cooperation with the military occupational forces and the psychological warfare branch of the Allied armies. Riskin even helped select the 40 features and 120 shorts for release in Italy—the first since December 1938—while the U.S. Army purchased and shipped 35mm projection equipment to facilitate exhibition.<sup>104</sup>

The U.S. government's support of Hollywood's postwar plans in Europe was motivated by both political and economic interests. Indeed, the two went hand in hand as the United States tried to sell democracy and free-market capitalism to those dominated by fascist and authoritarian regimes. Communism would be a crucial concern when the postwar era finally arrived, but in the later war years a much greater emphasis was placed on recapturing the French, German, and Italian markets. These countries not only had been closed to American products but had undergone extensive anti-American and pro-fascist propaganda campaigns. The U.S. government saw Hollywood movies as one means of effectively deprogramming the Axis-dominated populace—thus giving the term "postwar reconversion" a rather interesting connotation. The government encouraged Hollywood to consider the postwar political stakes as well. One good example occurred in January 1945, when the OWI and the Office of Censorship denied an export license to UA's *TOMORROW THE WORLD* (1944), a picture (based on a hit Broadway play) about an American college professor (Fredric March) who adopts his 12-year-old nephew, a German war orphan, and whose family then struggles to deprogram the dedicated young Nazi. In the OWI's view, the picture's portrayal of the Nazis was simply "too sympathetic."<sup>105</sup>

Hollywood executives not only tolerated but welcomed government assistance. They realized that without Washington's help, recovering the foreign markets lost during the war would be difficult if not impossible. The importance of Washington to Hollywood's postwar foreign trade is well illustrated in the industry's dealings with France after its liberation in 1944. The French government threw up one roadblock after another to prevent U.S. distributors from reclaiming the dominant position they had enjoyed before the war. Unlike Germany and Italy, whose production of escapist and entertainment-oriented pictures had all but ceased during the war, France had continued to turn out commercial features under German occupation. After liberation, Charles de Gaulle's government wanted assurances that French theaters would play domestic product in reasonable numbers, and also that French films would receive first-run release in the United States. Such assurances were not forthcoming, so the 108 features which the

Hollywood distributors had dubbed and readied for release were held up by the French government. Moreover, a proposed French ordinance would prohibit the release in France of any picture over two years old, which put 800 or so major Hollywood features released from 1940 to 1942 in jeopardy.<sup>106</sup>

One reason for Hollywood's concern about the French market was the relative health of its exhibition industry. Of the 4,600 theaters in France before the war, only an estimated 300 had been seriously damaged by the fighting, and only half of those were completely destroyed.<sup>107</sup> England, too, had weathered heavy fighting with relatively little damage to exhibition; nearly 5,000 of its prewar total of 5,300 theaters were running at the end of the war.<sup>108</sup> But fighting and air raids had severely depleted exhibition in other principal combatant nations, especially Germany and Japan. Heavy air raids over Germany in 1944-1945 devastated its movie theaters, with the total in Berlin, according to the Department of Commerce, falling from about 400 before the war to only 31 by early 1945. One U.S. official who visited Germany in April said that both the production and exhibition facilities would have to be completely rebuilt after the war.<sup>109</sup> In Japan, meanwhile, where the information dissemination section of General Douglas MacArthur's occupational army coordinated the release of 45 subtitled Hollywood features immediately after the war, the nation's total number of theaters had fallen from nearly 2,000 in the late 1930s to about 900.<sup>110</sup>

Despite devastation, political tangles, and burgeoning foreign competition from England, France, Mexico, and even Russia, the postwar prospects for Hollywood, overall, were extremely positive. In late 1945, reports of foreign revenues from Europe and the Far East indicated that in the three-month period following V-J Day, Hollywood distributors' overseas revenues exceeded those of the entire year of 1941.<sup>111</sup>

### *The Antitrust Campaign*

As mentioned earlier, Hollywood's response to the 1940 consent decree ideally positioned the Big Five for the ensuing war boom. Selling in blocks of five and holding regular trade shows encouraged the major studios to scale back B-movie production and to concentrate on high-end product, and thus they were well prepared for the war-induced market surge of the early 1940s. Meanwhile, the independent exhibitors, whose complaints had initiated the Justice Department suit in 1938, continued to complain about block booking, the run-zone-clearance system, and other unfair trade practices that favored the studio powers. Thus, as the decree's new selling policies finally took effect in September 1941, Attorney General Thurman Arnold already had misgivings about the settlement. And as exhibitor complaints intensified and the market began its record surge in late 1941 and early 1942, Arnold began to seriously consider not settling with Columbia, Universal, and UA before the 1 June 1942 deadline. Not settling would activate the escape clause in the 1940 agreement, effectively voiding the consent decree after only nine months of actual operation, and would send the Justice Department and the majors back to the negotiating table.

The studios were well aware of the independent exhibitors' dissatisfaction with the decree, of course, and of Arnold's misgivings as well. The studios hoped the decree would stand, and those hopes were bolstered in early 1942 when unofficial word came from Washington that there would be a truce on antitrust suits for the duration in those

industries involved in war production. But then in April, Arnold announced that the truce did not include the movie industry.<sup>112</sup> The majors, fearing that Arnold might let the escape clause deadline pass, had begun actively working with representatives of both Allied States and the Motion Picture Theater Owners of America on an alternative fair-trade policy. Spearheading this effort was the United Motion Picture Industry (UMPI), an industry organization formed immediately after Pearl Harbor.

The result was the so-called UMPI (or Unity) Plan, a selling formula designed to satisfy not only distributors and exhibitors but the Justice Department as well.<sup>113</sup> The key elements of the UMPI Plan were: features would be offered in blocks of twelve (approximately one-quarter of a company's annual output) and sold quarterly; five of the twelve pictures would be trade-shown, with the other seven identified by synopsis, star, and story (except for Westerns, which could be sold in blocks of six, unscreened, and identified by star only); cancellation would be allowed on none of the five trade-shown pictures but on two of the seven others; prices would be set at the time of booking or notice of availability.<sup>114</sup>

The UMPI Plan was delivered to Arnold in Washington in late May 1942, only days before the escape clause deadline. As expected, Arnold let the deadline pass in June, thus voiding the 1940 consent decree, but he made no immediate ruling on the new plan. Then in August, after two months of deliberation and consultation, Arnold rejected the UMPI Plan owing to concerns about the return to partial blind bidding and the ongoing inequities favoring the distributors' affiliated chains. "More and more competition must be shown," said Arnold in his statement rejecting the plan, "before the Federal Government will agree that the integrated companies are not suppressing competition between independent exhibitors and affiliated houses."<sup>115</sup> Arnold insisted that trade shows continue for all releases, but he left sales policies up to the individual distributors. Acknowledging that the consent decree had not accomplished its original objectives, Arnold warned the studio-distributors that he would continue to evaluate the situation until November 1943, when the three-year decree expired.<sup>116</sup>

In January 1943, Arnold issued another statement seemingly directed at Hollywood. While reaffirming that "our anti-trust laws have had to yield to the emergency," Arnold also asserted that the Justice Department's trust-busting efforts had not been "suspended for the duration."<sup>117</sup> But while those efforts did indeed continue, Arnold himself was no longer in charge. In February, Roosevelt named Thurman Arnold to the circuit court in Washington. Arnold's replacement was Francis Biddle, but the campaign against Hollywood was sustained primarily by Tom C. Clark, the assistant attorney general in charge of the antitrust division, who was as eager as his predecessor to undo the majors' control of the motion picture industry.<sup>118</sup>

The majors, meanwhile, continued to sell in blocks of five or fewer, with the exception of MGM, which went with the UMPI Plan's twelve-picture blocks and modest cancellation options. These sales policies continued through the 1943-1944 season, the only notable change being Warners' decision to adopt a single-picture sales policy.<sup>119</sup> And as negotiations with Clark and with the exhibitors continued, it became increasingly clear that a sales plan which satisfied all parties, including the Justice Department, was all but impossible. While the majors favored the status quo, predictably enough, the independents leaned toward full divorcement, as they had from the outset. The MPTOA favored a freeze on theater-chain expansion by the majors, a return to full-season blocks but with unrestricted 20 percent cancellation rights, and more effective arbitration machinery.





Newly appointed "trustbuster"  
Tom C. Clark.

These policies, however, were clearly unacceptable to the government, which would not countenance any form of blind selling.<sup>120</sup>

Throughout 1943 and 1944, the majors and the government continued to submit proposals and counterproposals, with the MPTOA and Allied commenting on each round of negotiations. Divorcement was always a consideration, although the Big Five increasingly pinned their hopes on the Justice Department simply declaring a freeze in further chain expansion. Dissatisfaction with the arbitration system became an increasingly important factor, as the system proved so costly, unwieldy, and ineffective that exhibitors stopped filing complaints. Through 1941–1942, the arbitration machinery handled 276 complaints from exhibitors.<sup>121</sup> This was a rather low figure considering the endless complaints about clearance, and in fact about three-fourths of these cases did involve clearance.<sup>122</sup> But in 1943, only 74 cases were filed; in 1944, there were 29.<sup>123</sup>

Clearly the arbitration system was not working, although the declining filings also indicated the rather ambivalent situation for independent exhibitors in 1944. On the one hand, they were boycotting what they considered an inadequate and unfair system; on the other, business was so good that they really had very little to complain about. Indeed, by late 1944 many of the independents seemed to be falling in line with the MPTOA position favoring a freeze over divorcement. As the MPTOA president Ed Kuykendall said in September 1944, "No one in the industry will tell you seriously that theater divorcement will do anything but damage the industry, or will solve the problems of the independent exhibitor."<sup>124</sup>

Any hopes in the industry that Justice would go along with the freeze rather than divorcement were dashed in December 1944 by a Supreme Court decision against the Crescent theater circuit for antitrust violations. Crescent had been convicted in a lower court in Nashville in March 1943 of monopolizing a five-state area in the Southeast and of colluding with the majors for favorable distribution terms—a case quite similar to those pending against the Griffith and Schine circuits in other districts.<sup>125</sup> Crescent appealed to the Supreme Court, basing its defense on what the *Motion Picture Herald* described as "the broad question of the extent of Government power to regulate film trade practices by means of anti-trust actions."<sup>126</sup> But the Supreme Court upheld the lower court, breaking up the Crescent circuit and outlawing preferential treatment by distributors in exchange for favorable runs and clearance. Under the banner headline "Crescent Cues Vast Changes," *Variety* termed this a "smashing victory" for the government and one that "greatly strengthened" Justice's position in future antitrust battles with the other circuits and the Big Five.<sup>127</sup> The majors may have won acquittal in a few relatively minor antitrust suits during the war years, and the Minnesota antitrust laws may have been shot down in the courts, but the Crescent case clearly signaled that the majors were vulnerable on the antitrust issue.<sup>128</sup>

When Tom Clark was promoted to attorney general in early 1945, Robert Wright took over the antitrust division. Wright immediately made it clear that he considered vertical integration an illegal restraint of trade, and that he intended to press the matter in the courts.<sup>129</sup> Outgoing Attorney General Francis Biddle, with successor Clark at his side, stated in his parting address that "it is absolutely essential to divorce theaters from producers," and that doing so was the only way to keep independent exhibitors from "being pretty well squeezed out."<sup>130</sup>

As the war reached an end and the war boom continued, Clark and Wright showed little interest in any agreement with the majors that did not include divorcement. Thus, negotiations reached an impasse and the Paramount suit resumed. On Monday, 8 October 1945, Hollywood's eight major producer-distributors and the Justice Department were back in U.S. district court in New York. That same week, significantly enough, another federal court ruled that the Schine circuit was guilty of restraint of trade and ordered it dissolved. Meanwhile, the Griffith trial had concluded a month earlier and still awaited a decision.<sup>131</sup> With the Justice Department's antitrust campaign against the motion picture powers back in full swing, Wright made short work of the Paramount suit. The trial was concluded in mid-November after only twenty days in court, with oral arguments scheduled for January 1946 and a final decision expected by summer.<sup>132</sup>

While the Paramount suit hung in the balance, the Justice Department hit the industry—and Paramount in particular—with yet another blow on the antitrust front. As Christopher Anderson outlines in chapter 14, Paramount since the late 1930s had been investing in television research and development, had entered partnerships with several firms involved in the manufacture of television sets and video projection systems for movie theaters, and had been buying television stations. In December 1945, the Justice Department charged Paramount and its television partners (Scophony Ltd. of England, DuMont, General Precision Equipment, et al.) with creating a "world cartel and domestic monopoly" in the manufacture and sales of theater projection video technology, mainly through Paramount's control of Scophony's patents in the United States. A page-one *Variety* story on the government suit described Paramount's video holdings as the nation's largest, and also noted that the "FCC has the authority to yank [TV station]

licenses and cancel applications" of any company found in violation of antitrust laws.<sup>133</sup> This observation referred, of course, to the other Paramount case being tried in New York federal court.

The new antitrust suit was a cruel coincidence for Paramount and a bitter irony for the studios. The government's laissez-faire attitude in the halcyon 1920s had allowed the studio system to develop, and in the 1930s Roosevelt's national recovery policies provided a government sanction to the studio cartel. By the 1940s, the Hollywood studios ruled the world's largest entertainment industry, but at the very height of their power they were plagued by the government's growing ambivalence about that power. While some in Washington, particularly in the executive branch, relied on Hollywood's support of the nation's wartime and postwar efforts—support that was of value precisely because of the studios' collective power—others sought to undercut that power. The Department of Justice was scarcely alone in this effort, but it had the means and the authority to bring down the Hollywood studios. And in going after the studios' television plans as well as their theater chains and sales practices, the government threatened to cut the studios off from their future as well as their past.

### Labor

The motion picture industry, like most major industries in the United States, entered the war era with a firm commitment to increase efficiency and productivity. The unions and guilds made no-strike pledges, and for the most part these were honored from late 1941 until 1945. In Hollywood, which was almost completely unionized by 1941, organized labor's wartime performance was particularly impressive—certainly far better than in other major industries such as steel and mining, which were plagued by wildcat strikes from 1943 onward and in 1944–1945 suffered major strikes requiring government intervention.

The upstart Conference of Studio Unions (CSU), formed in 1941, made real strides during the war in its challenge of IATSE, which was still smarting after a series of pre-war setbacks. As the Hollywood labor historian David Prindle aptly describes IATSE's plight: "Its president in prison, its connections to organized crime publicized to the world, its name a synonym for corruption and tyranny, the International Alliance of Theatrical and Stage Employees was, by the beginning of World War II, reeling and vulnerable."<sup>134</sup> Under Herb Sorrell, the CSU's membership grew to about 10,000 studio workers by 1945, while IATSE's fell to around 16,000.<sup>135</sup> IATSE's reach still extended well beyond Hollywood; its real power base was in exhibition (via the projectionists' union), and it also had a solid grip on distribution through the white-collar exchange workers. The only area of the industry outside Hollywood where IATSE's dominance was seriously challenged was New York City, where CIO unions controlled white-collar workers, both in the home offices of the major companies and in the regional exchanges.<sup>136</sup> During the war, in fact, the home offices and overall distribution sector reached the same stage of organization that Hollywood had before the war, with all but the top company executives becoming unionized. The exhibition sector lagged behind, with some work roles and some regions of the country still not organized by the end of the war.

After relative quiet through the early war years, several incidents in 1944 indicated Hollywood's increasingly volatile and politicized labor scene. The first involved the creation of two quasi-political organizations, the Motion Picture Alliance for the Preservation of American Ideals (MPAAI, usually MPA) and the Council of Hollywood Guilds and Unions (CHGU). The Motion Picture Alliance was formed in February 1944 by a group of notable Hollywood conservatives, including Gary Cooper, Walt Disney, King Vidor, the writer Casey Robinson, and the art director Cedric Gibbons; the producer-director Sam Wood was elected as its first president. According to *Variety*, the Alliance was formed in response to a Writers Congress meeting at UCLA that the Alliance founders felt was Communist-inspired; the organization's goal was to combat communism, fascism, and other alien "isms" in Hollywood.<sup>137</sup> In a brochure published in 1944, the Alliance defined its mission as follows:

Our purpose is to uphold the American way of life, on the screen and among screen workers; to educate, not to smear.

We seek to make a rallying place for the vast, silent majority of our fellow workers; to give voice to their unwavering loyalty to democratic forms and so to drown out the highly vocal, lunatic fringe of dissidents; to present to our fellow countrymen the vision of a great American industry united in upholding the American faith. (Reprinted in Eric Smoodin, *Animating Culture* [New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993], p. 161)

Within weeks of the Alliance's founding, the House Committee on Un-American Activities, the so-called Dies Committee, began checking into the backgrounds of various studio employees; union leaders attributed this activity to the Alliance's efforts.<sup>138</sup> In late June, a counteralliance of sorts was formed by the constituents of 17 Hollywood labor organizations claiming to represent about half of Hollywood's 30,000 workers. In a mass meeting at the Hollywood Women's Club, the group denounced the Alliance as antilabor, anti-unity, racist, and reactionary and voted to create the Council of Hollywood Guilds and Unions. The Council's goal was to counter the Alliance's influence on all fronts, although its title well indicated that organized labor was its primary unifying force.<sup>139</sup>

Two other labor-related flaps in late 1944 indicated the growing tension between IATSE and the CSU, and its potential to generate a major strike. One involved a group of disgruntled extras and bit players who bolted SAG and created the Screen Players Union (SPU). Sorrell and the CSU backed the new union, and support was sufficient to warrant an NLRB certification election in December 1944. Predictably enough, given the ratio of extras and bit players to full-fledged screen actors—a distinction related to the issue of speaking parts, which was in fact key to this dispute—the SPU prevailed.<sup>140</sup> At that point, SAG and IATSE went into action (with heavy AFL support), forming the Screen Extras Guild (SEG) in direct opposition to SPU. Within a matter of months, virtually all screen extras had joined the SEG fold (and thus were under indirect SAG and IATSE control) and the SPU was finished.<sup>141</sup>

While the screen extras skirmish remained just that, another seemingly minor labor flap in late 1944 developed into a much more serious, long-term crisis. In October, a group of set decorators and painters, along with sympathetic machinists, walked out of



MGM when the studio refused to recognize the CSU-backed Studio Set Designers, Illustrators, and Decorators as an official bargaining agent. The studio refused because the seventy-eight-member union was not certified by the War Labor Board, and also because jurisdiction over the decorators was claimed by IATSE. The *Motion Picture Herald* termed the walkout the first major labor problem since 1937, and one of sufficient magnitude, potentially, to completely shut down production.<sup>142</sup> That was precisely what the CSU wanted to convey. There was no doubt of IATSE's ability to shut down production, due largely to its reach into the distribution and exhibition sectors; as the decorators' dispute developed, the central issue became the question of whether the CSU had that kind of clout.<sup>143</sup>

Sorrell tried to resolve the dispute through the WLB as well as the studios; when that effort failed, he officially led the local 1421 of the decorators union out on strike in March 1945. By then, the battle lines were clearly drawn, with the CSU facing off against IATSE not only in a battle for jurisdiction over the decorators but also in a struggle over whether the Hollywood filmmaking machinery would continue running. The studios' alliance with IATSE in the strike gave it an odd labor-management dimension by securing IATSE's commitment to keep the factories operating. (Actually Monogram and PRC, the two weakest studios, recognized CSU jurisdiction and were not subject to the strike.)<sup>144</sup> Thus began the so-called decorators strike of 1945, which dragged on month after month, steadily drawing in other craft unions until some 7,000 workers were



CSU boss Herb Sorrell, whose car window shows signs of a failed assassination attempt in October 1945.

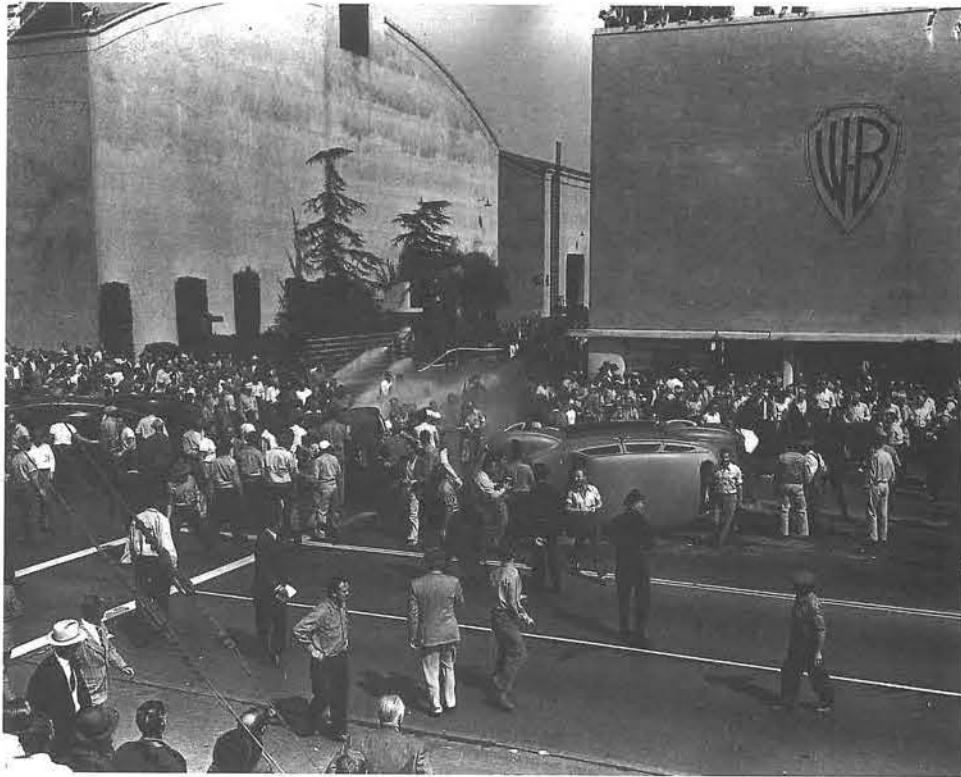
on strike. Sorrell and the CSU were resolute, defying not only the studios and IATSE but the courts as well, which ruled that Walsh acted within his rights when he executed an emergency takeover of the decorators union.<sup>145</sup> By summer, the studios were operating near capacity despite picket lines, mounting tensions, sporadic violence, and rising studio overhead costs, which, according to Sorrell, had doubled since March. The strikers, meanwhile, were losing an estimated \$2 million per month in wages.<sup>146</sup>

Hollywood became increasingly divided over the strike. The conservative Screen Actors Guild sided with IATSE, while the left-leaning Screen Writers Guild voted to support the CSU and to honor the picket lines. The AFL president, William Green, failing to resolve the dispute between the two AFL-affiliated groups, publicly criticized both parties and washed his hands of the entire affair. The AFL's archrival, the CIO, voted to support the strike, while the powerful Teamsters opposed it.<sup>147</sup> The war's end in August brought a sudden increase in the manpower supply in Hollywood, but V-J Day was tempered by what the *Motion Picture Herald* termed the "continuing state of strike-siege." The studios now had a huge supply of carpenters, painters, machinists, electricians, and others from the nearby aircraft plants to replace the CSU strikers. Still, noted the *Herald*, "the only way producers can avail themselves of a labor supply dumped at their door by the warplants is to route workers in via IATSE membership and across CSU picket lines. It can be done, but it isn't simple."<sup>148</sup>

That proved to be an understatement. The strike became steadily more militant after V-J Day, with sympathetic workers from Lockheed joining the CSU pickets, who battled IATSE strikebreakers outside various studios. In October, the isolated fistfights and rock throwings erupted into violent riots as the strike became front-page news nationwide.<sup>149</sup> The NLRB in mid-October announced the results of another election favoring the CSU-backed local (55 to 45), but that scarcely stemmed the tide of violence or moved the strike any closer to resolution. The heaviest violence occurred outside Warners, where production closed down completely for several days. While Jack Warner and his fellow executives looked on from studio rooftops inside the walled compound, studio guards and Burbank police waged a pitched battle with picketers. Sorrell then shifted the attack to Paramount, where about fifty were injured when IATSE workers crashed the CSU picket lines.<sup>150</sup>

Under pressure from Congress and the Labor Department, not to mention the California state authorities and an outraged public, the Hollywood powers finally resolved the dispute in late October during the thirty-second week of the strike. The key figure in that effort was a relative newcomer to Hollywood, Eric Johnston. A conservative businessman and recent president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Johnston succeeded the venerable Will Hays as president of the MPPDA in September 1945. To his credit, Johnston quickly took charge of the strike situation. In a daylong session behind closed (and locked) doors at the Netherland Plaza Hotel in Washington, D.C., Johnston, Walsh, and various representatives of the industry and the AFL worked out an agreement whereby local 1421 was officially recognized and the 7,000 CSU workers returned to work, with their replacements kept on stand-by status for a 60-day arbitration period—at an added studio expense of an estimated \$325,000 per week.<sup>151</sup>

In dollar figures, the strike wound up costing the strikers \$15–16 million in lost wages, and it cost the studios around \$10 million in additional overhead. But there were other costs as well. While Sorrell and the CSU won recognition for the decorators union, they failed to close down Hollywood production. The rift between competing labor factions, especially the CSU and IATSE, was now wider than ever, and the studios



*The strike at Warners turns violent. Studio executives were on roof of building (upper right).*

also had grown increasingly hostile toward and suspicious of the CSU and its supporters. That did not bode well for the postwar era: workers were demanding a larger share of the industry's record profits, but the war-induced economic prosperity was bound to level off. *Variety*, in its year-end story on the labor situation in Hollywood, termed the decorators strike "the most disastrous strike in the film industry's history," but *Variety* expected more of the same as new contracts were being negotiated for 20,000 studio workers.<sup>152</sup>

Thus, 1945 ended with the prospect of labor strife and the antitrust trial casting a dark cloud over what should have been Hollywood's brightest year ever. Indeed, these events marked the rather ignominious end to the war era generally—an era that had seen the Hollywood studios accomplish more than in any other four-year period in their history.

## 6

## *The Hollywood Studio System, 1942–1945*

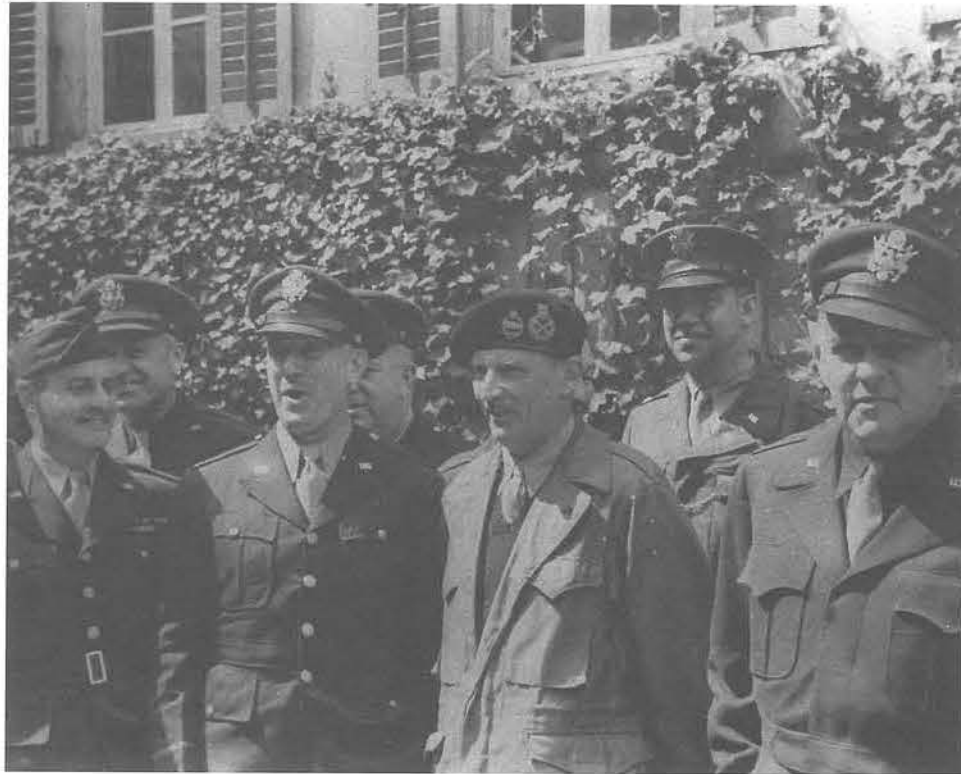
At 11:26 A.M. on 7 December 1941, news of the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor disrupted what was, by all accounts, a clear and quiet Sunday morning in Los Angeles. The news itself hit like an explosion, throwing the entire area into panic and confusion. The Hollywood movie colony, enjoying its weekly respite from an otherwise nonstop production schedule, was soon bustling with activity. In the first hours and days of the war, that activity had little to do with filmmaking. Makeshift air-raid shelters were constructed on movie lots, while dimout and blackout plans were quickly formulated. Studio employees fretted about Japanese attacks and the resemblance of the sound stages to aircraft plants.

Meanwhile, studio executives worried about the wartime status of Hollywood films and filmmaking. The U.S. entry into the war actually put the studios in a curious bind. On the one hand, there was the possibility of nationalization by the government and the suspension of all commercial operations "for the duration." On the other hand, the studios faced the prospect of playing a marginal role (or less) in Washington's overall war plans. After Pearl Harbor, as Richard Lingeman has noted, "the movie business was just another war industry eager to cooperate [with the government] out of fear that it would be considered 'non-essential' and strangled by lack of priorities."<sup>1</sup>

As seen in chapter 5, within two weeks President Roosevelt gave Hollywood the green light to continue commercial filmmaking, but with express instructions regarding the studios' active support of the U.S. war effort. Hollywood and Washington quickly adapted a workable wartime rapport, and the studios cooperated with both the government and the military in the production of war films. Several lesser Hollywood plants—Fox's old B-picture studio on Western Avenue, for example, and both the Disney and Hal Roach studios—were completely retooled for war-film production.

Hollywood swarmed with military personnel, including a number of filmmakers who joined up to do documentary work. Several top studio executives took military commissions, began wearing uniforms, and insisted on being addressed by rank. Jack Warner, for instance, signed up with the Army Air Corps and thereafter became "Colonel Warner," even in interoffice memos. Of the 2,700 workers who left Hollywood for active military duty in 1942, however, few were top studio executives. One notable exception was Fox's production chief, Darryl Zanuck, whose 1942–1943 stint as a commander in the Army Signal Corps included considerable action in North Africa.<sup>2</sup>





Moguls in uniform: Darryl Zanuck, Jack Warner, British General Bernard "Monty" Montgomery, and Harry Cohn.

### *Income, Output, and the Balance of Studio Power*

The most significant developments in the Hollywood studio system during World War II were increased studio revenues (and profits) and decreased output. While the lower output of films was related to various wartime factors—the manpower shortage, for example, and restricted supplies of film stock—these cutbacks resulted more than anything else from surging wartime revenues. Simply stated, the first-run movie market was so bullish after Pearl Harbor that the major studios quickly saw the logic of increasing their emphasis on top product while cutting back on their overall output of films.

Indeed, the wartime reduction in motion picture production and overall releases was most acute, by far, among the Big Five integrated majors. During the five years before Pearl Harbor, the Big Eight producer-distributors together released 1,833 pictures. In the five years after Pearl Harbor (1942–1946), they released 1,395—a decline of 438 pictures, or nearly 25 percent. The three major-minors accounted for virtually none of that decline: Universal and Columbia averaged 50 pictures per year during both periods, and UA just over 20. The Big Five, meanwhile, declined from an average of 50 releases annually per company in the five prewar years to only 30 per year from 1942 through 1946.<sup>3</sup>

The Big Five had begun to scale back output in 1941, but clearly the real cuts came with the war itself. In a one-year span from 1942 to 1943, Warners cut its output from

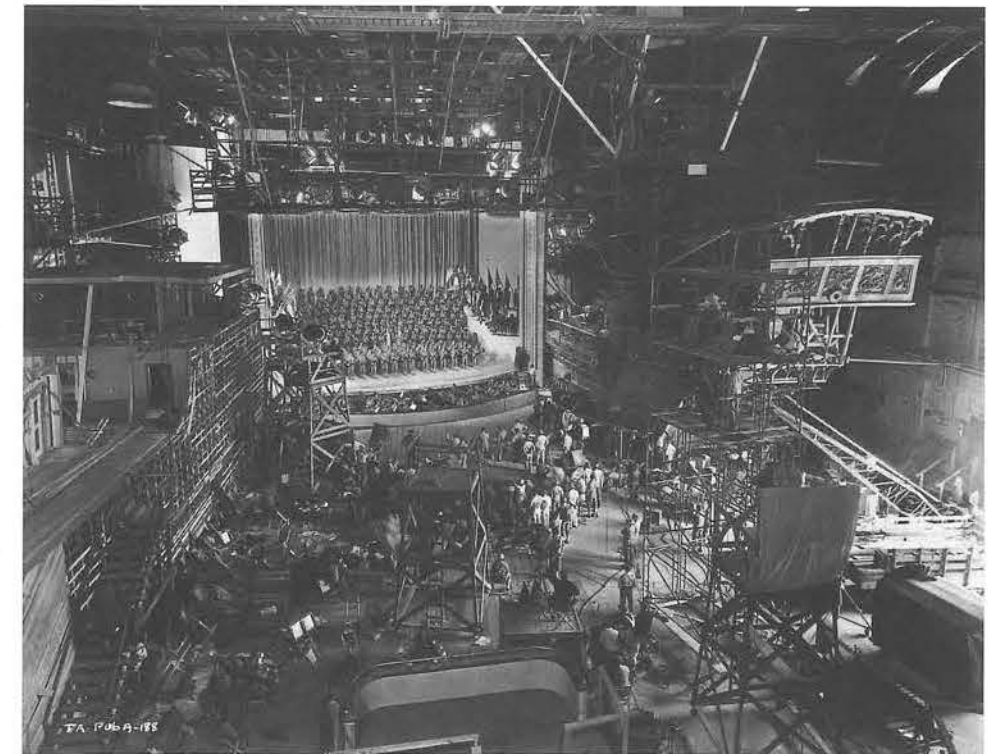
34 to 21 pictures, MGM from 49 to 33, Fox from 51 to 33, and Paramount from 44 to 30. RKO's big drop came a year later, falling from 44 to 31 releases. Once instituted, these reductions held throughout the war, thus creating a very different release pattern for the early and later war years:

Table 6.1  
MAJOR STUDIO OUTPUT, 1940–1942 AND 1943–1945

Company	Number of Releases		% Decline
	1940–1942	1943–1945	
20th Century–Fox	150	86	42.6
MGM	144	94	34.7
Paramount	137	85	37.9
RKO	136	108	20.5
Warner Bros.	127	59	53.5
Total	694	432	37.7

SOURCE: Motion Picture Year Book.

In terms of studio profits, all of the Big Eight fared well during the war, with the integrated majors enjoying the benefits of the war boom to a far greater degree than their



A Warner Bros. soundstage in 1942—shown here filming *THIS IS THE ARMY* (Warners, 1943), a huge wartime hit, in between two other major studio productions.

competitors. As in the 1930s and early 1940s, the Big Eight took about 95 percent of the total market, with the Big Five consistently accounting for 90 percent of industry profits. Revenues and profits for the integrated majors were far beyond Depression and prewar totals: combined industry profits climbed from just under \$20 million in 1939 and 1940 to \$34 million in 1941, \$50 million in 1942, and then right around \$60 million for the next three years.<sup>4</sup> A key factor here, of course, was the relative size of each major company's theater holdings. Its theater holdings gave Paramount a huge advantage over the other majors and left both MGM and RKO at an obvious disadvantage.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the balance of power among the Big Five that had begun to shift in 1940–1941 changed even more during the war; MGM was steadily overtaken by Paramount and Fox, with Warners close behind.

Looking at the total revenues, net profits, and profit shares of all the Big Eight during the war era, the collective domination of the Big Five and the relative balance of power among the majors—and especially Paramount, Fox, Metro, and Warners—is readily apparent.

Table 6.2  
STUDIO FINANCES, 1942–1945

	Total Revenues (\$ millions)	Net Profits (\$ millions)	% Profit Share
Paramount	\$575.6	\$57.8	24.8
MGM	557.6	52.6	22.6
Fox	572.4 <sup>a</sup>	46.5	20.0
Warners	519.8	33.7	14.5
RKO	321.2	18.8	8.1
Universal	188.2	14.1	6.0
Columbia	132.7	7.3	3.1
UA	109.5	1.4	0.6

SOURCE: Figures from Joel Finler, *The Hollywood Story* (New York: Crown, 1988), pp. 31, 286–87; and Christopher H. Sterling and Timothy R. Haight, *The Mass Media: The Aspen Institute Guide to Communications Industry Trends* (New York: Praeger, 1978), p. 184. See also Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986).

<sup>a</sup>Note that the Fox revenue total for 1942 does not include its theater income. Factoring this in would increase Fox's revenue total to about \$625 million—the highest revenue total for the war era.

It is important to note that the majors did not enter the war with plans to reduce output but did so rather haphazardly in 1942–1943 in response to changing industry conditions. Consider the case of 20th Century–Fox during this period. In May 1942, Fox announced plans to spend \$28 million on fifty-two features for the 1942–1943 season.<sup>6</sup> Three months later, as the marketplace continued to heat up, Fox decided to cut ten B's out of its schedule (following the lead of Paramount and Warners).<sup>7</sup> Then in September 1942, Fox announced that its profits for the previous six months were up 300 percent compared with the same period in 1941; Fox planned further reductions, with an even heavier concentration on first-run features.<sup>8</sup>

The wartime decrease in output among the Big Five was accompanied by steadily increasing production costs. Between 1942 and 1945, the average cost per feature rose from \$336,600 to \$554,386, and the average number of shooting days per picture

climbed from twenty-two to thirty-three. The total cost for all film production in Hollywood more than doubled in that period, from \$198.5 million to \$402 million.<sup>9</sup> This increase was due in part to war-induced inflation, of course, but the primary factor was the steady shift to high-end production. By 1945, the Big Five were concentrating almost exclusively on A-class product for the first-run market, the major-minors dominated the middle ground (though they put out a few modest A pictures and a few low-grade B's), and the minors concentrated on the low end. A clear indication of this general range is provided by these figures charting the estimated costs on 300 studio productions in 1944:

Table 6.3  
BUDGET RANGE OF STUDIO FEATURES, 1944

Company	Over \$500,000	\$200,000– 500,000	\$100,000– 200,000	Under \$100,000
MGM	21	5	0	0
20th Century–Fox	20	2	3	1
Paramount	17	2	4	4
Warner Bros.	12	2	2	0
RKO	9	12	9	1
UA	3	10	0	0
Universal	10	17	17	5
Columbia	5	10	24	3
Republic	1	3	12	7
Monogram	0	2	3	21
PRC	0	0	2	19

SOURCE: "All Features Released in 1945," *Box Office Digest*, 6 January 1945, p. 18.

Another factor in the majors' decreased wartime output was the stockpiling of product. Initially the impulse to stockpile pictures resulted from the sales policies under the 1940 consent decree. Since blind bidding was prohibited and all pictures had to be trade-shown, the studios were compelled to have their pictures ready well in advance of release. Once the war broke out, large trade shows and national sales conventions became impractical and were phased out in lieu of advance screenings of individual films at key exchanges prior to release. Thus, the studios could have reverted to a tighter schedule from completion to release, but by then war conditions encouraged stockpiling.

Early in the war, interestingly enough, stockpiling was the result of the studios stepping up production in response to war-related restrictions, anticipated shortages, and general uncertainties. As *Variety* noted in late 1942: "In a race against the time when wartime exigencies are expected to circumscribe activities via further inroads on talent, technicians, material and equipment, Hollywood studios are steaming ahead at the speediest production clip in history in order to build up their picture stocks."<sup>10</sup> As those stockpiles grew, along with inflated costs and first-run revenues, the studios found that they could continue stockpiling while actually cutting back production.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, as the war went on, stockpiling was essentially a function of the overheated first-run marketplace. As revenues and market conditions outran even the most optimistic projections year after year from 1942 to 1946, long runs and holdovers



became the rule as the studios milked their top features for every possible dollar. Thus the urge to stockpile product—studios shelved pictures which were ready for release for two years or more. Indeed, much of the falloff between 1942 and 1943 was less a matter of the Big Five *producing* fewer pictures than of *releasing* fewer pictures.

The backlogs grew rapidly in 1942 and early 1943, ranging between 100 and 200 features completed and awaiting release.<sup>12</sup> At the end of the war, the *Motion Picture Herald* pegged the backlog at 203 pictures, while *Variety* estimated an industrywide inventory of \$250,000,000.<sup>13</sup> By then, the backlogs were part of overall postwar strategy; the studios anticipated changes in the tax codes as well as a box-office surge when servicemen returned and wartime restrictions were eased.<sup>14</sup> That strategy paid off: 1946 saw the Big Five's revenues and profits burst to even higher levels in the last shuddering concussion of the war boom.

### Studio Operations and Market Strategies

#### THE MAJOR-MINORS AND THE MINOR STUDIOS

The war era saw a growing rift between the Big Five and the other studios in terms of production and management operations as well as overall market strategies. The major studios, with their superior resources, were able to respond to the wartime market more aggressively than the lesser studio powers. While the Little Three and the Poverty Row studios certainly benefited from the war boom, their overall production and sales strategies, for the most part, remained quite consistent during the war.

The one exception was United Artists. Its wartime success is scarcely surprising, given its established focus on high-end releases and the wartime premium on A-class pictures. While Universal and Columbia were content to simply sustain their prewar policies and enjoy the financial benefits of the war boom, UA under David Selznick lined up an impressive array of talent and film projects. Selznick signed the MGM producer Hunt Stromberg to a lucrative five-picture deal in 1942, for instance, and in early 1943 he closed a five-picture deal with James Cagney, just off his Oscar-winning performance in *YANKEE DOODLE DANDY* (1942).<sup>15</sup> Both contracts involved financing as well as distribution, a significant innovation for UA in the 1940s, and one that attracted a number of independents. In late 1943, the *Motion Picture Herald* reported that UA had a record sixteen units "currently active."<sup>16</sup>

While those units were active, however, they were not all that productive, and in fact UA was in desperate need of product. Thus, in a stunning reversal of form, the UA board decided in mid-1942 and again in mid-1943 to purchase packages of stockpiled second-rate pictures from Paramount. UA paid \$4.8 million for a total of twenty-one pictures in the two deals—less than \$250,000 per film. The studio acquired a few A pictures, but most were B's and series Westerns, including a number of Hopalong Cassidy programmers—hardly in the UA tradition. And in a further break with tradition, UA abandoned its long-standing singles-only policy and sold these pictures in blocks.<sup>17</sup>

The Paramount packages covered UA's shortfall, although they did not keep UA in the black. Incredibly, UA actually showed a net loss in 1944—the only company to accomplish such a feat during the war. But as Tino Balio suggests, the most severe loss was UA's prestige, since by 1944 it was "supplying second features for double bills almost

exclusively."<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Selznick's relationship with the UA board, and particularly with Chaplin and Pickford, deteriorated steadily during the war, thus aggravating the company's long-standing instability.

Wartime production and market strategies on Poverty Row, meanwhile, were still geared to the subsequent-run markets—especially at Monogram and PRC, which continued to struggle simply to break even, despite the war boom. But Republic, always the strongest of the minors, enjoyed annual profits in the half-million-dollar range and thus was able to venture cautiously into A-class production.<sup>19</sup> President Herbert J. Yates replaced Gene Autry with Roy Rogers as Republic's resident singing cowboy star, and Rogers likewise played himself in an uninterrupted series of near-A formula Westerns.<sup>20</sup> Equally important to Yates's A-class aspirations was John Wayne, who continued to alternate between loan-outs to the majors and starring roles in high-end Republic productions.<sup>21</sup> His value to the studio was underscored in 1945, when Republic signed Wayne to a star-producer deal which included 10 percent of the gross on his pictures. Yates made other important moves to crack the first-run market in 1945, including deals with the producer-director Frank Borzage and the writer-producer-director Ben Hecht.<sup>22</sup>

The most significant wartime development at Monogram was the production of what were being termed "exploitation pictures," which *Variety* defined as "films with some timely or currently controversial subject which can be exploited, capitalized on in publicity and advertising." These ranged from offbeat actioners like *WOMEN IN BONDAGE* (1943), about a women's prison, to topical melodramas like *WHERE ARE YOUR CHILDREN?* (1943), an exposé of juvenile delinquency. The most successful of these was *DILLINGER* (1945), Monogram's first release to earn over \$1 million, and a picture whose graphic violence and glorification of the legendary gangster incurred the wrath of critics and parents' groups.<sup>23</sup>

PRC made some efforts to upgrade its product line during the war, but it continued to specialize in exceptionally low-budget Westerns (some shot in only two to three days), along with its signature B-grade crime dramas and actioners. While none of these broke through commercially on the scale of *DILLINGER*, several PRC pictures directed by Edgar G. Ulmer were modest hits and have become minor classics, including offbeat musicals like *JIVE JUNCTION* (1943) and *CLUB HAVANA* (1945) and provocative thrillers like *STRANGE ILLUSION* and *DETOUR* (both 1945).<sup>24</sup>

#### THE MAJOR STUDIOS

The integrated majors saw radical changes during the war, owing primarily to the volatile market conditions and the increased importance and clout of producers and top talent. Perhaps the single most important development was the sharp acceleration of unit production and hyphenate status for above-the-line contract talent. While these changes had considerable impact on production management, studio management—executive control of the company at large—changed very little. In fact, the war boom reinforced the Big Five's established hierarchy of executive power, with ultimate studio authority still residing in the New York office.

Both Fox and RKO underwent changes in top management early in the war that underscored the market-driven mentality of the period. In March 1942, Fox's president, Sidney Kent, died suddenly of a heart attack at age 56.<sup>25</sup> Coming in the wake of the Fox board chairman Joe Schenck being sentenced to federal prison, Kent's death left a void



Republic's Herb Yates signs Ben Hecht to a producer-director-writer deal in 1945.

atop the executive ranks. The Fox board responded in April by appointing Spyros Skouras, then head of Fox theater operations, as company president. The board also named as its chairman Wendell Willkie, just off his successful industry defense at the Senate propaganda hearings in late 1941. Willkie served essentially as a figurehead, assuming various public relations duties, but that role was cut short by his own untimely death (at age 55) in 1944. At that point, Spyros Skouras became the sole chief executive, while his brother Charlie, another theater man, took over Fox's exhibition operations.<sup>26</sup>

RKO, meanwhile, underwent a management shake-up which accompanied the ascent of the Wall Street financier Floyd Odlum to board chairman of the company. Odlum's Atlas Corporation had begun investing in RKO in the 1930s, and by 1942 Odlum had acquired controlling interest.<sup>27</sup> Odlum promptly fired RKO's president, George Schaefer, who had overseen both the New York office and studio operations, and replaced him with two executives: Peter Rathvon, a Wall Street colleague of Odlum (and longtime RKO financial adviser), who took over the New York office as president of the RKO parent company; and the sales chief Ned Depinet, who became president of RKO-Radio Pictures. Meanwhile, Odlum replaced Joe Breen as studio production chief with the head of RKO theater operations, Charles Koerner. The new team quickly turned things around: RKO's profits rose from \$600,000 in 1942 to \$6.9 million one year later.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, Fox and RKO followed the prewar strategy of Paramount and Universal, installing men with theater and sales backgrounds as top corporate executives. *Variety* speculated in March 1942 about the role of these former theater executives "in shaping



Old power/new power: Paramount's Barney Balaban, new UA independent James Cagney, Loew's Nicholas Schenck, and new Fox president Spyros Skouras in August 1942.



studio production policies," but in fact the chief executives at all of the integrated majors had even less control over actual filmmaking operations than ever.<sup>29</sup> A governing paradox of the period was that market conditions, and particularly the increased emphasis on A-class product, brought a general shift in production management away from corporate and studio executives and into the hands of top talent. This shift was more pronounced at some companies than others, of course, as the studios responded in quite different ways both to market conditions and to the prospect of yielding more creative control to their top producers, directors, and writers.

MGM and Warner Bros. provide an illuminating contrast in this regard. Warners, without question the most factory-oriented of the Big Five in the 1930s, overhauled both its market strategy and production operations during the war. In cutting its output in half during the war, Warners completely abandoned both B-picture production and block booking, producing only A-class products which were sold on a unit basis. The last vestiges of the old Warners vanished with two telling events at the dawn of the war era. In September 1941, Warners' veteran B-unit head Bryan Foy was released from his contract. (Fox, less eager to eliminate B production, immediately picked him up.)<sup>30</sup> Then in February 1942, Warners made an even more dramatic change: the longtime studio production chief Hal Wallis stepped down, signing a new contract as a unit producer.<sup>31</sup> Jack Warner continued to oversee plant operations and to negotiate contracts and such, but for the first time since the 1920s—dating back to Darryl Zanuck's regime as production boss at Warners—no individual executive oversaw production. Thus, Warner Bros. underwent a belated shift during the war from a central-producer system to a unit-producer system and actually began assigning on-screen producer credit for the first time in 1942.

MGM, meanwhile, did reduce its output by some 30 percent during the war but proved altogether unwilling to adjust its basic production and management policies. MGM continued to turn out high-gloss, high-cost product, with Louis B. Mayer actually expanding the studio's bloated and inefficient supervisory system despite the decreased output. All production decisions were made by Mayer and his executive committee, comprising four MGM vice presidents and an elite group of eight producers, with another thirty or so producers supervising actual filmmaking. Metro also maintained the factory-system model, with multiple writers and directors working on individual pictures—a practice by then deemed wasteful and counterproductive by the other majors. An MGM study done in 1942 indicated that fourteen to sixteen writers worked on the average studio project, far more than was common elsewhere.<sup>32</sup> And in 1945, a trade journal reported that MGM had 116 writers under contract—three to four times the number of contract writers at the other studios.<sup>33</sup>

Despite MGM's efforts to maintain a central-producer (by committee) system, however, studio authority over actual filmmaking continued to erode during the war, because of the unprecedented demand for A-class product and the consequent increase in independent and unit production.

### *The Wartime Surge in Independent Production*

In February 1942, *Variety* ran a prescient analysis of the unit phenomenon as it had developed over the preceding months. In 1941, noted *Variety*, "company after company has swung away from the system of front-office assignment of producers, which they have used for years, toward the unit idea." Now the war economy "is expected to still

further spur the rush toward unit production which has marked the Hollywood scene for the past few months." Thus, predicted *Variety*, "virtually all of Hollywood's important pictures will be coming from these more-or-less independent producers."<sup>34</sup> The qualifier "more-or-less" was necessary because of the studios' ultimate control of distribution and first-run exhibition, and because the studios provided financing and production resources for most independents.

This latter point meant, in effect, that some filmmakers were more independent than others. *Variety* posited a "first class" of independents which included producers like Goldwyn and Selznick, who relied on particular studio-distributors but had their own production facilities and contract personnel, and who could handle their own financing. In the "second class" were contract producers and hyphenates like MGM's Hunt Stromberg and RKO's Orson Welles, who could "walk out at any time" and sign with a rival studio. Industry conditions were such that top producers were becoming increasingly mobile: "Hollywood has become such a checkerboard of jumping producers that it's almost impossible to keep up with the moves."

*Variety* concluded with the results of a "quick industry survey" naming the top ten unit heads in Hollywood: Sam Goldwyn, David Selznick, Jesse Lasky, Cecil B. DeMille, Walt Disney, Charlie Chaplin, Orson Welles, Preston Sturges, Jules Levey, and Alexander Korda. This group included filmmaking hyphenates, straight producers, and even a few production executives, suggesting that the term "independent" still was being applied rather haphazardly, even in the trade press. And interestingly enough, only a few of those among *Variety's* top ten were very productive during the war in terms of a steady output of "important" pictures. But their varied efforts illustrate the range of independent activity during the war, and so a brief survey of *Variety's* 1942 inventory of top independents proves rather illuminating.

Charlie Chaplin and Orson Welles, Hollywood's two most celebrated independents at the time, were essentially inactive during the war. This was no surprise in Chaplin's case, because he typically spent four or five years between finished films. Since the release of *THE GREAT DICTATOR* in late 1940, Chaplin still had not decided on his next project. Welles's situation was quite another matter. His 1942 excursion to South America for the experimental amalgam of documentary and fiction *IT'S ALL TRUE* went badly owing to cost overruns, inclement weather, and other complications. RKO eventually stopped funding the project, and Schaefer's departure left Welles without support at the studio. RKO's new chief executive, Peter Rathvon, refused to renew Welles's contract, so Welles went freelance and spent the rest of the war era trying in vain to buy the *IT'S ALL TRUE* footage from RKO so he could complete the project. He also tried to initiate other independent projects, including an experimental documentary-drama about the infamous French "Bluebeard," Henri Landru. Welles eventually sold the idea to Chaplin and it provided the basis for Chaplin's controversial postwar satire *MONSIEUR VERDOUX* (1947).<sup>35</sup>

The two other hyphenates on *Variety's* list, the producer-director Cecil B. DeMille and the writer-producer-director Preston Sturges, had units at Paramount and enjoyed considerable success during the war. DeMille produced two prestige pictures, *REAP THE WILD WIND* (1942) and *THE STORY OF DR. WASELL* (1944); both were commercially successful but failed to impress the critics. Sturges, on the other hand, enjoyed tremendous critical success but only modest box-office returns in a succession of outrageous comedies, including *THE PALM BEACH STORY* (1942), *THE MIRACLE OF MORGAN'S CREEK*, *HAIL THE CONQUERING HERO*, and *THE GREAT MOMENT* (all 1944). After a bril-



Orson Welles in Brazil, 1942, working on his ill-fated RKO production *IT'S ALL TRUE* (shot 1942; released 1993).

liant creative run of eight pictures for Paramount from 1940 to 1944, and at the peak of his success, Sturges decided to leave for an independent alliance with Howard Hughes—an ill-fated decision that effectively stalled his career.<sup>36</sup>

Three other independents on *Variety's* list simply were not all that productive during the war. Jules Levey and Jesse Lasky produced just three pictures between them, none of which was successful. The British producer Alexander Korda began the war with a hit UA release, *TO BE OR NOT TO BE* (1942), but his London Films company was plagued by financial problems which eventually caused a split with UA. In early 1943, the *New York Times* announced that Korda was taking over the MGM-British unit, but that union resulted in only one picture, *PERFECT STRANGERS* (U.S. release 1945; British title *VACATION FROM MARRIAGE* [1944]). Korda also coproduced several wartime pictures, including *SAHARA* (1943), directed by his brother Zoltan Korda for Columbia.<sup>37</sup>

The other three on *Variety's* list, Sam Goldwyn, David Selznick, and Walt Disney, formed an elite trio as Hollywood's dominant major independent producers, although they too underwent very different wartime experiences. Of the three, only Goldwyn maintained business as usual during the war, turning out *BALL OF FIRE* in 1941, *THE PRIDE OF THE YANKEES* in 1942 and *THE NORTH STAR* in 1943, *THE PRINCESS AND THE PIRATE* in 1944, and *UP IN ARMS* in 1944. All were released by RKO, and all but *THE NORTH STAR* were major hits.

Disney continued to release through RKO, but virtually all of Disney's wartime output directly supported the war effort. A financially crippling studio strike (and settlement) in

1941 and the disappointing box-office returns of the prewar features (*PINOCCHIO* and *FANTASIA* in 1940; *DUMBO* and *THE RELUCTANT DRAGON* in 1941) encouraged Disney to abandon commercial operations after the release of *BAMBI* in June 1942 and to concentrate almost exclusively on war-related films. The Disney studio with its 1,200 employees was the only one designated as an official war production plant by the government, and it turned out scores of animated military training films and informational shorts. Disney's cartoons were geared to the war effort as well, although they remained extremely popular with wartime moviegoers. Disney's only feature during the war was an animated documentary on strategic bombing, *VICTORY THROUGH AIR POWER* (1943).<sup>38</sup>

Selznick, meanwhile, remained inactive as a producer during the early war years, but he quickly expanded his efforts as a talent agent to include the packaging of movie projects. He made enormous profits loaning out such contract talent as Ingrid Bergman, Joan Fontaine, Gregory Peck, Jennifer Jones, Joseph Cotten, Shirley Temple, Dorothy McGuire, and the directors Alfred Hitchcock and Robert Stevenson. Selznick also packaged star, story property and/or script, and other top talent for such films as *CLAUDIA* (1943) and *JANE EYRE* (1944), both purchased by Fox. In 1944, Selznick returned to active production with three projects, *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY, I'LL BE SEEING YOU*, and *SPELLBOUND* (1945).

The wartime careers of *Variety's* top ten indicate both the vagaries and the variations of Hollywood independence during that turbulent era, which saw the ranks of so-called independents swell enormously. Indeed, the term was applied to virtually any above-the-line talent not under conventional long-term studio contract—a roster which included James Cagney, Gary Cooper, Lester Cowan, Buddy De Sylva, Arthur Freed, William Goetz, Howard Hawks, Ben Hecht, Mark Hellinger, Alfred Hitchcock, Fritz Lang, Leo McCarey, Dore Schary, Jack Skirball, Edward Small, Leo Spitz, Hunt Stromberg, Jerry Wald, Hal Wallis, and Walter Wanger. Many of these would have been considered simply freelance talent a few years earlier, but the economic and regulatory conditions during the war encouraged noncontract talent to set up independent production companies.

The wartime income tax was a crucial factor in the rise of independent companies. Its effect was described in detail by the industry executive Ernest Borneman in a *Harper's* piece, "Rebellion in Hollywood: A Study in Motion Picture Finance." The "rebellion," said Borneman, involved Hollywood's "inner circle of top producers, high-priced writers and directors, and the cherished stars," who were "clutching the banner of artistic freedom in one hand and an income tax blank in the other." The rebellion was "touched off inadvertently by the Treasury Department" in that Hollywood filmmakers and artists, "dismayed by wartime tax rates, went into business for themselves as independent producers in order to pay capital gains tax rather than income tax." This invariably entailed setting up a so-called single picture corporation—that is, a film production company created to produce a single feature. After the film's release, the company would be dissolved, its stocks sold, and the profits taxed at the capital gains rate of 25 percent.<sup>39</sup>

This arrangement proved most attractive to those who, by 1942, found themselves in the 80–90 percent income tax bracket. James Cagney, for example, readily acknowledged that his move to independent status with UA in 1942 was motivated largely by the fact that, in 1941, his earnings of over \$350,000 with Warners yielded an after-tax income of only \$70,000.<sup>40</sup> Established independents took to this strategy as well. Sam Goldwyn, for instance, was advised in November 1942 by his New York accounting firm





Walt Disney (right) confers with Alexander P. de Seversky, author of *VICTORY THROUGH AIR POWER*.

to liquidate Samuel Goldwyn, Inc., and create a succession of “collapsible corporations” for each of his RKO productions, so that he could “convert ordinary income into capital gains.” Goldwyn readily complied, and thus his wartime productions were put out by a series of new companies, including Avalon, Regent, Beverly, and Trinity Productions.<sup>41</sup>

As the independent trend accelerated and the market continued to heat up, the movie industry also underwent dramatic changes in production financing. As Borneman noted in his 1946 article: “In the unprecedented boom market of the past five years, it has no longer been necessary [for independents] to make pre-production deals with a major distributor in order to get production capital.” Not only were independents less dependent on studios for financing, notes Borneman, but they also found a viable alternative to banks in the form of companies designed to finance movies. “Motion picture finance corporations have arisen in Hollywood, New York, and Chicago, which will put up all the necessary production capital, put up all the salaries, including that of the producer-promoter himself, and take one half of the net proceeds for their pains.” Lester Cowan, for instance, used Domestic Industries, Inc., of Chicago to finance *TOMORROW THE WORLD* (1944) and *THE STORY OF GI JOE* (1945), both of which were produced by single-picture corporations and released through UA.<sup>42</sup>

#### *Studio-based Units and In-house Independents*

The studios had little choice but to accommodate filmmakers who expressed independent inclinations, given the wartime demand for top talent and for a steady flow of high-end product. Thus, by early 1944, according to *Variety*, “Hollywood’s most important independent producers [were] setting virtually their own terms with distributors.”<sup>43</sup> At that time, 71 units were scheduled to deliver 196 features over the coming year at a total projected cost of \$180 million—a figure equal to the combined production budgets of several major studios.<sup>44</sup> UA, a company designed solely to release major independent pictures, accounted for half of these. But UA’s declining wartime fortunes due to management and marketing difficulties encouraged other studios to compete with it—invariably adapting the “UA model” to their own production needs. Thus, by 1944–1945, many independents were finding better terms elsewhere, particularly at Universal and RKO.

Universal signed deals with many in-house independents during the war, including Charles K. Feldman, Gregory La Cava, Frank Lloyd, Jack Skirball, and Walter Wanger. The most significant of these was Wanger, who entered a quasi-permanent relationship with Universal after producing *EAGLE SQUADRON* in 1942. Wanger then signed to produce *ARABIAN NIGHTS* (1942), a costume romance with Jon Hall and Maria Montez, and Universal’s first Technicolor feature. The picture was a success, and it set the pattern for a series of limited contracts between Wanger and the studio. The deals called for Wanger to supply the story idea for each picture; once it was approved, he received \$50,000 for script development. Wanger and the studio boss Cliff Work worked out the cast, crew, and budget, and Wanger then had complete control until the preview stage. He was paid a weekly salary during production and then split any net profits with Universal after release. Most of Wanger’s films were scripted by Norman Reilly Raine and directed by Jack Rawlins, both freelancers; otherwise, he relied on Universal’s contract talent.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, Wanger, even without the production facilities and contract personnel of filmmakers like Goldwyn and Selznick, became a major independent producer through his connection with Universal. He maintained creative and supervisory control of his pictures, while providing Universal with a prestige-level unit and a steady string of commercial hits, including *GUNG HO!* (1943), *LADIES COURAGEOUS* (1944), and *SALOME, WHERE SHE DANCED* (1945). Wanger's commercial success at Universal enabled him to pursue a more ambitious venture with the studio in 1945. After signing another five-picture deal with the studio to deliver more standard A-class fare, Wanger entered a very different kind of arrangement in the form of Diana Productions. Wanger set up the company as a partnership with his wife, the actress Joan Bennett, and the director Fritz Lang, with Universal to supply one-half the finances and to distribute Diana's output of one or two pictures per year—beginning with *SCARLET STREET* in 1945.<sup>46</sup>

Universal entered several other new independent arrangements in 1945, signing Mark Hellinger Productions as well as Leo Spitz and William Goetz's International Pictures. Those deals, along with already established ones, gave Universal as strong a lineup of independent unit producers as any of the Hollywood majors except RKO.<sup>47</sup> At that point, RKO's outside-producer ranks included Walt Disney, Sam Goldwyn, Arthur Rank, Liberty Pictures (Frank Capra, George Stevens, and William Wyler), Jesse Lasky, Alfred Hitchcock, and Dore Schary. Several of these producers, however, were signed



Walter Wanger signing one of his many quasi-independent deals with Universal's Nate Blumberg.

in 1945 as the boom reached its peak, although Goldwyn, Disney, and Hitchcock (via Selznick) had played a crucial role in RKO's wartime success.

While RKO and Universal successfully exploited the in-house independent trend during the war, both studios also were shifting to a unit-production system for top contract talent. In fact, both developed a clear three-tier system during the war, with in-house independents supplying most of the A-class product, contract talent in studio-based units turning out a few A's but mainly near-A's, and the factory assembly line cranking out routine B's. The most significant of Universal's studio-based units was overseen by the writer John Grant, who graduated to writer-producer status in 1944 and produced the Abbott and Costello vehicles. Another important studio-based setup was the Sherlock Holmes unit under the producer-director Roy William Neill. Just before the war, Universal bought the rights to Arthur Conan Doyle's detective stories along with the contracts of Basil Rathbone and Nigel Bruce from Fox. Neill put Holmes and Watson through their paces in a dozen pictures during the war, developing a unit that was as consistent and dependable—if not quite as profitable—as Grant's Abbott and Costello unit.

RKO, meanwhile, enjoyed considerable success with a series of near-A horror films produced by Val Lewton, who left Selznick in early 1942 and signed with RKO as writer-producer. The first of these was *CAT PEOPLE*, a late-1942 release which was a modest commercial and critical hit and established what Lewton described (in a letter to Selznick) as "our little horror unit."<sup>48</sup> The Lewton unit continued to turn out modest horror films—notably *I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE* and *THE LEOPARD MAN* in 1943, *THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE* in 1944, and *THE BODY SNATCHER* and *ISLE OF THE DEAD* in 1945—which were consistent moneymakers for RKO. These were scarcely on a par with RKO's A-class projects, however, nor was Lewton, because of his contractual status with RKO, in the same league with the in-house independents.

This distinction is crucial, particularly with regard to the other integrated major studios. Simply stated, the rest of the Big Five had both the production resources and the economic leverage to resist the in-house independent trend, and they went on record publicly—and often quite vocally—as being utterly at odds with the trend. *Variety* in July 1943, for instance, in one of the many trade press stories about the majors' resistance to "indie units," noted that "Paramount, Warners and 20th Century-Fox have no outside producers."<sup>49</sup> But in actuality, the majors were, in various ways, modifying the trend toward independent units to accommodate their top talent, usually through the relative autonomy of unit status and, in rare cases, profit-participation deals.

MGM and Fox remained most resistant to the in-house independent trend during the war, with MGM granting unit status to contract producers like Arthur Freed and Dore Schary, while Zanuck eschewed unit designation even for his top producers and directors. Interestingly enough, Fox had begun to develop unit production under Bill Goetz in the early war years while Zanuck was away with the Signal Corps, and Goetz actually signed a few outside deals—including a two-picture deal with Selznick for Hitchcock's services. Zanuck's return in 1943 effectively stifled that effort, however, and it ended Goetz's tenure with Fox as well. Goetz left in late 1943 to form International Pictures in partnership with Leo Spitz. The longtime Fox writer-producer Nunnally Johnson also left upon Zanuck's return, because Zanuck refused to let him have his own unit and a profit participation deal.<sup>50</sup> Johnson went on to form a successful independent company with Gary Cooper.

The situation was more varied and complex at Warners, which developed a range of strategies to accommodate the independent urge of top talent. Ample evidence of these



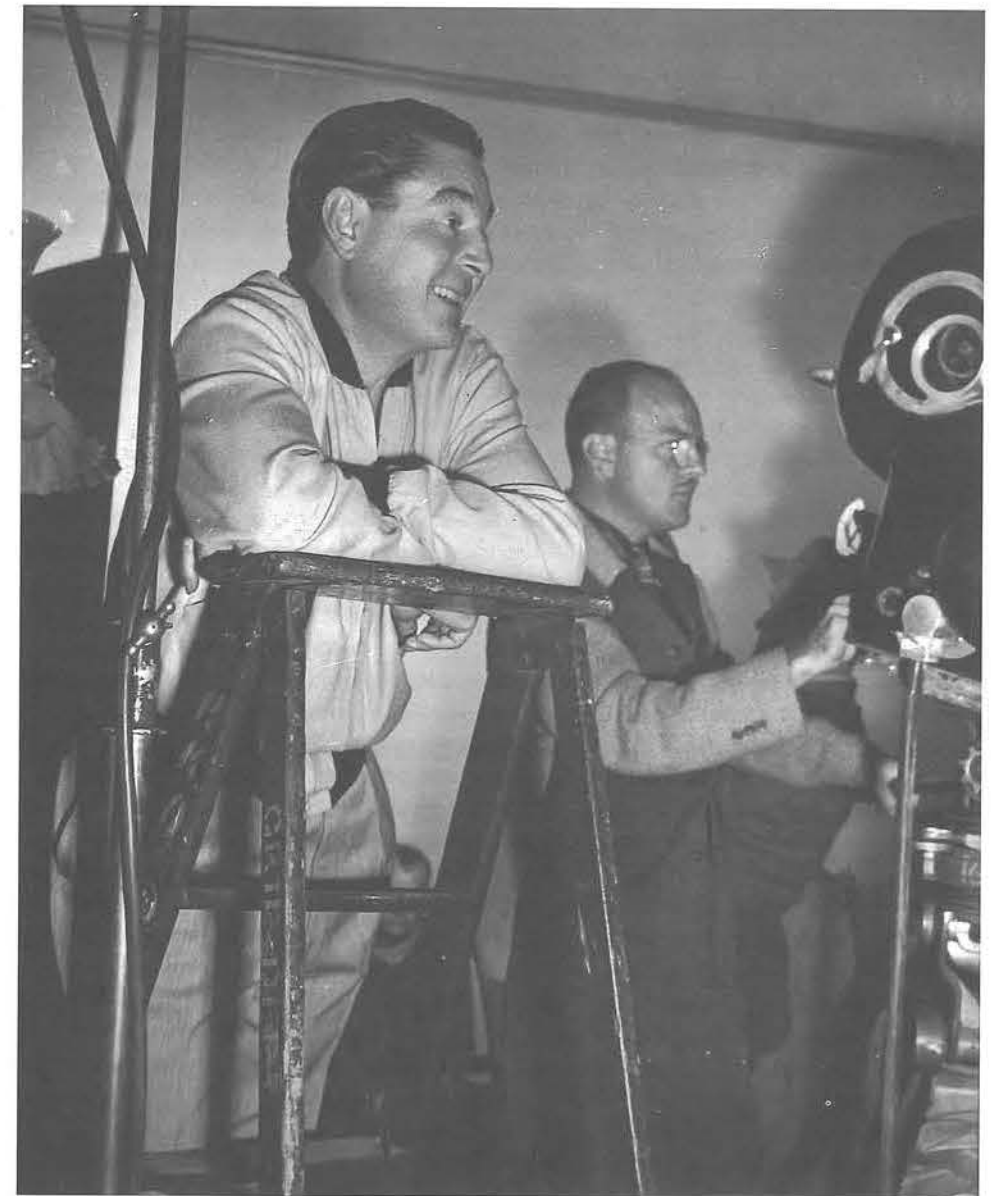
varied strategies is provided by three early-1942 deals between Warners and Hal Wallis, Howard Hawks, and Mark Hellinger. The Wallis contract of January 1942, as mentioned earlier, signaled the end of Warners' central-producer setup. Because neither Wallis nor Warners wished to produce "as large a number" of pictures as in previous years, Wallis became responsible for only four pictures per annum. The contract was to run four years, starting at \$4,000 per week, with Wallis to receive an additional 10 percent of the gross receipts once his pictures returned 125 percent of their costs. The participation angle marked a radical departure for Warners, as did the degree of Wallis's authority over his pictures: he had first choice of story properties, directors, performers, and other contract talent. He was to supervise the scripting and editing, although Jack Warner had the last word in any disputes. Each of Wallis's pictures was to be billed as "A Hal B. Wallis Production," in type at least 50 percent the size of the title.<sup>51</sup>

The Hawks and Hellinger deals of February 1942 differed considerably from the Wallis deal in that neither was granted the same degree of authority or a cut of the profits. But the two deals did further indicate Warners' shift to an in-house unit setup. Warners signed Hawks to a five-year, five-picture deal at a salary of \$100,000 per picture, with his duties described as those of "Director and/or Supervisor." This designation gave Hawks authority over both scripting and editing, and his pictures were to be billed as "A Howard Hawks Production" in a type size 25 percent that of the title. Hawks was sufficiently comfortable with Warners to sign an exclusive deal, which meant he could work for no other company while the contract was in effect.<sup>52</sup> The writer-producer Mark Hellinger had left Warners in 1941 rather than submit to Wallis's authority. But with Wallis's shift to unit producer, Hellinger now was willing to return. On 26 February, he signed a five-year deal at \$3,000 per week "as producer and/or executive and/or director and/or writer," and his contract stipulated a separate producer credit on all his pictures with his name at 25 percent the size of the title.<sup>53</sup>

Also of note in this context is an arrangement made with Bette Davis. In June 1943, Warners created B.D. Inc., an in-house independent setup for Bette Davis giving her 35 percent of the net profits on her pictures. That company folded, however, after a single picture; Davis ultimately had little interest in becoming her own producer.<sup>54</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Paramount had maintained a special arrangement with Cecil B. DeMille since the late 1930s but otherwise avoided in-house independent deals. This policy began to change during the war. In 1944, Hal Wallis left Warners and signed a deal with Paramount giving him an independent unit on basically the same terms that DeMille had been operating under for years. Shortly thereafter, the longtime Paramount production executive Buddy De Sylva demanded, and received, a similar deal from the studio.<sup>55</sup>

The easing of Paramount's resistance to the independent unit trend was further underscored by a 1944 deal with Leo McCarey. During the war, McCarey was virtually the only established freelance producer-director to maintain that status, relying on one-picture deals with various studios. After a modest 1942 hit for RKO, *ONCE UPON A HONEYMOON*, McCarey approached Paramount with an original story (his own) about two priests struggling to make ends meet in a New York City parish. McCarey convinced Paramount that it might make an ideal Bing Crosby vehicle, and the studio agreed to finance and distribute the picture. But Paramount also was sufficiently leery of the project to oblige McCarey's request to waive his salary in lieu of a share of the profits. The result, of course, was *GOING MY WAY*, the single biggest hit of 1944; McCarey's share was reportedly in excess of \$1 million.<sup>56</sup>



*Hollywood's leading independent producer-director during the war era, Leo McCarey, on the set of THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S (1945).*

McCarey then reasserted his independence and market value by spurning Paramount and striking a deal with RKO for *THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S*, the sequel to *GOING MY WAY*. This, too, would star Crosby, whom Paramount had granted quasi-independent status, opposite Ingrid Bergman (on loan from Selznick). That 1945 production gave McCarey another huge hit, confirming his stature as Hollywood's leading freelance producer-director.

It confirmed, too, the validity of RKO's wartime courtship—which by 1945 had become remarkably aggressive—of outside independents. One of the more significant deals was with Dore Schary, a producer loaned to RKO in 1945 by another leading independent, David Selznick, as part of a multifilm package. The deal marked another stage in Schary's remarkable wartime ascent from contract writer at MGM to prestige-level independent—an ascent worth tracing in some detail.

#### CASE STUDY: DORE SCHARY AT MGM, VANGUARD, AND RKO

The career of Dore Schary during World War II demonstrates the range of independent and unit production strategies at the time, and several other wartime trends as well—particularly the emergence of the writer-producer as a significant industry force and the hyperactivity of A-class (and near-A) feature production. Schary's career in 1944–1945 also was directly related to two other significant developments in Hollywood's independent filmmaking arena: the return of David O. Selznick to active production, and Selznick's increasingly elaborate packaging of movie projects.

In late 1941, Dore Schary was a 36-year-old contract writer at MGM earning \$1,000 per week; his more significant screen credits included *BOYS TOWN* (1938) and *YOUNG TOM EDISON* (1940). Schary wanted to produce, and he impressed Louis Mayer with his ideas about improving Metro's low-budget output. So in November 1941, Mayer signed Schary to a new one-year contract, at \$1,750 per week, as executive producer and put him to work with Harry Rapf on MGM's mid-range product—its near-A pictures.<sup>57</sup>

Harry Rapf was a Metro executive (and corporate vice president) who not only lacked experience as a "creative" producer but did not even read the story properties or scripts that his unit developed.<sup>58</sup> MGM's near-A operations quickly changed under Schary's supervision, and in fact the Rapf-Schary unit (as it was termed in interoffice memoranda) soon became known on the lot—and well beyond it—as the Schary unit. Schary chaired weekly meetings with the unit's producers, going over story material, making cast and crew assignments, and monitoring production. He also played an active role in story and script development, serving as story editor and closely supervising postproduction. The Rapf-Schary unit included about a dozen producers; the total varied as some producers graduated to the A ranks while others were let go. Schary also joined Rapf on MGM's elite executive committee, not only to tap into the available studio talent and personnel but also to pass along promising projects deemed too ambitious for the B unit. Schary used top talent in some of his near-A productions—Robert Taylor in *BATAAN*, for instance—and also developed new talent that could work in both A and B pictures, such as Margaret O'Brien and Elizabeth Taylor.

The Schary unit started strong with *JOE SMITH, AMERICAN*, a home-front drama released in early 1942 and starring Robert Young as a munitions plant worker who faces problems at home and on the job. He eventually is kidnapped by enemy agents trying to discover the workings of a new bomb sight, and he is able to endure by fixing his mind on the values of home and family. The film avoided the jingoism and spy-thriller

mechanics of so many early war films, however, and in fact critics were impressed by both its unassuming story and its modest production values. "In its own simple and unassuming way," stated the *New York Times*, "'Joe Smith, American' does more to underscore the deep and indelible reasons why this country is at war than most of the million-dollar epics with all their bravura and patriotism." It was "not a 'big' film as Hollywood productions go," noted the *Times*, "but it pulls a good deal more than its own weight."<sup>59</sup>

*JOE SMITH, AMERICAN* was budgeted at \$280,000 and came in \$44,000 under budget; it turned a profit of \$240,000.<sup>60</sup> Although the film was invariably held up as a working model for the Schary unit, few others were produced as efficiently or did as well. The unit turned out thirteen films in 1942 at an average cost of \$275,000. Most of these were crime thrillers, home-front dramas, Westerns, and combat films—all standard B-grade wartime fare—with the war-related pictures by far the more successful.

In 1943, the Schary unit's average cost per film rose to nearly \$400,000, owing both to inflation and to Schary's growing ambition. Its two biggest pictures at that time were *JOURNEY FOR MARGARET* (1942), a rehash of *MRS. MINIVER* (1942) that cost \$463,000, and *LASSIE COME HOME* (1943), which cost \$564,000. Both were hits, although the real payoff was the introduction of 5-year-old Margaret O'Brien in the former and 11-year-old Elizabeth Taylor in the latter. (Their weekly salaries in 1943 were \$150 and \$75, respectively).<sup>61</sup> The unit's biggest project was *BATAAN* in late 1943, which cost \$789,000 and costarred Robert Taylor, Thomas Mitchell, and Robert Walker; it was directed by Tay Garnett while he waited to start a big-budget Greer Garson vehicle. Clearly Schary's near-A productions were edging closer to A-class status, although the unit was operating only at about a break-even level. Still, Mayer was satisfied. He raised Schary's salary to \$2,000 per week in November 1942 and then offered him another raise in late 1943.

By then, Schary had other plans. He wanted to personally produce A-class pictures, and despite Mayer's assurances, he was not optimistic about that possibility at MGM. There were other offers in late 1943, including one from Selznick, who finally was returning to active production. Selznick had two prestige-level projects in the works, *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY* and *SPELLBOUND*, and he wanted Schary to produce more modest A-class pictures through his Vanguard Films to complement Selznick's own prestige productions. Schary agreed, signing on in November 1943 at \$2,500 per week plus 15 percent of the net profits on all his Vanguard releases.<sup>62</sup> A few weeks later, he purchased the screen rights to an original radio drama, *Double Furlough* by Charles Martin, for \$2,500.<sup>63</sup> The story centered on a shell-shock victim who, while home for Christmas, falls in love with a woman on holiday furlough from prison. Schary convinced Selznick to bring in the freelancer Ginger Rogers for the lead, while costarring roles went to two Selznick contract players, Joseph Cotten and Shirley Temple, who also were appearing in *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY*.

Schary managed to keep his initial Selznick project on target at \$1.3 million, proving that he was ready to handle A-class productions. He also displayed a canny feel for the marketplace by convincing Selznick to change the title to "I'll Be Seeing You," which Schary suggested in early 1944 after first hearing the Tommy Dorsey–Bing Crosby song.<sup>64</sup> Although Selznick was wary of the war-related title "Double Furlough," he balked at the suggestion. But when "I'll Be Seeing You" became the number-one coin-machine hit in the United States in July 1944, Selznick assigned Gallup's ARI to market-test the title.<sup>65</sup> ARI's research supported the change, and so the film was released just before the Christmas holidays under the title *I'LL BE SEEING YOU*. By then, the song had fallen from its extended run atop the charts but had become a wartime standard,





Dore Schary with Ginger Rogers and Joseph Cotten during production of Vanguard's *I'LL BE SEEING YOU* (1944).

and its use as both a title and a musical theme undoubtedly enhanced the film's popularity. Total earnings on *I'LL BE SEEING YOU* reached \$3.8 million—giving Schary a profit share of \$97,000 (beyond his salary of \$105,000 on the picture) and securing his role with Vanguard.<sup>66</sup>

By early 1945, Selznick was preparing another Hitchcock picture, *NOTORIOUS* (1946), and a big-budget Western, *DUEL IN THE SUN* (1946). Schary had two comedies in the works: *THE BACHELOR AND THE BOBBY-SOXER* (1947), with Cary Grant and Shirley Temple, and *THE FARMER'S DAUGHTER* (1947), with Joseph Cotten and Loretta Young. Selznick's operations were plagued by various problems in 1945, however, principally cost overruns on *DUEL* and the decorators' strike, which completely closed down production in April while Selznick continued to run up huge overhead costs.<sup>67</sup> Selznick decided to unload all of his current projects except *DUEL*, making a series of immensely profitable deals in the summer of 1945 with RKO. These involved the outright sale of the *NOTORIOUS*, *BACHELOR AND THE BOBBY-SOXER*, and *FARMER'S DAUGHTER* packages (with profit participation to Selznick), and also the loan of the Selznick contract talent attached to each project—including Dore Schary.<sup>68</sup>

Thus, Schary joined Sam Goldwyn, Walt Disney, Leo McCarey, and others as an outside producer at RKO. His efforts there were eminently successful—so successful, in fact, that within a year he would be installed as RKO's production chief after the death

of Charles Koerner. That promotion marked the culmination of Schary's remarkable climb through the filmmaking and executive ranks in wartime Hollywood, and it also indicated that the industry's "independent" ranks were still intimately tied to the major studio powers. Those ties would continue, of course, as long as the studios controlled the means of production and distribution, and as long as it remained necessary to rely on outside talent to satisfy the market demand for A-class product.

The studios also had the resources to exploit these A-class pictures, and in fact their sales, promotion, and marketing operations were geared up to another level during the war years. Indeed, not only the war-related market surge but also the post-decree sales policies, which took effect in late 1941, virtually demanded that the studios adopt more aggressive strategies in promoting and selling their high-end pictures. Some companies were more aggressive than others, but all recognized that both the war and the antitrust campaign meant that the marketing as well as the making of motion pictures was changing dramatically.

### *Working the First-Run Market*

With the financial stakes and profit potential going up with each wartime release, and with the 1940 consent decree spurring a move to unit sales, the studios steadily adjusted both their market strategies and their marketing operations. *Variety* reported in September 1942 that the majors were increasing their "exploitation" budgets by 25 percent that year, and in April 1943 *Advertising Age* noted that overall motion picture advertising in all media—radio, newspapers, magazines—was up 10 percent.<sup>69</sup> Newspapers continued to be the primary means of movie advertising and promotion, although radio became increasingly popular during the war. Spot radio ad campaigns pushed individual pictures in specific first-run markets, and radio adaptations of top releases became a viable promotional strategy as well.

With its reduced output, increased emphasis on top product, and single-unit sales policy, it is scarcely surprising that Warners was the most aggressive in its promotion and advertising.<sup>70</sup> The other majors followed suit in 1943 as they, too, shifted to unit sales. The last to come around was MGM, which in 1943 still was selling groups of eight to twelve pictures. (*MRS. MINIVER* was the only picture Loew's sold singly in the early war years.) Metro had little choice but to adjust, however, since the trend toward longer runs and holdovers virtually demanded that pictures be marketed individually.

Most of Warners' efforts to promote its top features involved product tie-ins, which effectively sold the film while creating (or enhancing) the story property's currency in other media venues. During a single month in 1943, for instance, Warners featured condensed radio versions of seven releases, including *YANKEE DOODLE DANDY* (1942), *NOW, VOYAGER* (1942), and *CASABLANCA* (1942).<sup>71</sup> For an early 1944 biopic, *THE ADVENTURES OF MARK TWAIN*, Warners came up with five 15-minute programs to promote the picture on 200 network radio stations.<sup>72</sup>

The war boom also brought an increased emphasis on presold story properties, especially best-selling novels and hit plays. Relying on presold properties had a long history in the movie industry, of course, but the trend took a slightly different turn during the war, when presold stories were generally perceived as one means (like the use of Technicolor) of offsetting the loss of top male stars.<sup>73</sup> Here again, Warner Bros. led the

way, and its success in securing presold properties was due largely to its willingness to make participation deals with authors and playwrights. This practice generally was avoided by the other studios, particularly MGM and Paramount, and for good reason.<sup>74</sup> Warners' deal with George M. Cohan for *YANKEE DOODLE DANDY*, for instance, paid Cohan \$125,000 up front plus 10 percent of the gross revenues over \$1.5 million, which turned out to be another \$320,000.<sup>75</sup> But Warners was satisfied with such arrangements and continued to cut participation deals throughout the war.

The significant increase in book sales early in the war skewed the presold story market toward literary properties. The studios stocked up on successful titles, setting a record in February 1942 for number of story buys in a single month (65). War stories dominated, especially nonfiction accounts of combat like *Guadalcanal Diary* (1942) and *They Were Expendable* (1942).<sup>76</sup> Several popular religious novels in 1942–1943—notably *The Robe*, *The Song of Bernadette*, and *The Keys of the Kingdom*—also were bought by Hollywood for hefty sums.<sup>77</sup>

One rather remarkable development which spoke volumes about the wartime fiction market, the movie industry's reliance on pre-sold properties, and the complex relationship between publishing and moviemaking involved MGM's 1943 hit *THE HUMAN COMEDY*. The novelist-screenwriter William Saroyan sold the story to MGM in early 1942, but disagreements over the script led Saroyan to withdraw his story and turn it into a novel instead of a film. A saccharine comedy-drama about life in small-town, wartime America, *The Human Comedy* (1943) was an immediate best-seller. That brought MGM back into the picture, and in March 1943 the film version was released. Aptly described by Bosley Crowther in the *New York Times* as "sentimental showmanship," the film was even more successful commercially than the novel and brought Saroyan an Academy Award for his "original" story.<sup>78</sup>

Another significant promotional trend was the boom in low-priced book editions with direct tie-ins to motion pictures, a strategy that developed along several different lines. Warners had an arrangement with Grosset & Dunlap to sell low-cost paperbacks based on original screen stories—a practice that dated back to the 1930s but really took off during the war with successful "adaptations" like *SERGEANT YORK* and *AIR FORCE*. Pocket Books had a similar arrangement with MGM; its 25-cent edition of *MRS. MINIVER* sold 550,000 copies within a year of the film's release. There were other types of cooperative ventures between publishers and studios, with film adaptations often turning moderately successful novels into best-sellers. *Kings Row* by Henry Bellamann, for example, had sold a respectable 30,000 copies before Warners' adaptation came out in December 1941; in the ensuing year, it sold 500,000.<sup>79</sup>

Another publishing tie-in which boosted the value of the print work was the serialization in newspapers of stories timed to coincide with a film's release. MGM serialized some thirty-five films in 1942, for instance, usually either in six-chapter versions in daily newspapers or three-chapter versions in weeklies. Among Metro's releases concurrently serialized were popular adaptations like *RANDOM HARVEST* (1942), based on the James Hilton story, *THE HUMAN COMEDY* (1943), and *THE MOON IS DOWN* (1943), an adaptation of John Steinbeck's story which already had appeared as both a play and a novel.<sup>80</sup>

By late 1943, the trend was shifting to popular stage hits. A key trendsetter was Irving Berlin's *This Is the Army*, a 1942 Broadway hit which Warners in 1943 adapted into a phenomenally successful movie musical.<sup>81</sup> *Variety* in early 1944 noted the growing controversy and exhibitor dissatisfaction with "war-themed material," especially combat-related stories, and suggested that the studios were turning to stage hits



The success of William Saroyan's "novelized" screenplay led MGM to reconsider *THE HUMAN COMEDY*—resulting in a 1943 hit starring Mickey Rooney.

"because Broadway offered more escapist material than the book marts," which many felt "were following the news headlines too closely for screen-purpose comfort."<sup>82</sup> The trend to stage adaptations intensified in 1944, a record year for Broadway—and for playwrights cutting motion picture deals.<sup>83</sup> One indication of the feeding frenzy was the reported asking price of \$3 million for John Van Druten's three-character comedy hit *Voice of the Turtle* (1943).<sup>84</sup> Warner Bros., which led all companies in play purchases in 1944 (spending \$1,650,000 on seven stage hits), eventually bought the rights to Van Druten's play for \$500,000, the same price it paid that year for Clarence Day's *Life with Father* (1935; dramatized 1939).<sup>85</sup>

This Broadway-to-Hollywood trend eased considerably in 1945 as plays were deemed overpriced and too many playwrights were demanding percentage deals. Thus, the pendulum swung back to fiction; in early 1945, for instance, the independent star-producer James Cagney paid a record \$250,000 for Adria Locke Langley's novel *A Lion Is in the Streets* (1945).<sup>86</sup> *Variety* noted the "growing feeling that published works are generally better source material for the studios than plays," and it later reported that the screen rights to novels with over \$1 million in sales could be bought for as little as \$100,000.<sup>87</sup> *Variety* also noted that Broadway in 1945 was suffering through its second straight season of musical flops.<sup>88</sup>

While stage musicals were falling on hard times in the later war years, the music and recording industries were doing record business. Indeed, another of Hollywood's key



wartime marketing strategies involved tie-ins with popular music. Considering the importance of popular music during World War II, with live performances, concerts, recordings, jukebox, and radio plays providing vital amusement for soldiers and civilians alike, music provided Hollywood with a viable presold commodity. Big-name band-leaders like Harry James, Jimmy Dorsey, Tommy Dorsey, Spike Jones, and Guy Lombardo were signed (along with their bands) to studio contracts and worked into pictures.<sup>89</sup> Radio and recording stars like Bing Crosby and the newcomer Frank Sinatra enjoyed unprecedented crossover success. And songwriters enjoyed a boom as well, with sheet-music sales—particularly of songs featured in motion pictures—reaching record heights.<sup>90</sup>

Audience research played an increasingly important role in Hollywood's cultivation of the volatile, high-stakes wartime marketplace. Gallup's Audience Research Institute remained the industry's leading market research firm, and in fact ARI hit its stride during the war. The company began referring to itself as Audience Research "Incorporated" in 1942, and in 1943 Gallup made an important change in ARI's management, replacing David Ogilvy as executive vice president with Albert Sindlinger, who had an extensive background in movie distribution and promotion. ARI's chief clients were still RKO and leading independents like Selznick, Goldwyn, and Disney, but the company also began doing business with other studios and producers as well.<sup>91</sup>

ARI's primary product was still its assessment of the drawing power of Hollywood's top stars, the "Audit of Marquee Values," which it updated every three months. ARI steadily refined its testing of story, casting, and title ideas. By 1942, its surveys were broken down along various lines: male versus female respondents; size of community (over 100,000, between 10,000 and 100,000, under 10,000); frequency of attendance (habitual versus occasional); income level (prosperous, upper-middle, middle, poor); and age (age 12–17, age 18–30, age 31 and older).<sup>92</sup> ARI also refined its "Index of Publicity Penetration" during the war and developed a "jury preview system," which provided far more detailed data on audience response than were generated by traditional studio previews. Clearly ARI's market research was making great strides and becoming increasingly comprehensive. As Shannon James Kelley notes, during the war "the ARI's research program took on a sort of all-inclusive logical closure in regard to 'the average "A" picture' and its audience."<sup>93</sup>

Whatever its claims to scientific validity and predictive reliability, market research in the movie industry was barely out of its infancy and was still far from reliable. Moreover, Hollywood producers and studio executives were not about to put a higher stake in researchers' figures than in their own talent, taste, and intuition. And yet as the economic stakes went up, the marketplace grew more complex, and research methods were steadily refined, market research became an unavoidable if troublesome and costly necessity.

While the studios pursued innovations in marketing and promotion, they continued to rely on established practices as well. Developed along with the vertically integrated industrial system, these practices included a range of promotional tactics, from movie previews ("trailers") shown in theaters to posters and print ads in newspapers and magazines and exploitation stunts in local communities. The vast majority of the studios' efforts and expenditures in their sales campaigns for individual films went toward newspaper ads. In 1945, according to the *Film Daily Year Book*, \$52 million of the total industry expenditure of \$63 million went to newspaper advertising.<sup>94</sup> The print ad campaign for each film and the national sales campaign were planned in detail in each stu-



Promotion of *THE SONG OF BERNADETTE* (1943), which included a specially commissioned Norman Rockwell painting and tie-ins with Franz Werfel's best-seller, reflects the sophistication of wartime movie marketing.

dio's New York office, and these plans were contained in the "pressbook" which accompanied each studio release. As Mary Beth Haralovich shows in the following section, pressbooks provided a veritable blueprint for a film's national sales campaign, and they also reveal a great deal about the industry's perceptions of its products and its audience.

#### SELLING *MILDRED PIERCE*: A CASE STUDY IN MOVIE PROMOTION

Mary Beth Haralovich

Throughout Hollywood's classical era, every studio release was accompanied by a pressbook, an oversized and glossy booklet which outlined the film's national sales campaign and contained basic materials crucial to that campaign. Pressbooks included two types of material: advertising (primarily mats used for newspaper ads) and publicity (stories and exploitation ideas). Advertising was designed to engage the potential moviegoer's interest in the film's story by stressing genre, the conjunctures of star and character, narrative suspense, and the special qualities of a film, such as its adaptation from a popular novel. Publicity presented a film in more detail through prepared reviews, and it also extended beyond the film itself through production stories and stills, merchandising tie-ins, praise for the studio's expertise, suggestions for exploitation stunts, and so on.<sup>95</sup>

Generally speaking, sales campaigns for individual films began in Hollywood and were completed in New York. The sales and promotional campaign for a film was initiated in discussions between advertising personnel and the producer prior to shooting. During production, staff publicists wrote synopses of the plot and created stories about production events and stars, planting these items in newspapers during production. Syndicated columnists like Hedda Hopper and Louella Parsons, as well as feature writers across the country, were fed information about the film and its stars. As shooting drew to a close, studio photographers took production stills and poster-art photographs, which were used by staff artists to create posters and advertising illustrations. Unlike frame enlargements from the film, poster-art stills guaranteed frontal positioning and concentrated on the performers' faces and bodies.<sup>96</sup>

Distribution of films and advertising was conducted out of the New York office, where staff assembled promotional materials and distributed pressbooks and advertising packages to trade papers, magazines, and theaters. Individual exhibitors were given considerable latitude in handling advertising materials and were encouraged to do more on their own to stimulate local interest in the film. Some theaters had staff artists who modified posters and pressbook materials to suit the local environment and the exhibitor's specific ideas. Each issue of the *Motion Picture Herald* also provided advice for theater owners on advertising layouts and publicity stunts.

Pressbooks invariably opened with a call for exhibitor confidence in the studio's box-office track record, its resources for a national campaign, and its promotional expertise. This appeal was most pronounced with A-class star vehicles and prestige-level films. The pressbook for *MILDRED PIERCE* (1945) reminds exhibitors about the "full page ads appearing regularly in leading national magazines" for other Warner Bros. films, from *CASABLANCA* (1942) and *THIS IS THE ARMY* (1943) to current releases like *OBJECTIVE BURMA* (1945) and *RHAPSODY IN BLUE* (1945). The pressbook also lists the magazines in which the ads appear, including *Life*, *Look*, *Collier's*, *Time*, *Fortune*, *Redbook*, *Liberty*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Parents*, *Newsweek*, *Harper's*, *American Legion*, and *Foreign Service*.<sup>97</sup>

Poster art was crucial to ad campaigns, and in fact newspaper advertising based on

posters was a primary use (if not *the* use) of pressbook materials. Pressbooks offered posters in a range of sizes: the familiar one-sheet, larger three- and six-sheets, a gargantuan twenty-four-sheet. Also, variations on the posters were offered in the form of lobby cards, slides, mats in various sizes, and more. Poster ads transmitted the essential attributes of the film, generating viewer expectations and forming what Barbara Klinger has termed "a tentative contract between producer and consumer." Posters identified the genre of the film and placed its stars/characters at a point of narrative suspense. Poster graphics often linked head shots of stars/characters to each other and to a central narrative enigma through glances and tag lines.<sup>98</sup>

A new "maturity" and sexual explicitness introduced in films like *THE OUTLAW*, as well as the pinup, a prevalent wartime phenomenon, resulted in posters that often displayed much more than head shots, especially during the early-to-mid-1940s. During World War II, the pinup brought a new dimension to poster art, marking a radical change in the presentation of women in movie advertising from the more wholesome, more fully clad, and less overtly sexual depiction in 1930s film posters. This change caused a bit of a stir within the industry's Advertising Advisory Council (AAC), whose task was to approve (and thus regulate) all film advertising. Created in the 1930s as part of the MPPDA's self-regulation effort, the AAC developed and continually refined its own Advertising Code, which underwent considerable revision in the 1940s.

Pressbooks also contained an official billing chart of the cast and top production personnel. This chart tacitly announced the status of these individuals in that the value of each was measured against a common standard: the type size of the title of the film. The names of a film's stars would appear in type size of 50 to 100 percent of the title type size, with top stars invariably appearing "above the title" and in the same type size. Lesser stars and featured players appeared below the title in increasingly smaller type. For prestige-level pictures involving top producers and directors, a type size of 25 percent of the title size was not uncommon. However, type size for other above-the-line talent, while included, could be minuscule; the names of writers and composers often appeared at less than 5 percent of the title size. While these credits were small but legible on posters and in the larger newspaper ads (that appeared on a film's opening day), they were dropped in smaller newspaper ads.

While film advertising was designed for potential ticket buyers and keyed to story, genre, characters, and performers, publicity was designed to "linger" over a film and to treat its personnel and production in a much wider context. While advertising centered on a few well-chosen elements, prepared reviews and stories could elaborate on a film's narrative and commend the cast and other studio personnel for their work on the production. Performance stories could discuss an actor's interpretation of a role or the studio's efforts to build a new star, or they could alert the industry to an Oscar-level performance. The assessment of production values and summary of the story also provided reviewers with basic information, while prompting positive reviews of the film.

Production stories played a complex role in the publicity process. In circulation to the public through newspapers, gossip columns, fan magazines, and so on, these stories illustrated the high level of expertise involved in the production of a film. In circulation to the industry, they gave the studio an opportunity to boast about its excellence and to establish industrial expectations about its products. Rather than maintaining the invisibility of the production process, production stories identified personnel and how they worked, discussing the filmmaking activities and atmosphere in some detail. Thus, these stories assumed an audience interested in and knowledgeable about the produc-



tion process. As they promoted the film, the stories also served as a means of self-promotion within the industry and of bolstering exhibitor confidence.

Another important form of publicity was the product tie-in, defined by Maria LaPlace as "the display of products in films and of stars in product advertisements." Tie-ins might push specific name-brand products, but they also involved generic statements about fashion and commodities. Moreover, they predominantly were aimed at women. As Maria LaPlace points out, "The main industries involved in tie-ins . . . are all aimed at female consumers: fashion, cosmetics, home furnishings and appliances." In tie-in publicity, a film's actors tended to function simply as models displaying products rather than as people making genuine use of the merchandise. Pressbooks offered premade tie-in stills for display in local shops and also asked exhibitors to develop additional tie-ins with local merchants. While film costumes were not duplicated for the retail market, fashion played an important and complex role in film promotion.<sup>99</sup>

The exploitation section of the pressbook suggested stunts and "ballys" (as in "ballyhoo") to local exhibitors to supplement the studio's advertising and publicity campaign. Designed to grab immediate attention, exploitation often involved amusing and boisterous antics, and unlike the print-oriented ad and publicity campaigns, exploitation could take place inside and outside the theater.

As even this general treatment of movie pressbooks suggests, the studios adopted complex and varied strategies for advertising and publicizing individual films. To indicate the nature and range of these strategies, what follows is a more detailed look at the pressbook and general advertising and promotion campaign of a single film, Warners' 1945 release *MILDRED PIERCE*.

*MILDRED PIERCE* was an A-class Warners production starring the newly signed Joan Crawford as the title character and adapted from the recent, controversial best-seller by James M. Cain. The film is an interesting blend of *film noir*-style crime thriller and domestic melodrama, and a brief plot synopsis is necessary to fully appreciate Warners' efforts to market and promote the film. *MILDRED PIERCE* opens with the murder of a suave, middle-aged man (Zachary Scott) whose dying word is "Mildred." The scene is photographed from the point of view of the killer, who thus is not revealed to the audience; the rest of the film involves the search—mainly through extended flashbacks—to identify the murderer. These flashbacks trace the separation of Mildred from her husband Bruce, her obsessive devotion to her thankless daughter, Veda (Ann Blyth), her partnership in a successful string of restaurants with the lecherous Wally (Jack Carson), and her eventual marriage to Monty Barrigan, the murder victim. Although Mildred initially confesses to the crime, the film ends with two dramatic revelations: that Veda had been carrying on an affair with her stepfather, and that she killed him when he spurned her for Mildred.

Released in September 1945 within weeks of V-J Day, *MILDRED PIERCE* was accompanied by a lush pressbook with a twelve-page advertising section and a fourteen-page publicity section. The pressbook presents the film as a prestige production in the tradition of other Warners hits and pledges national visibility through an aggressive magazine advertising campaign. "It is in this way the public is being told of the Warner way . . . the American way of motion picture making." Crawford, in her first screen role since leaving MGM in 1943, is accorded the attentive treatment of a star and a valued performer, and the production is lauded as an exemplar of studio craft and expertise.

The advertising for *MILDRED PIERCE* centers, of course, on the title character, who is presented as a *film noir* *femme fatale*. Interestingly enough, a primary image used in



Michael Curtiz (lower left, back to camera) directs Zachary Scott and Joan Crawford in *MILDRED PIERCE* (1945).

the ad mats is a drawing which dominates the cover of the pressbook: a figure of a woman who is not immediately recognizable as Joan Crawford. She stands in long shot wearing a low-cut gown, holding a smoking gun in one hand and clutching a drapery with the other, and staring directly at the spectator. The tag line accompanying the image and appearing in most of the advertising mats asserts: "She's the kind of woman men want . . . but shouldn't have!" In the mats which have a clearly recognizable image of Crawford, the star is integrated into the *film noir*-style murder mystery—the primary means of engaging audience interest—with tag lines such as: "She knew there was trouble coming—trouble she made for herself—a love affair—and a loaded gun. . . . She had no right playing around with either!"

Through this focus on *film noir* and the dominance of the title character, Mildred is assigned direct responsibility for aggressive sexuality and for violence. While not precisely faithful to the film, this ad strategy was efficient and effective since it promoted the title of the film and emphasized the lead character (and star) rather than the secondary character of Mildred's daughter, Veda. In both the novel and the film, Veda may have had the more obvious *femme fatale* status and the greater narrative agency (as an adulteress and also as the murderer being sought by the police). But her name was not tied to the title, nor was the actress playing Veda, the relative newcomer Ann Blyth, likely to appeal to potential moviegoers.

Three actors are allocated type size equal to the title: Crawford, Jack Carson, and Zachary Scott. Crawford's name appears first and occasionally above the title; also, her full name shares type size with only the last names of the two male costars. Poster graphics situate the two men in relation to Mildred and *film noir*, as do their respective tag lines. On Zachary Scott/Monty: "He'd rather die than double-cross her . . . so he did both!" On Jack Carson/Wally: "Mildred! . . . she had more to offer a man in a glance than most women give in a lifetime!"

This billing and ad strategy sustained the *film noir* murder mystery and Mildred's *femme fatale* concentration, qualities further reinforced by a small box containing an appeal to the film's entertainment value as suspense: "Please don't tell anyone what she did! We know our patrons will thank us if no one is seated during the last 7 minutes. No One Seated During Last Seven Minutes!" This promise of thrills is reinforced by the ubiquitous reminders that MILDRED PIERCE is adapted from Cain's sensational novel. Many of the mats contain a small drawing of the novel lying open with steam rising from its pages and tag lines like "From the daring book by James M. Cain!" or, "From that sizzling best-seller."

While advertising concentrates on story and stars, it also contains production credits. The MILDRED PIERCE ad mats are peppered with studio name recognition, such as "Warner sensation!" and "Warner hit!" The names of the producer Jerry Wald and the director Michael Curtiz, two of the studio's leading talents, are accorded 25 percent of the title type size—while the screenwriter Ranald MacDougall and the composer Max Steiner are at 3 percent and the novelist Cain at a mere 2 percent. The prepared reviews also praise Wald and Curtiz. The former is described as "Hollywood's most aggressive young movie-maker," and the latter as an "infallible" director and an "Academy Award winner" (for CASABLANCA) who is "liked as well as admired by the people who work for him."

Just as the advertising material focuses on Crawford's title character, the main focus of the publicity material is on Joan Crawford the actress and star. MILDRED PIERCE was termed "the high-water mark in the career of one of screenland's most important ladies"; she "offers an unforgettable, intensely human characterization." And beyond the repeated accolades for her performance, the pressbook stresses that the depth of portrayal was born of human experience as well as professional acumen.<sup>100</sup> In this sense, the pressbook's publicity treatment of Crawford shifts the genre focus from the *film noir* angle to that of the woman's film and motherhood. Stories highlight her experiences—as a woman, mother, and actress—that provide the basis for her "truthful" interpretation of Mildred. The mother, not the *femme fatale*, is privileged here, providing the primary motivations for her character. "Miss Crawford is the sacrificing, doubt-ridden, incorruptible Mildred Pierce, squaring off against the world, true to what she conceives to be a duty to her daughter, for whom she unflinchingly undergoes every privation." Crawford, asserts the pressbook, brings "a remarkable knowledge of the inner workings of the mind and heart of a woman for whom life has gone bitterly wrong at every turn."

Only one story in the pressbook, "Actress' Rise to Stardom Was Difficult Journey for Crawford," makes reference to the star's departure from MGM—the result, supposedly, of Crawford's refusal "to accept further roles which she considered trite." And even the history of the star is given a slant which brings it in line with the film. Crawford, like Mildred, "came up the hard way, earning her success." In presenting Crawford's career as an ongoing process of hard work and overcoming obstacles, the star image contributes

to her interpretation of Mildred and justifies Warners' expertise in finding a role worthy of Crawford at this point in her career.<sup>101</sup>

The publicity related to merchandising and commercial tie-ins also focuses on Crawford. One story begins with a dual address as luxurious detail about the star's costume invokes the pleasure of consumption as well as the realistic spectacle of the production itself. "Star 'All Dressed To Kill'—Even Herself" treats the opening scene in which Mildred, alone on the Santa Monica pier (actually a studio set) seems to be contemplating suicide. It opens with a description of the "bright green wool dress [the film was shot in black and white], shoes with very high heels and big purse . . . fur cape-style coat with matching fur hat . . . the most expensive items of the wardrobe."

Here and elsewhere, publicity about costumes in MILDRED PIERCE draws on three functions of costuming: the expectation that a Hollywood star will wear glamorous costumes; the role that costumes play in establishing character traits and a plausible story; and the value of costumes as a mark of the stature and prestige of the production. In its treatment of Crawford's costumes, the pressbook highlights the studio's drive for excellence and its achievement of both realism and glamour. But it also acknowledges that in some instances the narrative demands that glamour be subordinated to realism and dramatic clarity: "Joan Crawford usually has a wardrobe to make most women gasp with envy. For her present role, however, she had fourteen aprons and twenty-one house dress changes—a new kind of record for one of the screen's most glamorous personalities." Most of the product tie-ins are of the generic variety—including the quarter-page piece on men's "dresswear," "sportswear," and the like.

The exploitation section of the pressbook concentrates on the adaptation of the Cain novel and "the film's dramatic punch." While the pressbook does not offer newspaper serialization of the novel, which was often done with adaptations, it does promote Tower Books' "special 49¢ movie edition" of *Mildred Pierce* and points out that similar promotion will appear in *Variety*, the *Hollywood Reporter*, and the *New York Times*. Exhibitors are encouraged to tie in to this national campaign through lobby displays of Cain's books, cooperative displays with local libraries and bookstores, and two specific stunts. One stunt is a quiz about movie adaptations involving "the fairer sex." The other is a newspaper "best-seller-to-hit-movie contest" in which contestants identify other recent Warner Bros. adaptations.

The exploitation campaign designed to sell the film's "title and drama" entailed "four attractive teaser ads" for newspapers, lobby displays, and "store windows and counters around town." Like the ad mats, these stress Crawford's *femme noir* status and underscore the mystery angle. One even invites patrons to sign a postcard stating: "I just saw 'Mildred Pierce' and I promise not to tell anyone what Mildred Pierce did." In one radio spot announcement, a woman's voice pleads: "You mustn't tell them what you saw here tonight! . . . Please keep my secret!"

Local promotion for MILDRED PIERCE followed the pressbook's general strategy fairly closely, although both the box-office success and critical accolades for the film were quickly incorporated as well. For example, in Los Angeles, where the film opened at three Warners theaters on Friday, 12 October 1945, each successive day of the preceding week incorporated some facet of the pressbook's *femme noir* and suspense gambits, culminating on opening day with this pitch: "Today!!! Please don't tell anyone what she did! 'Even a woman like me can be hurt once too often!!!' It's all about that talked-about Mildred Pierce, Warner's New Sensation. It's *That* story! The sizzling best-seller by James M. Cain."<sup>102</sup>





Among the various promotional strategies for MILDRED PIERCE was this poster tie-in to the millions of returning vets.

Five days later, Los Angeles advertising was using quotes (“Raves!”) from reviews by Louella Parsons, Walter Winchell, and Edwin Shallett of the *Los Angeles Times* that extended beyond the mystery angle to embrace Crawford’s performance and to position MILDRED PIERCE as a woman’s picture. Two days later, after a full week in release in L.A., the ads began touting the film in terms of its box-office performance. On 26 October, the ads even began an ironic twist on the earlier campaign strategy: “We *MUST* tell you what ‘Mildred Pierce’ did!!! Broke every existing house record at Warners 3 First-Run Theatres! Earned the critical acclaim of every outstanding reviewer in the nation! Took L.A. by storm with one of the most unusual and engrossing pictures ever produced! Join the throngs!! See for yourself!!!”<sup>103</sup> When the film opened at the Balaban and Katz Roosevelt in Chicago in December, a similar pattern emerged, with the studio-designed promotional campaign augmented by testimony of the film’s popular and critical success in New York and Los Angeles.<sup>104</sup>

One aspect of market conditions clearly avoided by the MILDRED PIERCE sales campaign, and by the film itself for that matter, was the war. As discussed in the following chapter, the film managed to convey a range of wartime conditions—working women, absent husbands, housing shortages—without directly invoking the war. In this sense, it was among the more subtle wartime dramas and in fact was more typical of films released toward the end of the war, when Hollywood had grown more adept at incorporating war themes into its feature films. Early on, however, the conversion to war production was decidedly more aggressive and overt, as Hollywood’s established stars and genres, indeed its vast filmmaking repertoire, were effectively retooled for the war effort.

## 7

## Wartime Stars, Genres, and Production Trends

### Hollywood’s On-screen Conversion

On 8 December 1941, a Warner Bros. story analyst filed a report on an unproduced play, “Everybody Comes to Rick’s.” The story centers on the American expatriate Rick Blaine, whose café in French Morocco is a haven for European war refugees, and whose life is disrupted by the unexpected arrival of Lois Meredith, the wanton American beauty who, years before, had broken up Rick’s marriage and family and cost Rick his law practice in prewar Paris. The story analyst considered the property a “box-office natural” and a suitable vehicle “for Bogart, or Cagney, or Raft in out-of-the-usual roles and perhaps Mary Astor.”<sup>1</sup>

A few days later, the report reached the desk of the Warners production chief Hal Wallis, who was encouraged to purchase the property by his savvy story department head, Irene Lee. In light of Warners’ current hit, *THE MALTESE FALCON*, Wallis agreed that “Everybody Comes to Rick’s” had potential as another near-A, offbeat thriller. But Wallis had bigger plans for the project, seeing it as an ideal A-class vehicle for his own move to unit producer and for Warners’ conversion to war production. Weeks later, when Wallis signed a new contract giving him first crack at the studio’s contract talent and story properties, he designated “Everybody Comes to Rick’s” as the first project for his production unit. He tapped Michael Curtiz to direct and assigned several top writers to overhaul the story, strengthening both the political and romantic angles. He also entered negotiations with David Selznick for the services of his fast-rising contract star Ingrid Bergman, to costar with Warners’ own emerging star Humphrey Bogart.<sup>2</sup>

The result, of course, was *CASABLANCA*, Hollywood’s seminal wartime “conversion narrative.” The conversion of studio operations and the retooling of established story formulas into war films were crucial factors, but the key factor in this conversion was the narrative itself. The love story was recast in terms of wartime separation and duty by reworking the female lead: the American seductress Lois was transformed into an innocent European refugee, Ilsa, whose commitment to the French Resistance leader Victor Laszlo actually motivated her earlier betrayal of Rick. And the signal conversion, finally, is Rick’s. Early on, Bogart’s Rick Blaine is very much the hard-boiled Warners hero: cynical and self-reliant, repeatedly muttering, “I stick my neck out for nobody.” But in the course of the story, he rediscovers his own self-worth, along with his love of woman

and country. Rick's final heroics—sending Ilsa away with Laszlo, killing the Nazi officer, and leaving Casablanca to join the Free French—crystallized the American conversion from neutrality to selfless sacrifice.

In a more general sense, *CASABLANCA* signaled the wartime conversion of Hollywood's classical narrative paradigm. As Dana Polan suggests in his study of 1940s film narrative, Hollywood's classical paradigm, with its individual protagonist and clearly resolved conflicts, underwent a temporary but profound shift to accommodate the war effort.<sup>3</sup> The two most fundamental qualities of Hollywood narrative, one might argue, were (and remain) the individual goal-oriented protagonist and the formation of the couple. During the war, however, these two qualities were radically adjusted: the individual had to yield to the will and activity of the collective (the combat unit, the community, the nation, the family); and coupling was suspended "for the duration," subordinated to gender-specific war efforts that involved very different spheres of activity (and conceptions of heroic behavior) for men and women.

Actually, Hollywood always had found conflict in its contradictory conception of the idealized male and female—the untrammelled man of action and of few words (and with well-concealed sentiments) who's "gotta do what he's gotta do," and the supportive, sensitive but stoic Madonna whose natural (even biological) destiny is to tame that free-spirited male for the higher cause of civilization. The resolution of the classical film narrative invariably involved the overcoming of that contradiction in the lovers' final embrace. But the war effort created radically different requirements, indefinitely postponing the climactic coupling while celebrating the lovers' dutiful separation and commitment to a larger cause—the lesson learned from Rick in the final moments of *CASABLANCA*.

By the time *CASABLANCA* was released in late 1942, Hollywood's wartime transformation had been under way for nearly a year. Within weeks of Pearl Harbor, and with the Senate propaganda hearings only a few months past, Hollywood shifted from outspoken denial of any overt promotion of U.S. involvement in the war to active on-screen support of that involvement. By mid-1942, about one-third of the features in production dealt directly with the war; a much higher proportion treated the war more indirectly as a given set of social, political, and economic circumstances.

Predictably enough, Hollywood's initial response to the war and to FDR's implicit call to arms was to convert established stars and genres to war production. Abbott and Costello stopped doing their service comedies in late 1941, in deference to the gravity of the military recruiting and training effort. That turned out to be a singular exception; the vast majority of stars and genres underwent just the opposite progression, converting to cinematic war production as soon as the United States entered the war. As the war and Hollywood's treatment of it progressed, the fit between various genres and the war conditions became clearer. Spy, detective, and crime thrillers, for instance, were easily reformulated (perhaps too easily) into espionage thrillers or underground resistance dramas in the early war years. The musical and woman's picture were recycled for war production as well and remained enormously effective throughout the war. The backstage musical was recast to depict groups of entertainers putting on military shows "for the boys," while working-girl sagas and melodramas of maternal or marital sacrifice were ideally suited to war conditions.

Hollywood dealt more directly with the war in combat dramas, documentaries, and newsreels. As the war progressed, in fact, the interplay of fiction and nonfiction war films became increasingly significant and complex, with war-related features evincing a documentary realism by 1944–1945 that was altogether unique for Hollywood movies. Meanwhile, *film noir*, a stylistic countertrend, developed; this 1940s period style



There were many reasons for the recasting of Hollywood's romantic idiom, among them the departure of top male stars like James Stewart and Clark Gable for military service.



expressed the bleaker side of the American experience during (and after) World War II. Thus, the war era represents a particularly complex and contradictory period in terms of Hollywood's production trends and on-screen accomplishments. Remarkably few canonized film classics were produced during the war, and yet Hollywood's social impact was more pronounced and more profound than ever before. Never in American film history had the relationship between cinema and social conditions been so direct and so politically charged; never had Hollywood films constituted so distinctly a national cinema. While Hollywood stopped short perhaps of functioning as a state-run propaganda agency, clearly the cinema's role as a culture industry was different during the war than at any other time in its history.

### *Stars and the Star System*

As seen in chapter 5, the war's most immediate impact on the film industry—and certainly its most widely publicized impact—was the manpower shortage and the departure of a contingent of Hollywood male stars for military service. The first top star to leave the industry for military service actually was the British actor David Niven, who enlisted in England in October 1939 after the outbreak of war in Europe. The exodus of American stars did not begin until March 1941, when James Stewart joined the Army Air Corps only days after the Academy Award ceremony in which he won the Oscar for best actor (and delivered the shortest acceptance speech on record: "Thanks").<sup>4</sup> Stewart's departure signaled a steady drain of male talent and notably leading men.<sup>5</sup>

There were frequent jokes about male stars being replaced by dogs (Lassie), horses (Flicka), kids (Margaret O'Brien, Baby Jean), and aging character actors (Charles Coburn and Barry Fitzgerald, both of whom won Oscars during the war). The studios also tried to compensate for the loss of male stars by emphasizing other production values—Technicolor, music, presold properties, and so on—and some in Hollywood openly welcomed the opportunity to develop less star-oriented pictures. A new generation of wartime stars emerged, of course, although the male replacements, such as Alan Ladd, Van Johnson, Roy Rogers, Gregory Peck, and Ray Milland, were overshadowed by a coterie of rising female stars, including Betty Grable, Greer Garson, Rita Hayworth, Veronica Lake, Margaret O'Brien, Lauren Bacall, and Jennifer Jones.

Many of the male stars who joined the service maintained high media profiles through popular press and newsreel coverage, particularly those who became decorated officers or qualified as bona-fide war heroes. Clark Gable, for instance, rose from the rank of private to major in the air force, winning an Air Medal for bombing missions over Germany during which he manned both machine guns and newsreel cameras. Douglas Fairbanks Jr. won a Silver Star for his service at Salerno, and two destroyers under Robert Montgomery's command sank in the Pacific. Jimmy Stewart's wartime exploits were perhaps the most celebrated. He began his military career as a private and within nine months had won a commission as a second lieutenant. After serving as a flight instructor in the western United States, he was assigned in 1943 to a Liberator bomber group in England as squadron commander (at the rank of captain) and flew dozens of strategic bombing runs over Germany. In 1944, he rose to the rank of colonel and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.<sup>6</sup>

Besides the drain on male acting talent, the war era also saw the studios' established control of the star system continue to erode. Stars not only took temporary leave for



*Hollywood's leading female stars served the cause offscreen as well as on—as with Betty Grable's ubiquitous pinup and Greer Garson's christening of a naval warship.*

military duty but also went freelance in increasing numbers with no intention of returning to studio employ. Moreover, the studio's established contractual methods were severely undercut when, in 1943–1944, the courts in California upheld Olivia de Havilland's suit against Warner Bros. for unreasonable suspension policies, thus establishing an actor's right to refuse roles and to sit out the duration of his or her contract.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the depleted ranks of male stars and eroding studio authority over stars' careers, the industry remained as star-driven and audiences as starstruck as ever during the war—arguably more so, considering the stars' unprecedented importance off-screen. Pinups of Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth were taped inside helmets and mess kits; Donald Duck was featured in more than four hundred official military insignias (the Disney animators designed well over a thousand such insignias during the war); and stars actively publicized and promoted the war effort, raising billions in war bonds in movie theaters across the country and entertaining the troops around the globe.<sup>8</sup>

This last point was especially important in terms of the role, status, and visibility of movie stars during the war. Carole Lombard's death in a January 1942 plane crash while on a war-bond tour generated enormous publicity and sympathy, as did the decision of Myrna Loy to retire for the duration to work for the Red Cross. There was an unprecedented amount of personal contact between stars and the public. Hundreds of thousands of servicemen talked and danced with stars at the Hollywood Canteen and the Stage Door Canteen while passing through Los Angeles and New York City. And Bob Hope, whose wartime work for the USO's Foxhole Circuit became legendary, had appeared before an estimated two million servicemen by late 1944.<sup>9</sup>

Many stars regarded filmmaking as their patriotic duty—as did the government, which declared Hollywood stars “essential” to the industry (and thus subject to draft deferment). SAG publicly decried this policy as preferential treatment, and in fact Mickey Rooney was the only major star whose studio (MGM) applied for such a deferment. The resulting negative publicity was so severe that MGM rescinded the request; Rooney then proceeded with his induction but failed his draft physical. He remained at MGM until Roosevelt's “work or fight” edict in early 1944 revoked his deferment, at which point Rooney joined the army.<sup>10</sup>

The top stars during the war era ranked as follows in terms of their popular and commercial appeal, with the order based on yearly rankings from 1942 to 1945 in the *Motion Picture Herald's* annual Exhibitors' Poll.<sup>11</sup>

Table 7.1  
TOP-RANKED STARS, 1942–1945

1. Gary Cooper	11. Mickey Rooney
2. Betty Grable	12. James Cagney
3. Bob Hope	13. Clark Gable
4. Bing Crosby	14. Walter Pidgeon
5. Abbott and Costello	15. Dorothy Lamour
6. Greer Garson	16. Wallace Beery
7. Spencer Tracy	17. Cary Grant
8. Humphrey Bogart	18. Tyrone Power
9. Judy Garland	19. Alice Faye
10. Bette Davis	20. Van Johnson

SOURCE: *Motion Picture Herald*, 26 December 1942, p. 13; 25 December 1943, p. 13; 30 December 1944, p. 12; 29 December 1945, p. 13.

During the four war years, the stars in the first six positions utterly dominated the box office, and all but Cooper became fixed in the public imagination (and still are widely remembered) as wartime stars. Only four from this elite group—Cooper, Hope, Grable, and Garson—ranked in the top ten all four war years. Crosby and the team of Abbott and Costello placed in the top ten three out of the four years; Crosby climbed to the number-one spot in 1944 and 1945, while the comedy duo started the war at number one but declined slightly each year. A dozen stars remained in the top twenty-five all four years, including all of the top ten in this combined list, plus Rooney and Pidgeon; Pidgeon was the only one of that dozen who failed to crack the top ten at least once during the war.

Several stars fell from the annual Exhibitors' Poll after joining the service: Gable, Autry, Power, and the newcomer Alan Ladd. A few stars who remained in Hollywood during the war also fell from the rankings, notably Cagney and Errol Flynn. A crop of new stars—like Ladd, Van Johnson, and particularly Betty Grable—were virtual unknowns before the war but became top stars by 1944–1945. In fact, nine of the top twenty-five stars in 1944 and eleven in 1945 had not been ranked at all in 1942 or 1943, including Margaret O'Brien, Roy Rogers, Betty Hutton, Ingrid Bergman, Van Johnson, Danny Kaye, Joseph Cotten, and John Wayne.

Productivity was a key factor in the rise of many of these stars. Despite prewar studies by both Gallup and Leo Rosten indicating that top stars should do two to three pictures per year to maintain their currency, Hollywood's elite made fewer films during the war. The top ten stars in the combined list averaged two per year in 1942–1943 but fell to less than one and a half annually in the next two years. The market was changing along with pay scales, tax laws, and war-related obligations, and top stars seemed perfectly willing, in most cases, to cut back. And the market was hot enough that the cuts in productivity barely affected the rankings of several stars. Spencer Tracy maintained his number-five ranking in 1944 and 1945, for instance, while turning out only three pictures; Garson placed in the top ten despite doing only one picture in each of those two years; and remarkably, Bob Hope remained in the top ten both years with only one release in 1944 and none in 1945. Other top stars, including several Oscar nominees and winners—Joan Fontaine, Barbara Stanwyck, and Katharine Hepburn, for example—never even ranked in the top twenty-five, let alone the top ten, owing primarily to low output.

While top stars tended to make fewer films as the war went on, many emerging and second-rank stars gained a competitive edge by working at a much higher rate of output; some actually increased their rate during the war. The ascending male stars, in particular, took advantage of the dearth of leading men and the lighter workloads of their top-ranked colleagues. Ray Milland did eleven pictures during the war, Fred MacMurray did fourteen, and both Van Johnson and John Wayne did fifteen. The war era also saw a reversal of the prewar trend toward male stars atop the rankings: a number of women broke into the top ten. Four of the top ten in the combined listing were women, two of whom (Bette Davis and Judy Garland) were established prewar stars while the other two (Betty Grable and Greer Garson) rose to stardom just as the war broke out.

Greer Garson was a wartime phenomenon of the first order among Hollywood's stars. Arguably the most potent propaganda weapon in Hollywood's arsenal, Garson's stardom coincided almost exactly with the war itself. Born in Ireland in 1908 (and thus well into her thirties when she became a star), Garson was educated in London, where she trained on the stage before joining the MGM-British unit. She was an instant success



with Metro, scoring an Oscar nomination in her first role as Robert Donat's dutiful spouse in *GOODBYE, MR. CHIPS*. The maternal role and Academy nomination set a dual precedent for Garson, although in the future hers would be the title role—invariably with Walter Pidgeon as the dutiful spouse. Pegged by Mayer in 1941 to succeed the poised and well-bred Norma Shearer (who turned down the Miniver role), Garson quickly emerged as Metro's wartime Madonna: a rare beauty of heroic courage, repressed sexuality, and indomitable spirit who nurtured orphans, offspring, and spouse in one lavish melodrama after another. She was nominated as Best Actress every year from 1941 to 1945 for *BLOSSOMS IN THE DUST* (1941), *MRS. MINIVER* (1942), *MADAME CURIE* (1943), *MRS. PARKINGTON* (1944), and *THE VALLEY OF DECISION* (1945)—all sizable commercial and critical hits, as was her other major star vehicle during the war, *RANDOM HARVEST* (1942).

Most of Garson's pictures were period pieces adapted from popular novels and were among MGM's most ambitious wartime productions. She worked with top studio personnel, notably the producer Sidney Franklin, the director Mervyn LeRoy, and the cinematographer Joe Ruttenberg. Her pictures racked up dozens of Academy nominations and quite a few Oscars; *MRS. MINIVER* was by far the most successful, virtually sweeping the 1942 awards—including Best Actress for Garson. And perhaps the best indication of her popular and commercial success during the war was Garson's legendary



Greer Garson's wartime persona was firmly fixed in the title role of *MRS. MINIVER* (1942).

"monopoly" over Radio City Music Hall. Her films routinely did holdover business there, with *MRS. MINIVER* and *RANDOM HARVEST* setting then-record runs of ten and eleven weeks, respectively, in 1942 and 1943. *MADAME CURIE* enjoyed a long run at Radio City in 1944, and by June 1945, as *THE VALLEY OF DECISION* began its eighth week there, Garson's playing time at Radio City had reached fully eleven months during the war years alone. The nation's busiest theater, in other words, devoted one-fourth of its screen time during World War II to Greer Garson.<sup>12</sup>

Betty Grable, Hollywood's other leading female star and wartime icon, presented a marked contrast to Garson. Whereas Garson proved ideal for MGM's dignified and somewhat subdued prestige pictures, Grable's brassy blonde with "million dollar legs" and well-honed song-and-dance skills proved ideal for Fox's slick, high-energy musicals. While Garson personified the tastes and sensibilities of Louis B. Mayer and MGM, Grable was the consummate Zanuck-Fox star: unabashedly sexy and attractive, with a screen personality that, like Tyrone Power's in his signature action-romances, utterly dominated one formula picture after another. For Grable the formula was Technicolor musicals with threadbare plots and promising titles that were quite literally constructed around her performance and her figure. While Grable invariably was teamed with an adequate male star like John Payne or Victor Mature, she clearly carried films like *SONG OF THE ISLANDS* (1942), *SPRINGTIME IN THE ROCKIES* (1942), *CONEY ISLAND* (1943), *SWEET ROSIE O'GRADY* (1943), *PIN-UP GIRL* (1944), and *DIAMOND HORSESHOE* (1945). These were money in the bank for Fox, and their success put Grable atop the 1943 Exhibitors' Poll.

Gary Cooper was the leading male star during the war years. Interestingly enough, Cooper's image as an ascetic loner and strong silent type softened during the war, beginning with his initial wartime effort, *BALL OF FIRE* (1941), a screwball comedy hit costarring Barbara Stanwyck and directed by Howard Hawks. Cooper followed that with a reversion to form and an even bigger hit, *THE PRIDE OF THE YANKEES* (1942), a biopic of the baseball legend Lou Gehrig (who had died recently at age 37) directed by Sam Wood.

*THE PRIDE OF THE YANKEES* ended Cooper's association with the producer Sam Goldwyn, although Goldwyn did have a hand in Cooper's next two pictures. Those involved deals with Selznick, Paramount, and Warners, turning on the services of Cooper and Ingrid Bergman (and the directing services of Sam Wood, also under contract to Goldwyn). Goldwyn orchestrated the deal whereby Selznick loaned Bergman to Paramount to costar with Cooper in *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS*, which led in turn to an arrangement in early 1943 whereby Warners reteamed the pair in *SARATOGA TRUNK*.<sup>13</sup> Both were directed by Wood, and both were huge hits. *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS*, a 168-minute Technicolor adaptation of Ernest Hemingway's war romance, emerged as the biggest box-office hit of 1943. *SARATOGA TRUNK*, another ambitious adaptation of a best-seller (by Edna Ferber), was produced in 1943 but then consigned to Warners' stockpile, where it remained for over two years—reasonably enough, since it was a period piece with two top stars. When Warners finally released *SARATOGA TRUNK* in early 1946, the Cooper-Bergman vehicle earned over \$5 million.

After *THE STORY OF DR. WASELL* (1944), a war-related biopic for DeMille and Paramount, Cooper teamed with the screenwriter Nunnally Johnson (who had recently resigned from Fox) to set up an independent unit with UA. Cooper and Johnson collaborated on *CASANOVA BROWN* (1944), a romantic comedy written and produced by Johnson that reteamed Cooper with Teresa Wright and the director Sam Wood, and *ALONG CAME JONES* (1945), a Western comedy-drama produced by Cooper and written



Director Sam Wood (left, with script) confers with cinematographer Ray Rennehan and costars Ingrid Bergman and Gary Cooper for a scene in *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS* (1943).

by Johnson that playfully undercut the Cooper persona. While the independent pictures were commercial disappointments, Cooper remained atop the Exhibitors' Poll because of the tremendous "legs" of *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS*. As of January 1945, the 1943 release had earned over \$4 million and still had not gone into widespread general release.<sup>14</sup>

Cooper's laconic individualist was utterly at odds with Hollywood's other top male wartime stars: Hope and Crosby, and Abbott and Costello. Both tandems enjoyed extraordinary wartime success, refining and to some extent varying their prewar routines and musical-comedy personas. Abbott and Costello appeared only as a team in eleven wartime comedies, eight for Universal and three on loan to MGM. After moving away from service comedies once the war broke out, they specialized in genre parodies—including *PARDON MY SARONG*, a 1942 spoof of the Hope-Crosby Road pictures. They also reworked the "in the navy" angle with *ABBOTT AND COSTELLO IN HOLLYWOOD* (1945) and *IN SOCIETY* (1944). The Abbott and Costello comedies relied less on music and musical costars during the war, although a few musical numbers were still worked in. The box-office returns were consistently in the \$2 million range, even when the overall market was rising, which helps explain why their ranking fell each year during

the war. The team remained invaluable, however, to Universal, which managed to keep their picture costs down to a bare minimum. *IN SOCIETY*, for example, cost only \$660,000, remarkably little for an A-class picture in 1945.<sup>15</sup>

Paramount's Hope and Crosby, whose costarring ventures (with Dorothy Lamour) had propelled them to top stardom, began and ended the war era together with hit Road comedies: *ROAD TO MOROCCO* in 1942 and *ROAD TO UTOPIA*, which was produced in 1944 but stockpiled until late 1945. There were no intervening Road pictures, although Hope and Crosby appeared together in several revue-format pictures like *STAR SPANGLED RHYTHM* (1942) and *DUFFY'S TAVERN* (1945). Crosby also had a memorable cameo in the climactic battle scene in Hope's 1944 swashbuckling spoof, *THE PRINCESS AND THE PIRATE*. Hope and Crosby each costarred with Lamour during the war: Crosby in a 1943 musical biopic, *DIXIE*, and Hope in a 1943 espionage comedy-thriller (increasingly his forte), *THEY GOT ME COVERED*. Lamour also starred in her familiar tropical excursions, such as *BEYOND THE BLUE HORIZON* (1942) and *RAINBOW ISLAND* (1944).

As successful as Hope and Crosby were in tandem, and as firmly as the two are fixed in wartime cultural memory in the Road pictures, they actually had their greatest success during the war in separate and quite different ventures. In fact, Crosby's two biggest wartime hits teamed him with other male costars: Fred Astaire in *HOLIDAY INN* (1942) and Barry Fitzgerald in *GOING MY WAY* (1944). The latter was a wartime sensation, netting Paramount \$6.5 million, scoring seven Oscars (including Best Actor for Crosby and Best Supporting Actor for Fitzgerald), and propelling Crosby to the number-one spot in the Exhibitors' Poll. He remained on top in 1945, owing largely to *THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S* opposite Ingrid Bergman. Hope, meanwhile, devoted himself to the USO, the War Activities Committee, the Hollywood Canteen, and other wartime causes. In fact, Paramount suspended Hope in 1944 for failing to appear in a third picture that year (after *THE PRINCESS AND THE PIRATE* and *ROAD TO UTOPIA*).<sup>16</sup> Hope shrugged off the suspension and continued to perform on the Foxhole Circuit overseas, and Paramount eventually relented when Hope was awarded a special Oscar for his war-related humanitarian efforts.

Paramount's suspension of Bob Hope was not for lack of product. The studio had built the industry's largest inventory by 1944—even after unloading that sizable package to UA—and successfully developed new talent as well. In 1942, Paramount scored with Alan Ladd and Veronica Lake in two stylish low-cost thrillers, *THIS GUN FOR HIRE* and *THE GLASS KEY*. Military service interrupted Ladd's rise, while war-plant work had a curious impact on Lake's screen persona. She was asked to modify her "peek-a-boo" hairstyle with its wave of hair over one eye; popular with women workers, it interfered with machinery operation. In the later war years, two of Paramount's lesser comedy stars had breakthrough roles in dramatic films: Fred MacMurray in *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* (opposite Barbara Stanwyck) in 1944, and Ray Milland in an Oscar-winning performance in *THE LOST WEEKEND* in 1945, both directed and coscripted by Billy Wilder. Meanwhile, the wartime comedies of another Paramount hyphenate, Preston Sturges, helped bring Betty Hutton, Joel McCrea, and Eddie Bracken to star status.

MGM was even more successful in developing new talent during the war. Besides Garson and Pidgeon, several younger Metro players were on the rise, including Lana Turner, Van Johnson, Red Skelton, Robert Walker, and two precocious preadolescents, Margaret O'Brien and Elizabeth Taylor. The wartime ascents of Van Johnson and Margaret O'Brien were particularly impressive. Van Johnson began in 1942 with bit parts and a supporting role in *DR. GILLESPIE'S NEW ASSISTANT* (replacing Lew Ayres,





Wartime heartthrobs Frank Sinatra and Van Johnson.

who left the series and the studio after declaring himself a conscientious objector to the war).<sup>17</sup> By 1945, Johnson had matured into Metro's consummate boy-next-door type, rising to number two in the Exhibitors' Poll and competing with Frank Sinatra for the hearts and screams of America's bobby-soxers. Margaret O'Brien was five years old in 1942 when she was cast as a wartime waif in the London blitz in *JOURNEY FOR MARGARET* (1942). After a series of minor roles in major pictures like *MADAME CURIE* (1943) and *JANE EYRE* (1944), O'Brien's breakthrough came in *MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS* (1944), costarring with Judy Garland. In 1945, she joined Johnson, Garson, Tracy, and Garland among the top-ten box-office stars—MGM's strongest showing since the 1930s—and won a special Oscar as Hollywood's top child actor.

In 1942, the MGM stars Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn first teamed up in a hit romantic comedy, *WOMAN OF THE YEAR*, and then did a somber but effective political drama, *KEEPER OF THE FLAME*. Each starred in a rather heavy war film in 1944—Hepburn in *DRAGON SEED*, from Pearl S. Buck's story of Chinese resistance to the invading Japanese, and Tracy as a prisoner of war in *THE SEVENTH CROSS*. In 1945, they reteamed in a comedy-drama, *WITHOUT LOVE*, which was something of a disappointment. In fact, Tracy's most effective teaming in the later war years was opposite the fast-rising Van Johnson in *A GUY NAMED JOE* (1943) and *THIRTY SECONDS OVER TOKYO* (1944)—two of MGM's biggest hits of the war.

MGM's postadolescent star duo, Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney, teamed successfully in two more Freed-produced, Berkeley-directed musicals, *BABES ON BROADWAY* (1941) and *GIRL CRAZY* (1943), and also enjoyed considerable success working separately—Rooney in three more Hardy Family installments, and Garland in three other Freed unit musicals, notably *MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS*. Each also was top-billed in a serious wartime drama: Rooney as Homer Macauley, the telegram delivery boy (and bearer of bad tidings) in *THE HUMAN COMEDY* (1943); and Garland opposite Robert Walker in *THE CLOCK*, a romantic drama directed by Vincente Minnelli (in his first nonmusical) and a surprise hit in 1945.

Another wartime MGM star of note was Wallace Beery, the hard-bitten, semiarticulate screen veteran who was pushing 60 and, along with a few other aging male actors, enjoyed renewed stardom during the war. Beery had risen to top stardom in the early 1930s opposite Marie Dressler, but her death in 1934 ended that unlikely pairing. In a savvy bit of casting, MGM paired Beery with the equally cantankerous Marjorie Main in *THE BUGLE SOUNDS* (1941), *JACKASS MAIL* (1942), and *RATIONING* (1944). Beery also lumbered through *SALUTE TO THE MARINES* (1943) and *THIS MAN'S NAVY* (1945), working his way to number eleven in the 1944 Exhibitors' Poll and winning yet another contract from MGM in early 1945.<sup>18</sup>

The Warner Bros. star roster saw heavy changes during the war, although few were due to military service. The studio's only significant loss to the military was Ronald Reagan, who joined up shortly after Pearl Harbor and just as the release of *KINGS ROW* (1942) put him on the verge of top stardom. Cagney won an Oscar in 1942 for his portrayal of George M. Cohan in *YANKEE DOODLE DANDY*, then abruptly left Warners to set up shop at UA. Edward G. Robinson left Warners in 1942 as well, doing his best work of the decade shortly thereafter: in Billy Wilder's *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* and then in two Fritz Lang psychodramas, *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW* (1944) and *SCARLET STREET* (1945).

Errol Flynn remained at Warners but faded badly, despite the success of his first two pictures with the director Raoul Walsh, the Custer biopic *THEY DIED WITH THEIR BOOTS ON* (1941) and as the boxer James J. Corbet in another period biography, *GENTLEMAN JIM* (1942). Flynn's slide, which began with the subsequent war-related dramas (*EDGE OF DARKNESS*, *NORTHERN PURSUIT*, 1943; *UNCERTAIN GLORY*, 1944), owed less to the material than to his increasingly dissolute lifestyle and difficult behavior at the studio, as well as the negative publicity surrounding two separate statutory rape charges in 1942. By 1945, Flynn's star status and matinee-idol appeal had waned, although he did close out the war years with an effective and uncharacteristically grim performance in his one distinguished war picture, *OBJECTIVE BURMA* (1945).

A more positive wartime note for Warners was the success of Bette Davis in such well-crafted star vehicles as *NOW, VOYAGER* (1942), *OLD ACQUAINTANCE* (1943), *MR. SKEFFINGTON* (1944), and *THE CORN IS GREEN* (1945)—Warners' prestige equivalents, in effect, to Metro's Greer Garson vehicles. Davis also was effective in Warners' 1943 adaptation of Lillian Hellman's wartime drama *WATCH ON THE RHINE*, although in a supporting role. None of Davis's wartime films was a breakaway hit, but they routinely returned \$2–3 million to Warners, which confirmed her value by giving Davis a profit-sharing deal in 1943 and allowing her to do outside pictures—long a sticking point between Davis and Jack Warner.<sup>19</sup>

Warners also made three significant additions to its stable of female stars in 1944, signaling a more aggressive pursuit of the women's market. Barbara Stanwyck signed a



*Bette Davis, shown here in a costume test for NOW, VOYAGER (1942), was among a large—and utterly unique—group of “mature” female stars during the war.*

five-year, ten-picture deal (at \$100,000 per picture), which took effect in January 1944.<sup>20</sup> In April, Warners signed Rosalind Russell to a three-year, three-picture deal (at \$150,000 per picture).<sup>21</sup> That same month, Warners cut a three-picture, three-year deal with Joan Crawford (at \$100,000 per picture).<sup>22</sup> Interestingly enough, all three were under consideration by the producer Jerry Wald in May 1944 for the title role in *MILDRED PIERCE*, and reportedly all three wanted the part.<sup>23</sup> Crawford was particularly eager, having reconsidered her strident refusal to play maternal roles at MGM only a few years before. Crawford won the part and an Oscar in the 1945 picture, thus consolidating her position alongside Davis as Warners' top female star.

The 1944 Warners deals with Stanwyck, Russell, and Crawford signaled not only a significant change in the studio's long-standing male ethos but also an important change in the wartime industry at large. Clearly Warners had plans to increase its output of women's films, and to do so with more mature stars: Russell turned 36 in 1944, as did Bette Davis; Stanwyck was 37, and Crawford 40. By some Hollywood standards, each was well past her prime—as could be said of Garson as well, at age 36. But those standards were changing, both because of the war and because of the increasing importance of women's films and female audiences.

While Warners increased its investment in women's pictures (and female audiences) during the war, it scarcely abandoned its traditional commitment to male action pictures. In fact, the 1942 departure of Cagney and Robinson was countered by the rapid wartime rise of two new resident tough guys, both of whom had been with Warners since the late 1930s. One was John Garfield, reminiscent of the young Cagney and an ideal Warners type in combat dramas such as *AIR FORCE*, *THE FALLEN SPARROW* (both 1943), *DESTINATION TOKYO* (1944), and *PRIDE OF THE MARINES* (1945). The other was Humphrey Bogart, who emerged during the war not only as Warners' top star but as Hollywood's consummate male hero, a wartime icon as distinctive in his way as Greer Garson or Betty Grable.

#### CASE STUDY: HUMPHREY BOGART

In December 1941, *THE MALTESE FALCON* was Warners' surprise hit of the year and Humphrey Bogart's contract option was up for renewal. Bogart had signed a five-year contract back in December 1937 starting at \$1,100 per week, with yearly options pushing his salary to \$1,850 per week in 1941. Picking up Bogart's final option in that standard term contract would take him to \$2,000 per week. Jack Warner had no reservations about renewing the contract, but he was still unsure whether Bogart was top star material. In fact, Warner had just cast Bogart in two second-rate crime thrillers, *ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT* and *THE BIG SHOT* (both released in 1942). His star potential was obvious enough, however, and Warners' leading filmmakers considered Bogart a nonsense professional with a workhorse mentality. So Warner decided to tear up the 1937 contract, and on 3 January 1942, he signed Bogart to a new seven-year deal starting at \$2,750 per week—a reasonable sum but nowhere near what the studio's top stars were making. Flynn at the time was pulling down \$6,000 per week, for example, while Cagney was earning \$150,000 per film plus 10 percent of the gross over \$1.5 million. The Bogart pact was exceptional, however, in that it was a straight seven-year deal with no annual option clauses.<sup>24</sup>

Among Bogart's chief supporters at Warners was Hal Wallis, who as unit producer had two Bogart projects under way. In late December, Wallis secured the rights to a



*Saturday Evening Post* serial, "Aloha Means Goodbye," and he had the staff writer Richard Macauley rework it with a post-Pearl Harbor angle.<sup>25</sup> Retitled *ACROSS THE PACIFIC* (1942), the film featured Bogart as an ex-naval officer working undercover who exposes a group of Japanese sympathizers planning to destroy the Panama Canal. Wallis assigned the director John Huston to the film along with two of Bogart's costars from *THE MALTESE FALCON*, Mary Astor and Sidney Greenstreet. (The picture was completed by the director Vincent Sherman when Huston left for military duty.) Unlike *ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT*, a fairly clumsy amalgam of gangster and espionage clichés, *ACROSS THE PACIFIC* was politically subtle and dramatically sharp, winning critical accolades and earning Warners \$1.3 million.

While *ACROSS THE PACIFIC* was an important star turn for Bogart, it was essentially a B-plus project which, like *THE MALTESE FALCON*, was lifted to A-class status by the talent involved. Bogart's next picture, however, was designed from the outset to be a first-class Warners production. After Wallis bought the rights to "Everybody Comes to Rick's," both Ronald Reagan and George Raft were considered for the role of Rick Blaine. But by April 1942, Wallis had decided on Bogart for the picture, now titled *CASABLANCA*, and had signed Ingrid Bergman to costar.<sup>26</sup>

With Bogart and Bergman cast, Wallis sent the script into rewrites, and the story underwent extensive changes, as mentioned earlier. As the picture neared production, Wallis had various writers work on different aspects of the script—all of them involving Bogart's hero. Casey Robinson, who specialized in romantic melodrama, worked (uncredited) on the Rick-Ilsa love story. The Epstein twins, Julius and Philip, known for light comedy (and just off a rewrite of *YANKEE DOODLE DANDY*), did a complete dialogue polish and also worked on the rapport between Rick and Louis Renault, the local prefect of police (played by Claude Rains). Meanwhile, Howard Koch (*THE SEA HAWK*, *SERGEANT YORK*, etc.) reworked Bogart's character with an emphasis on both the action and the political intrigue.

*CASABLANCA* was shot during the summer of 1942, with Michael Curtiz directing, and was completed in November at a final cost of \$878,000. Warner and Wallis considered adding a tag scene to clarify the fate of Rick and Louis, but those plans were abandoned when the Allies began Operation Torch, a massive offensive in North Africa in the very region where the film was set. So Warners rushed the picture through postproduction for a Thanksgiving premiere, clarifying the ending simply by redubbing the final exchange between Rick and Louis as they walk away in the fog; Wallis himself reportedly came up with Bogart's immortal closing line, "Louis, this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship."<sup>27</sup> *CASABLANCA* officially opened in January 1943, just as Roosevelt and Churchill began a series of summit talks in Casablanca, further exploiting the picture's topical appeal. *CASABLANCA* became one of Warners' all-time biggest hits, returning \$4.1 million, winning an Oscar for best picture, and confirming Bogart's status as an A-class star.

Bogart followed *CASABLANCA* in 1943 with two straightforward combat films, *ACTION IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC* and, on loan to Columbia, *SAHARA*. The former celebrated the U.S. merchant marine convoys, and the latter celebrated the Allies' efforts in North Africa; both reinforced Bogart's wartime persona as the hard-bitten realist who realigns his rugged individualism with the collective war effort and emerges as a natural leader in the process. Both pictures were hits: *ACTION IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC* returned \$2.6 million to Warners, while *SAHARA* was Columbia's top release of the year, netting \$2.3 million. Those pictures, along with *CASABLANCA*, vaulted Bogart from twenty-fifth to

seventh in the 1943 Exhibitors' Poll—the first of seven straight years for Bogart in the top ten.

Wallis developed Bogart's next Warners picture, *PASSAGE TO MARSEILLES* (1944), as a follow-up to *CASABLANCA*, reuniting Bogart, Rains, Lorre, Greenstreet, and Curtiz. But the story, depicting a group of disparate losers who escape Devil's Island to join the Free French, was an oddly uneven and disjointed affair which devoted far too little time to Bogart's character. While engaging in retrospect as a consummate example of what might be termed "Warners noir," with its convoluted time frame, exotic darkness, and cynical outlook, *PASSAGE TO MARSEILLES* was Bogart's only wartime disappointment.

Bogart's career then took a rather dramatic turn, owing in large part to Hal Wallis's departure for Paramount and Bogart's collaboration with Howard Hawks on his next two pictures, *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT* (1944) and *THE BIG SLEEP* (1946). Each picture refined the Bogart persona, and each displayed an ideal melding of the Bogart, Hawks, and Warners styles: they are taut, economical thrillers whose action, pace, and penchant for violence are offset by elements of comedy and romance and by a wry self-awareness that typified both Bogart and Hawks at their best. Crucial to this effect was Lauren Bacall, who costarred with Bogart in both pictures.

The first of the Hawks-Bogart pictures was initiated in 1943 when Hawks, after completing *AIR FORCE* for Warners, created an independent company, H-F Productions (with his agent Charles K. Feldman) and purchased the rights to Hemingway's 1937 novel *To Have and Have Not* from Howard Hughes for \$97,000. Hawks then sold the



Bogart and Bacall in one of the additional scenes done to build up Bacall's role and the romantic dimension of *THE BIG SLEEP* (1946).

property to Warners for \$108,500 plus 20 percent of the film's gross up to \$3 million, and he agreed to produce and direct the picture.<sup>28</sup> H-F also sold Warners the contract of Hawks's 19-year-old discovery, Lauren Bacall.<sup>29</sup> Hawks brought in William Faulkner and Jules Furthman for the adaptation. Furthman had scripted *ONLY ANGELS HAVE WINGS* for Hawks in 1939 as well as several Von Sternberg-Dietrich films, and at Hawks's behest, he modeled Bacall's character on the surly, sultry Dietrich persona.<sup>30</sup>

Ostensibly an adaptation of Hemingway's best-selling novel, *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT* was also indebted to *CASABLANCA*. Bosley Crowther in the *New York Times* described it as "'Casablanca' moved west into the somewhat less hectic Caribbean," a transformation accomplished "with surprisingly comparable effect."<sup>31</sup> Like *CASABLANCA* (and unlike the novel), *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT* was a romantic intrigue, with a war-related backdrop, whose enigmatic hero finds love and sheds his cynical neutrality to take on the nefarious Nazis. Again the action is set in an exotic foreign locale and centers on a saloon, replete with ceiling fans, sunlight slanting in through the venetian blinds, and an array of colorful characters, including a piano-playing sidekick and an overweight heavy. Despite the similarities, several qualities of *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT*, particularly the Bogart-Bacall relationship, set the film off rather dramatically from *CASABLANCA*. As with many Hawks-directed thrillers and action films, *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT* is an offbeat romantic comedy involving a self-reliant, resolutely unattached male and a wisecracking, aggressive woman who violates his space and his all-male group, eventually breaking down his defenses and winning both his affection and his respect. Bacall played the role to perfection, evoking from Bogart an emotional depth that he had not previously displayed on-screen—not even opposite Bergman in *CASABLANCA*.

While *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT* was still in production, Hawks and Bogart decided to follow it with a detective thriller in the mold of *THE MALTESE FALCON*—only this time with Bogart playing Raymond Chandler's hard-boiled private eye, Philip Marlowe. H-F Productions purchased the screen rights to Chandler's 1939 novel *The Big Sleep*, and Hawks set Faulkner to work on the adaptation with the newcomer Leigh Brackett (while Furthman remained on *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT*).<sup>32</sup> By late fall, the Hemingway adaptation was completed and released, and in December 1944 the Hawks unit opened production on *THE BIG SLEEP*.

Hawks and company initially treated *THE BIG SLEEP* as a straight detective story and Bogart vehicle, with Bacall relegated to a supporting role. But by the time Hawks finished shooting in the spring of 1945, the full impact of Bacall's popular appeal and of the Bogart-Bacall chemistry in *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT* had become evident. The earlier picture was a major hit (\$3.65 million in rentals), Bacall had been dubbed "The Look" by the press, and the gossip columns were rife with stories of Bogart's breakup with his wife, Mayo Methot, and his plans to marry Bacall. (They wed in May 1945.) Hawks and Jack Warner were acutely aware of the opportunity missed in *THE BIG SLEEP*, especially after test audiences responded poorly to preview screenings in early summer. Warner decided to postpone release and to rush out *CONFIDENTIAL AGENT* (1945), a war-related spy story starring Bacall and Charles Boyer (her only film during the 1940s without Bogart). That gave Bacall additional exposure and gave Hawks time to rework *THE BIG SLEEP* as a Bogart-Bacall picture.

Actually, the strategy for Hawks's overhaul of *THE BIG SLEEP* had been outlined by the film critic (and later screenwriter) James Agee in his November 1944 review of *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT* in *The Nation*: "The best of the picture has no plot at all, but is a leisurely series of mating duels between Humphrey Bogart at his most proficient and

the very entertaining, very adolescent new blonde, Lauren Bacall."<sup>33</sup> That observation turned out to be a blueprint for the later overhaul of *THE BIG SLEEP*. As Hawks's partner Charles Feldman explained in a letter to Jack Warner: "Bacall is more insolent than Bogart [in *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT*], and this very insolence endeared her both in the public's and the critic's mind." The retakes, he said, would "give the girl [Bacall] at least three or four additional scenes with Bogart of the insolent and provocative nature that she had in *To Have and Have Not*."<sup>34</sup>

The added scenes effectively recast *THE BIG SLEEP* as an offbeat romantic intrigue and undoubtedly improved its box office, which netted Warners \$3 million after the film's release in early 1946. In fact, the Bogart-Bacall courtship—itsself tinged with intrigue, since the girl's allegiance to Marlowe is uncertain until late in the story—may have provided the film with an element of coherence that was otherwise sorely lacking. As Hawks and others have related, the writers had considerable difficulty with Chandler's convoluted plot, as did critics and audiences.<sup>35</sup> The love story made perfect sense, of course, and countered the pervasive darkness and brutality of the film, which was still among the more nihilistic thrillers of the period.

*THE BIG SLEEP* provided a fitting vehicle to carry Bogart out of the war years, just as *THE MALTESE FALCON* had fittingly ushered them in. Indeed, there was a remarkable symmetry to Bogart's career in the early 1940s: his prewar portrayal of the detective Sam Spade and his postwar Philip Marlowe effectively bracketed the war era, while Bogart opened and closed the war period itself with two other oddly symmetrical films, *CASABLANCA* and *TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT*. These in turn bracketed several straightforward combat films done in 1943, in the midst of the war. There is a linear trajectory here as well, a clear development of Bogart's screen persona. *THE MALTESE FALCON* and *CASABLANCA* firmly established Bogart's persona just when Cagney and Robinson left Warners, and they also distinguished Bogart from Warners' other top male star, Errol Flynn. Whereas Flynn was vigorous and athletic, Bogart was contemplative and a bit sedentary. Flynn was hyperkinetic; Bogart was quintessentially "cool." Flynn flashed youthful good looks and exuded sexuality; Bogart was rumpled and pushing middle age. (Bogart was, in fact, ten years older than Flynn.) Flynn was in constant, breathless motion; Bogart was a figure in repose, hunched in a trenchcoat with a cigarette dangling from his lips. Bogart also proved in *ACTION IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC* and *SAHARA* to be more adaptable to the war film than Flynn, while he could hold his own in more romantic roles as well.

The intervening war films as well as his rapport with Bacall were crucial to the maturation of Bogart's screen persona, motivating a commitment to something beyond himself while reinforcing the viability of his personal code. Bogart's persona reached full maturity in the Hawks films, which were more than a mere rehash of *THE MALTESE FALCON* and *CASABLANCA*, despite the similarities. Thus, the vaguely earnest and aggressive Sam Spade gave way to the postwar Philip Marlowe—older, more subdued, and more world-weary, yet with a sense of humor, a deeper resolve, and the capacity for genuine affection. Bogart, in other words, had become "Bogie."

### Genres and Production Trends

Few periods in Hollywood's history were as overtly genre-oriented as World War II; war themes permeated a range of established genres and the war film steadily coalesced into two dominant cycles: the combat film and the home-front drama. These war-related



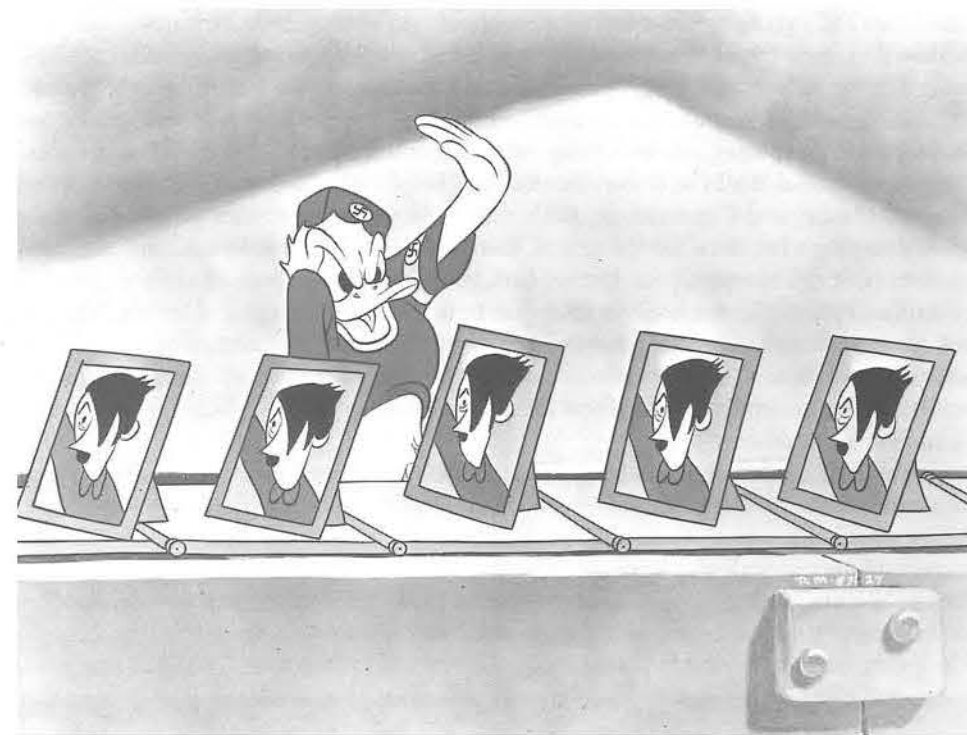
cycles (treated in detail later in this chapter) were distinct, but the fact is that virtually all of Hollywood's major genres were affected by the war and might in some way be included under the general rubric of "war film." This can be said not only of feature films but of Hollywood's secondary products as well—serials, newsreels, live-action shorts, and cartoons. In fact, the cartoon underwent a particularly swift and effective transformation after Pearl Harbor.

Within weeks of the entry of the United States into the war, both Warners and Disney began work on war-related animation projects, which were released in January 1942: "Any Bonds Today?," a two-minute Bugs Bunny cartoon produced by Warners' Leon Schlesinger unit for the Treasury Department; and Disney's "The New Spirit," a Donald Duck cartoon designed, as one Treasury official put it, "to stimulate public interest in the payment of income taxes."<sup>36</sup> The Disney cartoon was the more ambitious and effective of the two, largely because of Disney's investment of resources as it converted its entire operation to war production. It also established Donald Duck as the key figure in Disney's war-related output. Second only to the upbeat, naive Mickey Mouse in the constellation of Disney stars, Donald was deemed more suitable for wartime conversion and thus was featured in a remarkable array of war-related films, from informational cartoons like "The New Spirit" to "good neighbor" films geared to the Latin American market on behalf of the Office of Inter-American Affairs. The latter included not only animated shorts but two featurettes as well, *SALUDOS AMIGOS* (1943) and *THE THREE CABALLEROS* (1945).<sup>37</sup>

The most notable of Disney's wartime efforts was a Donald Duck cartoon produced for the War Department, "Der Fuhrer's Face" (1942), which won an Oscar for best short subject and may have been the single most popular propaganda short produced during the war. In it, Donald dreams he works in a Nazi munitions factory where he must constantly salute images of Hitler and other Axis leaders; he awakens to the comforting sight of a small replica of the Statue of Liberty on his windowsill. "Der Fuhrer's Face" and other Disney cartoons did terrific business, and in fact Disney led the Exhibitors' Poll of top moneymaking shorts in 1944.<sup>38</sup>

The other studios' animation units turned their attention to the war more sporadically than Disney, although Hollywood's overall war-related cartoon output was indeed substantial. Paramount's Fleischer unit featured Popeye in such films as "You're a Sap, Mr. Jap" (1942) and "Spinach fer Britain" (1943). In 1942, 20th Century-Fox's Terrytoon unit created "Mighty Mouse," an animated superhero who battles Axis foes in numerous cartoons. MGM's Hanna-Barbera unit won an Oscar in 1943 for their patriotic Tom and Jerry cartoon "Yankee Doodle Mouse"—although by far the more popular wartime cartoons released by MGM involved a cycle based on "Red Hot Riding Hood" (1943) featuring the oversexed Wolf and the alluring showgirl Red. Created by Tex Avery, the Wolf-Red cartoons occasionally deal directly with the war, as in "Swing Shift Cinderella" (1943). But regardless of plot, the lecherous Wolf and voluptuous Red proved remarkably popular with wartime audiences—and especially with military personnel.<sup>39</sup>

Warners' Schlesinger unit was, next to Disney, the most aggressive and successful in its cartoon treatment of the war, the enemy, and the home front. The humor was more scatological, self-reflexive, and irreverent, and thus as propaganda the Warners cartoons were somewhat more complex than their Disney counterparts. The Schlesinger unit, notably the animation directors Friz Freling, Bob Clampett, and Chuck Jones (along with Tex Avery and Frank Tashlin, before their wartime departures to MGM and Fox, respectively), cranked out a remarkable spate of war-related cartoons, from parodies of



Donald Duck's nightmare in Disney's Oscar-winning 1942 cartoon, "Der Fuhrer's Face."

the studio's features, such as "Confusions of a Nutzy Spy" to parodies of their established cartoon stars, such as "The Ducktators," featuring web-footed versions of Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito. Bob Clampett created a surrealist pro-Soviet piece, "Russian Rhapsody," wherein a grotesque caricature of Hitler is assaulted by "Gremlins from the Kremlin." Bugs takes on the Germans in "Herr Meets Hare" and the Japanese in "Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips," while Daffy Duck dodges a ubiquitous draft-notice server in "Draftee Daffy."<sup>40</sup>

Bugs also made occasional cameo appearances in the "Private Snafu" cartoons, which Warners and MGM produced for *Army-Navy Screen* magazine. These had modest production values (black-and-white film stock, running times of three to four minutes, etc.), were shown only to military personnel, and were far more raunchy and risqué than theatrical cartoons. Thus, the Private Snafu cartoons gave Hollywood animators the opportunity to experiment with the political, sexual, and topical humor of cartoons, while they gave millions of adult moviegoers a very different cartoon experience. But these experiments were scarcely as significant, finally, as was the retooling of mainstream animated fare, which effectively recast the wartime experience for adults and children alike in the distinctive formal and narrative logic of the Hollywood cartoon.

In terms of features, the musical was the established form most effectively enlisted into the war effort, primarily in a cycle of musical "revues," which were little more than filmed versions of military stage shows. The single biggest hit of the war era, *THIS IS*

THE ARMY (1943), not only sparked this trend but dominated the entire war era. Produced onstage by the War Department as an all-soldier musical revue with music by Irving Berlin, "This Is the Army" premiered on Broadway on the Fourth of July in 1942 and was a huge hit. Warner Bros. purchased the screen rights later that year and began production in early 1943, while the stage version continued to play to record audiences. The producer Hal Wallis and the director Michael Curtiz (between stints on *YANKEE DOODLE DANDY* and *CASABLANCA*) fleshed out the play's paper-thin plot about army recruits staging a big show for the troops, incorporating about a dozen second-rank studio stars (George Murphy, Joan Leslie, Alan Hale, Ronald Reagan, et al.) along with a few cultural icons like the boxer-soldier Joe Louis. On both stage and screen, *THIS IS THE ARMY* ran uninterrupted throughout the war. Warners' film version returned \$8.5 million in rentals, and the stage show enjoyed a thirty-nine-month run from July 1942 to October 1945, generating \$19 million for army-navy relief and playing to an estimated 2.5 million servicemen.<sup>41</sup>

The studios turned out revue musicals in record numbers during the war. Most of them were laden with top talent but very thin on plot, and what plot there was invariably involved the war or the military. Widely disparaged or dismissed by critics, the wartime revue musicals also were among the most popular and commercially successful films of the era, and they were relatively inexpensive films by musical standards. The



A scene from Warners' version of *THIS IS THE ARMY* (1943), the most successful wartime musical. At far left, in uniform, is boxer Joe Louis.

most successful revue musicals were Paramount's *STAR SPANGLED RHYTHM* (1942) with Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Dorothy Lamour, Veronica Lake, Alan Ladd, Cecil B. DeMille, et al.; Warners' *THANK YOUR LUCKY STARS* (1943) with Eddie Cantor, Dennis Morgan, Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart, Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Ann Sheridan, et al.; UA's *STAGE DOOR CANTEEN* (1943) with Katharine Hepburn, Paul Muni, Harpo Marx, Benny Goodman, Count Basie, Edgar Bergen, et al.; MGM's *THOUSANDS CHEER* (1943) with Kathryn Grayson, Gene Kelly, Margaret O'Brien, Mickey Rooney, Judy Garland, June Allyson, Lena Horne, et al.; and Warners' *HOLLYWOOD CANTEEN* (1944) with Bette Davis, Joan Crawford, the Andrews Sisters, Roy Rogers, Ida Lupino, et al. Some revue-oriented musicals like *FOUR JILLS IN A JEEP* and *HERE COME THE WAVES* (both 1944) developed quasi-plausible characters and plot lines, invariably blending comedy and romance, as in the backstage and show musicals of the 1930s. But as with their wartime musical-revue counterparts, the climactic show invariably lapsed into an extended stage-bound revue.

Musicals generally were deemed escapist fare by exhibitors and industry executives, whether they were related to the war or not. Thus, the military revue musicals provided something of an ideal screen formula: they supported the war effort while giving audiences the essential escapist elements of comedy, music, and romance. These elements were evident in traditional musicals as well, particularly the historical period musical—a prewar trend which accelerated during the war. The most successful of these was MGM's *MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS* (1944), which charted the experiences of a turn-of-the-century midwestern family, culminating in the St. Louis World's Fair.

Fox had been turning out period musicals since before the war and continued to exploit the cycle with films like *CONEY ISLAND* (1943), *DIAMOND HORSESHOE* (1945), and *STATE FAIR* (1945). Bosley Crowther in his *New York Times* review of *CONEY ISLAND* noted, "Twentieth Century-Fox has a formula for high, wide and fancy musical films which seldom fail." The basic requirements of the formula, wrote Crowther, were a "locale and period of glitter and gaudiness," several standard tunes "of a certain nostalgic quality," and "a pat little love triangle" centering on "a lady singer"—usually Betty Grable.<sup>42</sup> This formula signaled a merger of sorts with the biopic, and in fact a number of wartime period musicals centered on the careers of vaudeville, ragtime, and Tin Pan Alley stars. Warners' *YANKEE DOODLE DANDY* (1942) typified the trend and was among the biggest hits of the era. Other musical biopics were *DIXIE* (1943), on the career of Dan Emmett; *STORMY WEATHER* (1943), an all-black musical based on the career of Bill Robinson; *SHINE ON, HARVEST MOON* (1944), on Nora Bayes; and *INCENDIARY BLONDE* (1945), on the nightclub queen Texas Guinan.

While musicals made up a fairly limited proportion of Hollywood's overall output, they generated a sizable share of its income. Twenty-five of the seventy wartime releases earning \$3 million or more at the box office were musicals, including three of the top ten (*THIS IS THE ARMY*, *MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS*, and *YANKEE DOODLE DANDY*). Also among the ten biggest wartime hits were Leo McCarey's sentimental quasi-musicals with Bing Crosby, *THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S* and *GOING MY WAY*. As in the prewar era, the studios developed star-genre musical formulas around key personnel—Betty Grable at Fox; Bing Crosby and Betty Hutton at Paramount; Judy Garland, Gene Kelly, and Kathryn Grayson at MGM; and Rita Hayworth at Columbia (notably with Astaire in *YOU WERE NEVER LOVELIER* in 1942, and with Gene Kelly in *COVER GIRL* in 1944). MGM also devised a musical formula for the swimmer Esther Williams—notably in *BATHING BEAUTY* (1944) and *THRILL OF A ROMANCE* (1945)—reminiscent of Fox's ice-skating



musicals with Sonja Henie, whose career was winding down during the war. The genre's wartime currency also was evident at the low end of the spectrum: low-budget musical production surged during the war. While the dominant trend was the ever-popular singing cowboy pictures (with Republic's Roy Rogers succeeding Gene Autry as the top singing B-Western star), the period also saw an increase in musical output by B units at Fox and Paramount.

The Western genre ran directly counter to the musical in output and income during the war. The Western led all genres in sheer numbers, but that output included very few high-end productions or top moneymakers. In fact, the prewar resurgence of the A-Western all but ceased during the war, owing especially to restrictions on sets and location shooting, as well as to the general shift of male action-adventure production to the combat film. The seventy leading moneymakers included only two Westerns: Howard Hughes's much-troubled Jane Russell vehicle *THE OUTLAW* (produced in 1940–1941 but not released until 1943, with most of its earnings coming after the war), and a 1945 Errol Flynn picture, *SAN ANTONIO*. Two other A-Westerns of note were *THEY DIED WITH THEIR BOOTS ON*, Warners' 1942 Custer biopic featuring a romanticized account of the Little Big Horn massacre (giving it considerable resonance in that year of Wake Island, Bataan, and Corregidor), and *THE OX-BOW INCIDENT*, a dark and somber study of mob violence and social injustice produced by Zanuck and Fox in 1943.



Errol Flynn as George Armstrong Custer in a resonant 1942 "last-stand" drama, *THEY DIED WITH THEIR BOOTS ON*.

These two films, along with *THE OUTLAW*, were actually quite important to the Western genre's evolution. *THEY DIED WITH THEIR BOOTS ON* set the stage for the post-war cavalry film, a fruitful melding of war film and Western; *THE OUTLAW* was the first A-Western to deal directly and overtly with issues of sexuality and along with *THE OX-BOW INCIDENT* was a precursor to the "adult" and "psychological" Westerns of the post-war era.

While the A-Western saw limited wartime action, B-Westerns continued to flourish. As with Hollywood's overall output, B-Western production declined during the war—steadily falling from 130 in 1941 to only 80 in 1945. But low-budget Westerns still consistently accounted for one-quarter of all features produced in Hollywood.<sup>43</sup> Out of a total of 572 Westerns produced during the war, only 38 came from the five majors—and over half of those were from RKO, which continued B-picture production longer than the rest of the Big Five. UA released 18 Westerns during the war, most of them Hopalong Cassidy series pictures picked up in the deal with Paramount. Columbia and Universal continued heavy B-Western production, turning out 53 and 35 wartime Westerns, respectively. Virtually all of the remaining 400-odd Westerns released from 1942 to 1945 were from the three minors; Republic's Roy Rogers pictures (*SONS OF THE PIONEERS*, 1943; *KING OF THE COWBOYS*, 1943; *THE YELLOW ROSE OF TEXAS*, 1944; *DON'T FENCE ME IN*, 1945) and occasional John Wayne Westerns (*IN OLD CALIFORNIA*, 1942; *DAKOTA*, 1945) were by far the most successful.

The historical drama and period biopic suffered a wartime decline along with the A-Western, and for many of the same reasons, especially restrictions on location shooting and set construction. Another reason for the biopic's wartime decline was Hollywood's tendency to shy away from any social issues except those related to the war. Thus, biographies of social crusaders, so prevalent in the 1930s, were relatively rare during the war, with a few notable exceptions like MGM's *MADAME CURIE* in 1943. The musical biography discussed earlier was the most prevalent biopic form during the war, and it illustrated the biopic's wartime penchant for escapist subjects. In fact, the most successful nonmusical biopic of the era was *THE PRIDE OF THE YANKEES* (1942), a baseball picture that also signaled the tendency of wartime biopics to avoid heavy social subjects.

Yet another sign of this tendency was the commercial failure of Darryl Zanuck's pet wartime project, *WILSON* (1944), despite tremendous promotional buildup, generally favorable reviews, and half a dozen major Oscar nominations. After returning to Fox from the Signal Corps in July 1943, Zanuck began working on a project he hoped would recapture and revive Woodrow Wilson's League of Nations crusade. Eschewing a star-vehicle approach, Zanuck cast a little-known, Canadian-born, British character actor, Alexander Knox, in the title role.<sup>44</sup> *WILSON* was a prestige production in every sense of the word, with elaborate sets replicating the House chamber and the Wilson White House, and a final cost of about \$4 million.<sup>45</sup>

*WILSON* was enthusiastically supported by the Office of War Information, but before its initial release Zanuck was informed by the War Department that the picture would not be shown on military bases and camps because of the Soldier Vote Act, which prohibited any media materials "considered to have political content."<sup>46</sup> This restriction was deemed a political setback of little commercial importance, especially after the picture's strong road-show performance. *WILSON* quickly lost momentum in general release, however, earning a respectable \$3.1 million but failing to return a profit or secure a best-picture statuette.<sup>47</sup> Zanuck considered *WILSON* one of the major disappointments of his career, and its lackluster performance also convinced him to drop plans to adapt

Wendell Willkie's best-selling political memoir, *One World*, purchased in July 1943 (for \$100,000) just as Fox began preproduction on *WILSON*.<sup>48</sup>

An offbeat period biopic that did score for Fox during the war was *THE SONG OF BERNADETTE*, the surprise hit of 1943 that made an overnight star of Jennifer Jones (on loan from David Selznick). Based on the popular "fictionalized biography" of the peasant girl who had visions of the Virgin Mary at Lourdes, the picture (under the direction of Henry King, who also directed *WILSON*) displayed simple verities and modest production values and did particularly well with female audiences.

*THE SONG OF BERNADETTE* signaled a general wartime surge in women's pictures, which ranged from lavish adaptations and period films to contemporary romantic and family melodramas, and which clearly were keyed to the social, industrial, and economic conditions of the time. An important factor was the wartime segregation of male and female audiences; the women's pictures did well at home but were rarely played in military camps. Indeed, the GIs' idea of a "woman's picture" featured pinup stars like Betty Grable, Rita Hayworth, and Dorothy Lamour, who rarely appeared in the kind of wartime melodramas targeted at female moviegoers.

As in the prewar era, women's films during the war focused on female protagonists suffering choices and making sacrifices, and the films tended to fall into five categories: maternal dramas, love stories, working-girl stories, Gothic thrillers, and biopics. Many women's films were quite timely; the war and related social conditions provided ready-made themes and conflicts, particularly for the maternal and romantic dramas. These included wartime home-front dramas like *MRS. MINIVER* and *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY*; historical sagas centering on powerful matriarchs, like *THE VALLEY OF DECISION*, *MRS. PARKINGTON*, and *A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN* (1945); and a few multigenerational or highly elliptical stories which managed to incorporate both a historical and a war angle, such as *RANDOM HARVEST*, *MR. SKEFFINGTON* (1944), and *THE WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER* (1944).

Some of the numerous melodramas about separated, soon-to-be separated, or otherwise troubled couples were historical or contemporary stories not directly related to the war—as in two 1942 Bette Davis pictures, *IN THIS OUR LIFE* and *NOW, VOYAGER*. In a related vein, *MILDRED PIERCE* and *OLD ACQUAINTANCE* (1943) focused on female protagonists whose choices of a career or the company of other women carried wartime resonances as well, although the war was not invoked in either film. Indeed, Hollywood's adaptation of the woman's picture to the war effort was so effective, as Linda Williams notes in her analysis of *MILDRED PIERCE*, that domestic melodramas could be "about" the female war experience—the working and economic conditions, relationships with husbands and lovers (absent or otherwise), and so on—without even acknowledging the war in the narrative.<sup>49</sup>

The majority of successful romantic melodramas made during the war, however, dealt directly with the war's impact on women and on couples—as in such 1945 hits as *I'LL BE SEEING YOU*, *THE CLOCK*, and *THE ENCHANTED COTTAGE*. The working-girl dramas often involved both war-strained romances and war-related female labor. *TENDER COMRADE* (1943), for instance, focuses on women war-plant workers sharing an apartment and the pain of loss and separation, and *SO PROUDLY WE HAIL* (1943) honors military nurses serving and dying with their male military counterparts in the Pacific. Of the various women's subgenres, only the Gothic thrillers consistently avoided the war, although here again hasty marriages and psychologically scarred male protagonists had interesting wartime implications.



Among the more successful home-front dramas was *TENDER COMRADE* (1943), starring Ginger Rogers (center).

As discussed earlier, the wartime woman's picture was dominated by Bette Davis and Greer Garson, both of whom worked almost exclusively in that genre and had a penchant for maternal and romantic melodramas. Joan Fontaine and Ingrid Bergman formed a kind of second rank, specializing in Gothic thrillers such as *SUSPICION* (1941) and *GASLIGHT* (1944). Other female stars who specialized in women's pictures included Claudette Colbert, Ginger Rogers, Barbara Stanwyck, and Dorothy McGuire, all of whom could lighten up these otherwise weighty emotional dramas and also worked successfully in wartime comedy.

Screen comedy thrived during the war, sustained largely by a very real need for diversion and by the exhibitors' continual clamoring for escapist product. Hollywood delivered in considerable quantity, although very few major hits were straight (nonmusical) comedies. In fact, Warners' *CHRISTMAS IN CONNECTICUT* (1945) was the only wartime comedy to earn over \$3 million. Still, the mid-range of studio output was dominated by comedy, particularly romantic and screwball comedies, male buddy comedies, and home-front comedies.

The year 1942 marked the wartime peak for screen comedy, and especially for the romantic and screwball strains. The biggest comedy hit of 1942 was *ROAD TO MOROCCO*, the third Hope-Crosby-Lamour junket. Among the other notable 1942 comedies were Preston Sturges's *THE PALM BEACH STORY*, with Colbert's delightfully



unruly woman opposite Joel McCrea; *THE MALE ANIMAL*, a campus comedy about socialism and football starring Henry Fonda and Olivia de Havilland, written and directed by Elliott Nugent (from his play); and two George Stevens-directed comedies, *THE TALK OF THE TOWN*, with Cary Grant, Jean Arthur, and Ronald Colman, and *WOMAN OF THE YEAR*, the initial Tracy-Hepburn pairing and easily their best comedy until *ADAM'S RIB* in 1949. Capra's *ARSENIC AND OLD LACE* with Cary Grant and Priscilla Lane also was "in the can" and ready for release in 1942—and in fact was released to servicemen in early 1943—but was shelved by Warners until 1944.

Interestingly enough, none of these 1942 comedies directly involved the war effort, although all of them treated the anxieties and conflicts related to the changing gender roles and sexual politics that were endemic to the period. One of the few 1942 comedies that did take on a war-related subject was *THE MAJOR AND THE MINOR*, Billy Wilder's debut as a Paramount writer-director; it costarred Ray Milland as a befuddled and unhappily betrothed military officer on a cross-country train trip who finds himself allied with Ginger Rogers, who is passing as a child because she cannot afford the full fare. While not quite up to Wilder's later standards, the picture was a mild success, suggesting that audiences might take to war-related comedy. Paramount reinforced the point with *MY FAVORITE BLONDE*, a 1942 war-related spy comedy starring Bob Hope—the first in a series of spy spoofs, including *THEY GOT ME COVERED* in 1943, playing off Hope's cowardly-hero persona. While Hollywood's output of screen comedies continued during the war, the overall quality (and critical accolades) fell sharply after 1942, in part because the established comedy directors abandoned the genre after 1942 for the duration of the war. Hawks turned exclusively to action films and Wilder to drama, Lubitsch took ill, and both Capra and Stevens joined the service.

One director who stayed with the genre was Preston Sturges, whose meteoric rise continued during the war and peaked with two 1944 home-front farces, *HAIL THE CONQUERING HERO* and *THE MIRACLE OF MORGAN'S CREEK*. Those two comedies were in something of a class by themselves during the later war years. Both were all-out comic assaults on motherhood, home, family, hero worship, the military, small-town America, and ultimately the very logic of the home front itself. *HAIL THE CONQUERING HERO* starred Eddie Bracken as a Marine Corps washout (due to chronic hay fever) who is hustled home and passed off as a war hero by a group of well-meaning marines on a five-day pass. *THE MIRACLE OF MORGAN'S CREEK* costarred Bracken as a tongue-tied hick and Betty Hutton as a hapless girl he befriends after she finds herself married and pregnant—the result of a drunken frolic with a now-departed soldier whose face and name escape her. Both films sent the PCA and the OWI into paroxysms, while the critics raved and Sturges parlayed his success into an independent venture with Howard Hughes.

Rounding out Hollywood's wartime comedies were the male-buddy escapades of Abbott and Costello, Hope and Crosby, and Laurel and Hardy. Most of these were aggressively escapist farces and genre parodies, treating the wartime male ethos only by radical indirection. Crosby also strolled amiably through *GOING MY WAY* and *THE BELLS OF ST. MARY'S*, two contemporary religious fables which blended elements of comedy, sentimental melodrama, and the musical. The huge success of these latter films, along with *THE SONG OF BERNADETTE* and *KEYS OF THE KINGDOM* (1944), confirmed that Hollywood was undergoing something of a religious cycle during the war. These rather ponderous religious dramas were complemented, in turn, by such offbeat afterlife comedy-dramas as Lubitsch's *HEAVEN CAN WAIT* (1943) and MGM's Spencer Tracy-Van Johnson hit, *A GUY NAMED JOE*.



In *HAIL THE CONQUERING HERO* (1944), woeful Marine Corps washout Eddie Bracken's chance meeting with a group of soldiers home on leave has comic-chaotic consequences.

Another noteworthy but limited wartime cycle involved children and animals, spurred largely by the success in 1943 of the MGM Schary unit's *LASSIE COME HOME*, costarring Donald Crisp, Elizabeth Taylor, and Roddy McDowall, and Fox's *MY FRIEND FLICKA*, starring McDowall. Both bred offspring in 1945: *SON OF LASSIE* and *THUNDERHEAD—SON OF FLICKA*. Like their predecessors, these were sentimental family comedy-dramas shot in Technicolor with an emphasis on action scenes and outdoor cinematography. They were near-A's whose solid production values compensated for their second-rank stars and running times of under 90 minutes. MGM actually upgraded the form that same year with *NATIONAL VELVET* (1944), which was based on a best-selling children's book, featured a top star (Mickey Rooney), and ran 125 minutes. The result was an A-class hit which earned \$4.25 million—and thus outperformed all three of Rooney's wartime Hardy pictures, an MGM family cycle that was clearly fading.

In a darker vein, Universal sustained its signature horror films during the war, primarily through B-grade formula rehash with Lon Chaney Jr., who starred in an incredible nineteen pictures from 1942 to 1945. Most of Universal's reformulations were utterly predictable: the 1932 classic *THE MUMMY*, for example, begat *THE MUMMY'S HAND* (1940), *THE MUMMY'S TOMB* (1942), *THE MUMMY'S GHOST* (1944), and *THE MUMMY'S CURSE* (1944). The studio rehashed its *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and *Wolf Man* franchises with comparable titles and variations. Universal's one significant wartime innovation

with these stock horror figures was the recombination of its horror subgenres in *FRANKENSTEIN MEETS THE WOLF MAN* (1943), *HOUSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* (1944), and *HOUSE OF DRACULA* (1945). Each of these so-called reunion pictures increased the number (and variation) of monsters, mad scientists, and miscreants on-screen, thus providing a remarkable study in the logic and textual limits of Universal's horror formulas. The studio also turned out an occasional A-class horror film, such as the 1943 Technicolor remake of *PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* starring Claude Rains.

The most innovative and influential horror films during the war era were produced not at Universal but at RKO by the newly formed Val Lewton unit. A former poet, novelist, and screenwriter, and recently a story editor for David Selznick, Lewton joined RKO in 1942 to produce low-budget thrillers. Working with the directors Jacques Tourneur, Robert Wise, and Mark Robson, Lewton produced ten pictures during the war, including *CAT PEOPLE* (1942), *I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE*, *THE LEOPARD MAN*, *THE SEVENTH VICTIM* (1943), *THE CURSE OF THE CAT PEOPLE* (1944), *THE BODY SNATCHER*, and *ISLE OF THE DEAD* (1945). Most of them were modest critical and commercial hits, and several now stand as minor horror classics. All ran about seventy minutes, were shot in black and white, and stressed mood and atmosphere rather than star, story value, or special effects. *CAT PEOPLE*, in fact, managed to be quite frightening without ever showing its "monster." Lewton's earlier productions also brought the horror genre closer to home in that the films were generally set in (or near) the United States.

The fascination with the dark side of America's wartime psyche and the invocation of the female Gothic tradition in Lewton's films evinced another crucial wartime trend—*film noir*. Indeed, although that 1940s period style had its roots in the prewar era and reached full expression after the war, its wartime development was among the more significant and pervasive stylistic trends of the era.

#### CASE STUDY: *Film Noir*

Throughout the 1940s, an increasing number of Hollywood films displayed an incipient darkness in tone, technique, theme, and narrative form, a style that came to be termed *film noir* by postwar French critics. The term had clear associations with *roman noir*, which French literary critics applied to the recent hard-boiled crime fiction and pulp melodramas by American writers like Dashiell Hammett, Raymond Chandler, James M. Cain, and Cornell Woolrich.<sup>50</sup> And in fact this type of fiction was crucial to Hollywood's development of *film noir* through a remarkable cycle of crime thrillers and detective films in the mid-1940s—notably *DOUBLE INDEMNITY*, *LAURA*, *MURDER, MY SWEET*, *PHANTOM LADY*, *THE WOMAN IN THE WINDOW*, *THE MASK OF DIMITRIOS*, and *CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY* in 1944; *MILDRED PIERCE*, *CORNERED*, *DETOUR*, *SCARLET STREET*, and *HANGOVER SQUARE* in 1945; and *THE BIG SLEEP*, *THE KILLERS*, *THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE*, and *THE BLUE DAHLIA* in 1946.

The development of *film noir* into a distinctive period style in the 1940s was evident not only in the dark crime thrillers and hard-boiled detective films of the era but in many other genres and cycles as well. As Robert Sklar aptly points out, *film noir* "describes the psychology and the look not simply of a genre, but of a surprisingly pervasive tone in Hollywood films of the 1940s." Sklar finds evidence of this period style in a range of wartime genres and cycles, from the "psychological thrillers" of Alfred Hitchcock and Fritz Lang to Warners' crime dramas and woman's pictures and the "black comedies" of Preston Sturges.<sup>51</sup>

Despite Sklar's admonition, discussions of *film noir* have focused almost exclusively on the male-oriented action and crime films, with their obvious debt to hard-boiled American fiction and to *serie noire* detective novels. As Deborah Thomas notes, "Most critics and viewers share a sense . . . of the essential male-centeredness of *film noir*." But as Thomas and others argue, this orientation overlooks the role that other genres and cycles played in the development of the *noir* style, particularly the female Gothic variation of the woman's picture.<sup>52</sup> While the emergence of *film noir* can be traced to prewar detective films like *THE MALTESE FALCON* and *CITIZEN KANE*, the style was equally pronounced in prewar women's pictures like *REBECCA* and *SUSPICION* and continued in a distinctive wartime cycle of female Gothics such as *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* in 1943; *JANE EYRE*, *GASLIGHT*, and *EXPERIMENT PERILOUS* in 1944; and *SPELLBOUND* in 1945. And like the crime thriller, the female Gothic found new intensity in the postwar era—as evidenced by such 1946 releases as *UNDERCURRENT*, *THE SPIRAL STAIRCASE*, *THE LOCKET*, *DRAGONWYCK*, and *NOTORIOUS*.

As these titles suggest, two key figures in the emergence of the *noir*-style female Gothic were David O. Selznick and Alfred Hitchcock. Selznick personally produced two Hitchcock-directed Gothics, *REBECCA* and *SPELLBOUND*. He also loaned Hitchcock and Joan Fontaine to RKO for *SUSPICION*, and in 1945 he sold RKO the *NOTORIOUS* package (including the Hecht-Hitchcock script as well as the services of Hitchcock and Ingrid Bergman). Selznick prepared *JANE EYRE* for Hitchcock but then sold the package (including the script and the services of Fontaine and the director Robert Stevenson) to Fox, which produced the film in 1944. That same year, he loaned Ingrid Bergman and Joseph Cotten to MGM for *GASLIGHT*. And as mentioned earlier, Val Lewton assisted Selznick in preparing *REBECCA* and in packaging *JANE EYRE*, work that clearly influenced his first two RKO productions, *CAT PEOPLE* and *I WALKED WITH A ZOMBIE*, two inventive amalgams of the female Gothic and horror and steeped in the *film noir* style.

The roots of *film noir* can be traced to the Gothic romances of the nineteenth century, the more recent popular fiction of Daphne du Maurier (author of the best-selling *Rebecca* [1938]), and the frequently cited detective fiction of Hammett and Chandler. Important cinematic influences included Josef Von Sternberg's exotic Marlene Dietrich vehicles, the horror and gangster pictures of the 1930s, and period styles in European cinema, especially German expressionism in the 1920s and French poetic realism in the 1930s. The European influence was even more direct through the work of filmmakers who migrated from Europe to Hollywood, notably Wilder, Lang, Hitchcock, Otto Preminger, Robert and Curt Siodmak, Edgar Ulmer, Anatole Litvak, and Julien Duvivier.

*Film noir* was affected by technical and technological developments in the early 1940s as well, especially faster, more sensitive, fine-grain black-and-white film, improved lighting equipment, and coated lenses. A contingent of top cinematographers also played an important role, particularly the monochromatic (black-and-white) specialists who hit their stride in the 1940s, like James Wong Howe, Gregg Toland, John F. Seitz, Lee Garmes, Lucien Ballard, Tony Gaudio, Sol Polito, and John Alton. Moreover, the war-induced confinement to the studio, owing to the myriad restrictions and the demand for production economy and efficiency, led not only to technical invention but to something of a break with the classical film style.

Analyses of *film noir* have tended to treat it in social, psychological, and formal aesthetic terms. Among the more insightful analyses is Paul Schrader's 1972 essay "Notes





Gothic prototypes: Joan Fontaine (with Judith Anderson) in *REBECCA* (1940), and (with Orson Welles) in an adaptation of the cycle's literary "foundation," *JANE EYRE* (1944).

on *Film Noir*," which examines the style in both social and aesthetic terms. Schrader notes that "*film noir* attacked and interpreted its sociological conditions, and . . . created a new artistic world which went beyond a simple sociological reflection, a nightmarish world of American mannerism which was by far more a creation than a reflection."<sup>53</sup> Positing *THE MALTESE FALCON* as the *film noir* prototype, Schrader suggests that "most every dramatic Hollywood film from 1941 to 1953 contains some *noir* elements." He provides an inventory of the "recurring techniques" of *film noir*: most scenes are lit for night; as in German expressionism, oblique and vertical lines are preferred to horizontal; the actors and setting are often given equal lighting emphasis; compositional tension is preferred to physical action; there is an almost Freudian attachment to water (and also to mirrors, windows, and other reflective surfaces); *noir* films have a penchant for voice-over first-person narration which is cynical yet oddly romantic; and often a complex chronological order reinforces a sense of hopelessness and lost time.

David Bordwell argues that *film noir* undercut not only the formal techniques of the period but basic narrative conventions as well—notably in its ambivalent treatment of good and evil and the heroic and the villainous, especially as embodied in the protagonists and antagonists. Bordwell also notes that a fundamental (and often unresolved) antagonism between the principal male and female characters undercuts—through arbitrary, inadequate, or otherwise unsatisfactory "happy endings"—the movies' most basic and cherished narrative operation, the formation of the couple.<sup>54</sup>

While Schrader treats *film noir* in terms of recurring techniques and Bordwell stresses narrative conventions, others have emphasized more subtle or abstract qualities. Sklar, for instance, privileges *noir's* thematic and atmospheric attributes:

The hallmark of *film noir* is its sense of people trapped—trapped in a web of paranoia and fear, unable to tell guilt from innocence, true identity from false. Its villains are attractive and sympathetic, masking greed, misanthropy, malevolence. Its heroes and heroines are weak, confused, susceptible to false impressions. The environment is murky and close, the settings vaguely oppressive. In the end, evil is exposed, though often just barely, and the survival of good remains troubled and ambiguous. (Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* [New York: Random House, 1975], p. 253)

David Cook follows a similar tack, describing *film noir* as a "cinema of moral anxiety" whose films "thrived upon the unvarnished depiction of greed, lust, and cruelty because their basic theme was the depth of human depravity and the utterly unheroic nature of human beings." Cook notes that this style first emerged during the war but reached full maturity only with the paranoia, pessimism, and social angst of the postwar era.<sup>55</sup>

When considering the formal and stylistic qualities of *film noir*, it is scarcely surprising that the detective story has been its privileged domain. In fact, two wartime *noir* classics, *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* and *MILDRED PIERCE*, were adaptations that literally imposed a detective framework on what were essentially romantic melodramas. Both were adapted from salacious potboilers by James M. Cain, and in each film the drama is reconstructed as a detective story through a flashback framework and an investigation format. (*DOUBLE INDEMNITY* was reworked for Paramount by Billy Wilder in collabo-

ration with Raymond Chandler; MILDRED PIERCE was reworked for Warners by various writers and the director Michael Curtiz under the producer Jerry Wald.) The detective structure reinforced the *noir* stylistics and served a number of more practical uses as well. It broadened the potential appeal of the films (especially to male viewers) while retaining the appeal of the novels, provided a more conventional and manageable plot trajectory, and provided a means of mollifying Breen's and the PCA's "compensating moral values" mandate.<sup>56</sup>

Interestingly, critics and historians of 1940s women's pictures have treated the female Gothic in terms quite similar to the detective thriller, although few have related the cycle to the concurrent development of *film noir*. Molly Haskell in *From Reverence to Rape*, for instance, notes the number of wartime women's films wherein "relationships are rooted in fear and suspicion, impotence and inadequacy."<sup>57</sup> Thomas Elsaesser notes that "Hollywood tackled Freudian themes in a particularly 'romantic' or gothic guise, through a cycle of movies inaugurated possibly in Hitchcock's first big American success, *Rebecca*." He finds in these films "an oblique intimation of female frigidity producing strange fantasies of persecution, rape and death—masochistic reveries and nightmares, which cast the husband into the role of sadistic murderer."<sup>58</sup>

Thus, as the two cycles developed during the early 1940s, the female Gothic displayed a remarkable "family resemblance" to the hard-boiled detective film in basic structure, thematic and gender-related concerns, and deployment of *noir* stylistics. Each subgenre's central concerns were gender difference, sexual identity, and the "gender distress" which accompanied the social and cultural disruption of the war and post-war eras. Each had an essentially good although flawed and vulnerable protagonist at odds with a mysterious and menacing sexual other: the *femme noire*, who invariably initiates both the detective's case and an uneasy romance with the hero; the suave, enigmatic husband or lover in the female Gothic, almost always an older man with a past and with something to hide.

In a larger sense, both the hard-boiled detective and the Gothic heroine are at odds with a social milieu that is seen as crass, duplicitous, and amoral. For the Gothic heroine, this conflict is a function of her sexual inexperience and social naïveté—she is an innocent who finds herself in a dark, disturbing world. The detective has "been around" and is in fact a bit seedy and cynical, but there is a commonness and an innocence to his character as well. As Raymond Chandler, in a 1944 essay, said of his hero: "Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid. The detective in this kind of story must be such a man. He is the hero; he is everything. He must be a complete man and a common man and yet an unusual man. He must be, to use a rather weathered phrase, a man of honor."<sup>59</sup>

The plot in both subgenres (the detective's case, the Gothic heroine's courtship and marriage) generally is initiated by the sexual other. It gradually becomes evident to the protagonist—and to the viewer, whose knowledge and "identification" are closely allied to the protagonist—that this motivating figure and object of desire is in fact both duplicitous and possibly deadly. This realization is hardly surprising in the detective film, but when the protagonist of the female Gothic finds out that her spouse has something to hide, what began as a romantic drama is transformed into a detective story and, quite often, into a murder mystery. The protagonist in each becomes obsessed with the past, with the discovery of the truth, and also with surviving an embrace that may prove fatal.

As the search develops, the hero's anxieties increase, as does the potential menace of the sexual other. It is notable, however, that even those female Gothics wherein murders do occur—and even those like *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* and *GASLIGHT* whose male other is in fact a killer—do not simply lapse into a crime-film mode, nor do they focus on the killer being brought to justice. The stakes in the female Gothic remain primarily domestic rather than social: the problems are identified and worked out in interpersonal and familial terms. But like the detective film, the female Gothic builds to a climactic resolution of its conflicts and enigmas—the truth about the mysterious secret, the real motives of the sexual other, the protagonist's survival (and happiness). In both forms, however, the resolution rarely marks a return to complete stability or moral equilibrium. Sexual tensions and uncertainties linger, as do doubts about the larger social milieu.

Invariably, the solution to the detective's case, when there is one, fails to resolve the deeper issues and conflicts at hand or to bring the appropriate culprits to justice. Ultimately, the hard-boiled hero grimly acknowledges his inability to escape or fully redeem his *noir* netherworld, and thus he simply rediscovers what he already knew and would like to forget. He may prevail over the *femme noire* (as in *THE MALTESE FALCON* and *MURDER, MY SWEET*), or she may prove herself to be a genuine love interest after all (as in *LAURA* and *THE BIG SLEEP*). But human contact offers the hero little more than a temporary respite from his own malaise and from the mean streets outside his dingy office, and one can be certain that upon meeting the detective hero again in another film, he will be resolutely alone.



Fred MacMurray is no match for Barbara Stanwyck's femme fatale in *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* (1944).



In that sense, the *noir* detective film was consummately a matter of style—ultimately of the hero's style, which was perfectly suited to his environment. Once allied with the legitimate forces of social order (the police force, the district attorney's office), the detective hero now works alone as a private eye in a decadent urban milieu. His isolation signals a rejection of that milieu and its values, including those of his former employer. A self-styled existentialist, the detective has refined his personal code of honor and justice, realizing that the cops and the courts are as inept and prone to corruption as the criminal element. A cultural middleman, the detective's streetwise savvy and penchant for violence enable him to operate within the urban jungle, while his moral sensibilities and innate idealism align him with the forces of social order. But that very idealism ultimately dooms him to failure, which he accepts with a shrug, lighting another cigarette and returning to his seedy office to await another case.

This conventionally downbeat resolution was countered in the female Gothic, whose heroine not only tends to survive but to attain a new awareness of herself and her world. This outcome was most prevalent in the wartime Gothics, whose penchant for happy endings suggested that the evil at work in the film is simply a function of the heroine's neuroses and/or the diseased mind of a single criminal. The resolution of the female Gothic involves a redemption of sorts—not only of the heroine but of the world as she has come to know and to see it. And thus the frequent observation that the outcome of these films seems rather perfunctory, as if the *noir* stylistics (and all that they represent) could be overcome by a sunlit tag scene and the heroine's return to emotional equilibrium.

The best of the *noir* Gothics, however, manage to turn this convention back on itself, presenting resolutions so rife with irony as to seem positively Brechtian. Consider *SHADOW OF A DOUBT*, which is particularly instructive in its variations on the Gothic formula and the detective film. Scripted by Hitchcock and Thornton Wilder, the latter fresh off his stage success with *Our Town*, *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* was one of the first of the wartime female Gothics to be set not in England but in America; in fact, it was shot almost entirely on location in Santa Rosa, California. The film recasts the marital angle, centering on the dark (and vaguely incestuous) romance between the suave, seductive Uncle Charlie (Joseph Cotten) and his namesake niece (Teresa Wright). On the verge of womanhood and decidedly bored with her middle-class existence, young Charlie welcomes the unexpected arrival of her world-traveler uncle, only to realize that he is a serial killer of wealthy widows and is on the run from the authorities. With that realization, young Charlie steadily descends into darkness and terror, especially once Uncle Charlie realizes she knows the truth and begins engineering her murder as well.

Hitchcock presents young Charlie's descent into the maelstrom in increasingly dark, claustrophobic, and compositionally off-balance visual terms. At one point Uncle Charlie corners her at night in a seedy bar and delivers a veritable testimonial to the world of *film noir*:

You think you know something, don't you? You think you're the clever little girl who knows something. There's so much you don't know. So much. What do you know, really? You're just an ordinary little girl in an ordinary little town. You wake up every morning of your life and you know perfectly well there's nothing in the world to trouble you. You go through your ordi-

nary little day and at night you sleep your untroubled, ordinary little sleep filled with peaceful stupid dreams. And I brought you nightmares. . . .

How do you know what the world is like? Do you know the world is a foul sty? Do you know if you ripped the fronts off houses you'd find swine? The world's a hell. What does it matter what happens in it?

Young Charlie prevails, but without the help of a well-meaning but ineffectual detective (Macdonald Carey) who, of course, falls in love with her. Carey's soft-boiled detective is a wry parody of his pulp-fiction counterpart, a fact underscored by the obsessive interest of Charlie's father and his best friend (Henry Travers and Hume Cronyn) in dime-store crime magazines. Charlie finally kills her uncle in self-defense, pushing him in front of a train—a fate he had planned for her. In a brief epilogue, young Charlie and the detective sit outside a church in bright sunlight while, inside, her family and neighbors, who suspected nothing about Uncle Charlie, are mourning what they believe was a tragic accident. While the upright detective muses knowingly that "people go crazy now and then, like your Uncle Charlie," young Charlie manages only a wan smile and half-hearted nod of agreement. But the detective cannot understand or explain away the darkness she has seen. She has stared into the abyss, and we get the strong impression that her world, however brightly lit, can never be the same.

That final exchange is the closest anyone comes in *SHADOW OF A DOUBT* to mentioning the war (although there is a fleeting glimpse of a war-related newspaper headline at one point). Like the hard-boiled detective film, the female Gothic deals with a troubled, wartorn world, but without attributing those troubles to the war itself. Indeed, the conflicts and tensions addressed in these cycles were in many ways deeper and more profound than those of the geopolitical struggle at hand, and they certainly were more endemic to the American experience. Both the female Gothic and the hard-boiled detective film, like the *film noir* style itself, tapped into social conditions and anxieties that not only preceded the war but would gain even greater currency in the postwar era.

### The War Film

The dominant wartime production trend, of course, centered on the war itself. Early on, the term "war film" actually was little more than a useful generalization as Hollywood injected war themes into a wide range of genres and formulas. In time, however, the movie industry dealt with the war more directly and effectively, particularly in combat films and documentaries, which provided, in Lewis Jacobs's provocative description, a "vast serialization" of the American and Allied war effort.<sup>60</sup> And remarkably enough, Hollywood's treatment of World War II ended almost as abruptly as the war itself, with combat films and other war-related cycles—military musicals, prisoner-of-war films, home-front dramas, postwar rehabilitation films—disappearing from movie screens soon after V-J Day. Thus, the war film was doubly exceptional: on the one hand, it emerged virtually by social mandate and was refined in direct response to social and historical conditions; on the other, it followed a historical trajectory that coincided almost identically with the events it depicted.

Various studies have charted Hollywood's war-related film production. One conducted by Russell Earl Shain, among the more exhaustive studies, provides these figures on the industry's war-related output from 1940 to 1947:

Table 7.2  
WORLD WAR II-RELATED HOLLYWOOD FEATURES, 1940-1947

Year	Total War Films	Total Films	% War Films
1940	12	477	2.5
1941	32	492	6.5
1942	121	488	24.8
1943	115	392	29.3
1944	76	401	19.0
1945	28	350	8.0
1946	13	378	3.4
1947	2	369	0.5

SOURCE: Russell Earl Shain, *An Analysis of Motion Pictures About War Released by the American Film Industry, 1939-1970* (New York: Arno, 1976), p. 31.

Shain notes that during the sustained peak in Hollywood's war-related output from 1942 to 1944, one-fourth of all features (312 of 1,286 releases, or 24 percent) dealt with the war. According to Shain, Hollywood released 340 war-related features during the four war years, or 20 percent of the industry total. Shain's figures cover only films dealing directly with World War II, not films about World War I or the Spanish Civil War, for instance. Studies that examine all war-related films indicate an even heavier overall output. Dorothy B. Jones of the OWI's film reviewing and analysis section, for instance, found that over 28 percent of Hollywood's total output from 1942 to 1944 (376 of 1,313 releases in her sample) were war-related.<sup>61</sup>

Despite the overall decline in the annual output of war-related films from 1942 to 1945, these films remained a viable box-office staple throughout the period. In fact, their stock steadily improved during the war. In 1942, 19 of the 101 films that returned at least \$1 million in rentals were war-related. The number and proportion of war-related hits more than doubled in 1943, when they comprised 41 of the 95 releases returning \$1 million or more.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, the top two hits in both 1942 and 1943 were war-related: *MRS. MINIVER* and *YANKEE DOODLE DANDY* in 1942, *THIS IS THE ARMY* and *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS* in 1943. The war-related films' box-office currency peaked in 1944, when they comprised 11 of the 19 releases returning \$3 million or more. For the entire wartime period, a remarkable 32 of the 71 \$3 million releases were war-related—including 10 musicals, 9 combat films, and 6 home-front comedies or dramas.<sup>63</sup>

Actually, what Hollywood termed "war themes" were likely to show up in any number of genres during the war era. Meanwhile, the term "war film" took on steadily narrower connotations as Hollywood refined specific war-related formulas. The dominant formula was the combat film, although espionage films and home-front dramas involving the training of soldiers and/or the day-to-day experiences of wartime Americans were significant cycles as well. Among the more interesting developments in Hollywood's war-film production, in fact, was the prominence of spy, espionage, and war-related crime thrillers in the early years of the war, especially 1942, and the subsequent surge in home-front dramas and combat films in the later war years. As these fig-

ures from Shain's study clearly indicate, by 1944-1945 the combat film was by far the dominant war-related type:

Table 7.3  
WORLD WAR II-RELATED FILMS BY TYPE, 1942-1945

Type	1942	1943	1944	1945°
Espionage	59.5%	22.0%	15.6%	17.7%
Combat	24.8	41.5	51.4	60.7
Home-front	16.0	36.7	32.7	18.0

\*Note that the figures do not total 100 percent; Shain does not explain this discrepancy.

SOURCE: Shain, *An Analysis of Motion Pictures*, p. 61.

The year 1942, particularly during the first six to eight months after the United States entered the war, was a singularly odd, exceptional period in terms of war-film production. Because Hollywood had been fairly tentative in its treatment of the war until Pearl Harbor, and because top features took nine to twelve months to produce and release, very few A-class war films depicting U.S. involvement were released in 1942. (*CASABLANCA*, for instance, was optioned within weeks of Pearl Harbor and went into immediate preproduction, but it did not go into general release until January 1943.) Thus, most of the war-related A-class films released in 1942 were initiated in 1941, and they tend to take one of three tacks: they focus on the British war effort (*MRS. MINIVER*, *THIS ABOVE ALL*); they depict Americans or "good" Europeans dealing with enemy aggression (Nazis in *TO BE OR NOT TO BE*, *DESPERATE JOURNEY*, and *THE PIED PIPER*; Japanese in *SOMEWHERE I'LL FIND YOU* and *ACROSS THE PACIFIC*); or they feature American fliers fighting for other nations (England in *EAGLE SQUADRON*; Canada in *CAPTAINS OF THE CLOUDS*).

There were B-grade versions of these trends in 1942 as well, such as MGM's *JOURNEY FOR MARGARET*, mentioned earlier, and Republic's *FLYING TIGERS*, in which John Wayne leads a group of fighter pilots assisting the Chinese against Japan. The majority of B-grade war films in 1942, however, had little in common with Hollywood's A-class treatments, nor were they prone to historical accuracy or the depiction of actual combat. Their penchant for exploitation and ability to make their low-budget films rapidly enabled B-class producers to scoop their A-class counterparts in terms of war-related topicality; in fact, on-screen references to Pearl Harbor began turning up in B films within weeks of the Japanese attack.<sup>64</sup> But these were invariably jingoistic celebrations of American heroism and superior know-how, depicted in terms of B-movie formula rather than the conditions at hand.

Hollywood's rapid conversion of various B-grade series to war production in 1942 was actually quite remarkable. Espionage and sabotage films dominated, not only because of genuine public concern but because they were easy reformulations of low-grade crime formulas. B-grade G-men and undercover cops simply turned their sights from gangsters to foreign agents; the trappings of the story—props, sets, costumes, cast, and plot structure—remained much the same. A few A-class features in 1942 dealt with spies and sabotage and did give the formula a certain legitimacy, notably Hitchcock's *SABOTEUR*. But shrill, jingoistic B-grade thrillers were far more prevalent. Gangster and spy formulas were refitted in pictures like *SABOTAGE SQUAD*, *UNSEEN ENEMY*, and



COUNTER-ESPIONAGE, while Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson were updated into wartime sleuths in *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE VOICE OF TERROR* and *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SECRET WEAPON*. B-Western series were recruited in films like Republic's *VALLEY OF HUNTED MEN*, in which the Three Mesquiteers battle Nazi spies, and Monogram's *COWBOY COMMANDOS*, in which the Range Busters pursue Nazi saboteurs.<sup>65</sup> Even the Universal horror film was converted to war production in *INVISIBLE AGENT*; Jon Hall's "invisible man" took on both Nazi and Japanese spies.

Many 1942 B-grade spy and crime thrillers also exploited the American public's anger about Pearl Harbor and anxieties about the Japanese threat—as evidenced by such titles as *A PRISONER OF JAPAN*, *MENACE OF THE RISING SUN*, *DANGER IN THE PACIFIC*, and *REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR*. These and other 1942 B's demonized the Japanese and embellished the "stab-in-the-back" thesis which was haphazardly applied to all Japanese—including Japanese Americans, in some cases.

The OWI grew increasingly alarmed by these trends; its September 1942 report openly criticizing Hollywood's B-grade war films received extensive coverage in the trade press. The OWI asserted that "the emphasis of the entire industry is still too much on the exciting blood-and-thunder aspects of the war." The report noted that 31 war-related espionage and sabotage pictures had been released in the previous six months, a number that "tended to give the public an exaggerated idea of the menace."<sup>66</sup> In October, the OWI's Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP) reported that 70 of 220 pictures released in the preceding six months were war-related, but that few of these substantially advanced the war effort. A *Variety* headline in November blared, "OWI Frowns on 'B' Types," and the subhead noted the agency's "Drive to get the studios to lay off cops-and-robbers formula." That story noted that whereas six "saboteur-spy type" war films were released in October 1942, there were none in the OWI's "all-important 'The Issues—What Are We Fighting For' category."<sup>67</sup>

This latter refrain would persist throughout the war years as Hollywood continued to avoid dealing with the conflict in sophisticated social or political terms. As the OWI's Dorothy Jones pointed out in a 1945 assessment of Hollywood's war-related films, no more than fifty or so had "aided significantly, both at home and abroad, in increasing understanding of the conflict." Jones accused the Hollywood community of thinking only in terms of escapist entertainment, asserting that "when faced with the task of making films which would educate the public about the war, most Hollywood movie makers did not know where to begin."<sup>68</sup>

The industry's defense, of course, was that the primary obligation of commercial filmmakers is to make pictures that sell. Walter Wanger, then the Academy president, outlined that rationale in *Public Opinion Quarterly*: "Film with a purpose must pass the same test that the escapist film more easily passes. Theater-goers must want to see the picture." Convinced that the kind of pictures the OWI espoused "can effect no purpose except to empty theaters," Wanger argued that any "truths" about war-related issues "had better be skillfully integrated" into the drama.<sup>69</sup>

By early 1943, when Wanger's article appeared, a growing number of films actually supported his view. While Hollywood would never quite satisfy the OWI, there was a clear improvement in the overall quality of war films as the ambitious first-run features made after Pearl Harbor finally reached the theaters in late 1942. Among the first and most important of these was *WAKE ISLAND*, a Paramount near-A released in August 1942; starring Brian Donlevy, William Bendix, Macdonald Carey, and Robert Preston, it dramatized the devastating defeat (in December 1941) of a marine contingent on a

remote island outpost near Hawaii. As Jeanine Basinger suggests, *WAKE ISLAND* was a watershed release and in many ways the first true World War II combat film. While incorporating many traits of earlier war films, *WAKE ISLAND* also "begins to relate the meaning of these 'old' devices directly to World War II." Key factors, according to Basinger, were its focus on an actual U.S. military battle and on the combat unit, "that unique group of mixed individuals, so carefully organized to represent typical Americans."<sup>70</sup> The film also established the conventions of the World War II "last-stand" drama. In *WAKE ISLAND* and later films such as *MANILA CALLING* (1942) and *BATAAN* (1943), a small, isolated unit of American soldiers fights to the death against impossible odds, with the narrative invariably concluding just before the last American is killed.

The popular and critical response to *WAKE ISLAND* underscored its watershed status. Returning \$3.5 million in rentals, it was among the top box-office hits of the year and scored four Oscar nominations, including best picture. Bosley Crowther in the *New York Times* called *WAKE ISLAND* "a realistic picture about heroes who do not pose as such," and *Newsweek* called it "Hollywood's first intelligent, honest, and completely successful attempt to dramatize the deeds of an American force on a fighting front."<sup>71</sup> Made in cooperation with the Marine Corps and endorsed by the OWI, *WAKE ISLAND* clearly established the viability of the violent, downbeat, hyperactive combat film, while toning down the jingoistic flag-waving, blatant racism, and gross historical distortions of so many previous B-grade war films. This is not to say that these qualities were eliminated alto-



Macdonald Carey and Brian Donlevy in the seminal World War II combat film *WAKE ISLAND* (1942).

gether. Most of Hollywood's wartime combat dramas were set in the Pacific, and most of them depicted the Japanese enemy as not only uncivilized but essentially inhuman—a view that pervaded the American media and colored the mindset of the public as well. As the war correspondent Ernie Pyle wrote: "In Europe we felt that our enemies, horrible and deadly as they were, were still people. But out here [in the Pacific] I soon gathered that the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman or repulsive."<sup>72</sup>

In 1943, Hollywood's wave of A-class war-related films hit the nation's theaters with enormous impact. These included big-budget musicals like *THIS IS THE ARMY* and *STAGE DOOR CANTEEN*; resistance dramas like *WATCH ON THE RHINE* and *THE MOON IS DOWN*; and wartorn romances like *CASABLANCA* and *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS*. There was also a marked increase in both the quantity and quality of A-class combat films, including *AIR FORCE*, *ACTION IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC*, *BATAAN*, *GUADALCANAL DIARY*, *THE IMMORTAL SERGEANT*, *SO PROUDLY WE HAIL*, *CRY HAVOC*, and *SAHARA*. Moreover, a number of British war films were released in the United States in late 1942 and early 1943—notably *IN WHICH WE SERVE*, *THE IMMORTAL BATTALION* (British title *THE WAY AHEAD*), *THE INVADERS* (British title *49TH PARALLEL*), and *ONE OF OUR AIRCRAFT IS MISSING*. All were critically well received, and Noel Coward's *IN WHICH WE SERVE* also was a solid commercial hit.

Critics and the Academy responded enthusiastically to the 1943 surge in A-class war-related films. The National Board of Review's top ten selections for the year included seven war-related pictures, and the Academy's ten nominees for best picture likewise included seven war-related films, with the Oscar going to *CASABLANCA*. And in the *Film Daily* poll of over 400 critics, every film on the top-ten list was war-related (including *RANDOM HARVEST*, with a World War I story, and *FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS*, with its Spanish Civil War context).<sup>73</sup>

#### THE WORLD WAR II COMBAT FILM

The combat film saw significant advances in both quantity and quality of output in 1943. Two key films were *AIR FORCE* and *BATAAN*, which solidified the essential conventions of the World War II combat film while establishing its two dominant variations. *AIR FORCE*, an early 1943 release shot on location (at a Florida air base) and made in cooperation with the Army Air Corps, won critical praise for its semidocumentary style. The story focuses on a group of men isolated within a powerful warship—an authentic B-17 "Flying Fortress"—that was involved in air-sea battles in the Pacific during the early months of the war. The men learn both the value of group cooperation and the finer workings of their bomber, which gradually emerges as the crew's mother, lover, and sacred vessel. The finale of *AIR FORCE* is relatively upbeat, with the warship taking part in the Battle of the Coral Sea (in May 1942)—one of the first important Allied victories in the Pacific.

*BATAAN* also involves an early battle campaign in the Pacific theater, but it is a more stylized, studio-bound production, and considerably more brutal and downbeat as well. The story centers on a combat unit of thirteen men in an isolated jungle outpost on Bataan, which is being overrun by invading Japanese troops. The unit is assigned to destroy a bridge and prevent the Japanese from rebuilding it; in carrying out that assignment, the men are killed, one by one, by the relentless, faceless enemy. The consummate last-stand picture, *BATAAN* ends with the unit leader and lone survivor (Robert Taylor) throwing curses at the swarming Japanese and swinging his machine-gun fire directly into the camera for the film's powerful closing image.



*The infantry unit in BATAAN (1943).*

These two types, centering on the warship and the infantry unit, steadily coalesced into Hollywood's standard, war-issue combat formulas. The group dynamic and celebration of technology of *AIR FORCE* recur in all manner of warships, from submarines and ships to tanks and aircraft, while the infantry films grimly trace the horrors of combat and the psychopathology of soldiering. For Basinger, *AIR FORCE* and *BATAAN* "contain the new genre" of the World War II combat film. "In fact, they *are* the new genre. They are the two most important films . . . because they are the first that are totally in and about World War II combat." She contends, however, that the infantry variation is "the truest and purest combat format," because it is so relentlessly "about" actual fighting. While the bomber can take its crew back to the relative security and domesticity of the barracks, and even the submarine has its social and hospitable attributes, the infantry film offers "no relief from the war."<sup>74</sup>

Basinger considers *BATAAN* "clearly the seminal film" of the World War II combat genre for three reasons. First, unlike all of the preceding combat films made during the war, *BATAAN* provides no "denial" of the war through furloughs, returns home, or other noncombat situations but focuses only on soldiering and combat. Second, the nature and composition of the combat unit in *BATAAN* became a veritable paradigm for subsequent films, along various social and cultural lines—the ethnic, racial, and religious background of unit members; their ideological, economic, and class-related status; their geographical and regional origins; and their military rank, experience, and professionalism. As Basinger notes, *BATAAN* set the standard not only for the composition of the



group in infantry combat films but also for the structure of authority, the likelihood of death, and even the order in which the unit members are killed.<sup>75</sup>

Third and perhaps most important, BATAAN integrated these conventions into a dramatically compelling narrative—and thus into effective propaganda. The group constituted what Lewis Jacobs has termed “a national collective hero,” although Basinger aptly notes that the unit’s “democratic ethnic mix” necessarily included a leader “who is part of the group, but is forced to separate himself from it because of the demands of leadership.”<sup>76</sup> Those demands generally include a military objective (in this case the bridge) related to a specific military campaign, as well as dealing with the inevitable internal conflicts of the group. Meanwhile, the individual group members partake in the myriad rituals of infantry life, the articulation of what they are fighting for, and the necessary horror of fighting and dying. With BATAAN, asserts Basinger, “the foundation of the World War II combat film is in place”; the various “generic requirements” of the form were “firmly established and repeated” in the films that followed, as was readily apparent by late 1943 in films like SAHARA, GUADALCANAL DIARY, CRY HAVOC, and DESTINATION TOKYO.<sup>77</sup>

The infantry and warship variations of the combat film were not altogether distinct from one another, and in fact a few war films effectively combined the two. Among the most notable of these was SAHARA, a late-1943 Columbia release starring Warners loan-out Humphrey Bogart as the leader of a disparate band of Allied soldiers (Dan Duryea, J. Carrol Naish, Rex Ingram, Lloyd Bridges) crossing the Libyan desert aboard a U.S. tank who eventually make a stand at a desert well against an entire Nazi division. One of the more underrated combat films of the war era, SAHARA is noteworthy on several counts—particularly the warship and the military unit involved, the deft blending of the warship and infantry variations, and the heightened realism of the production.

SAHARA opens with the tank commander Sgt. Joe Gunn (Bogart) and his two-man crew crossing the North African desert alone in their tank during the chaotic retreat after the fall of Tobruk. At a bombed-out military hospital, they come across a British medical officer and five infantrymen: two Britons, two Australians, a South African, and a Frenchman. Gunn offers them assistance, but the British dismiss the tank as an “old scow” and a “tin hearse.” Gunn takes offense, not only extolling his tank but romanticizing and feminizing it in the process. “She’s an M-3 air-cooled job that can cross 200 miles of desert as easily as you’d walk around in that Piccadilly Circus of yours,” he says. “When I go into Berlin I’ll be riding that tank, the same one that’s standin’ there with the name Lulubelle on her.” With no real choice, the soldiers climb aboard, riding atop the tank while Gunn and his crew (a radioman and a gunner) ride inside.

SAHARA is clearly a star vehicle, with Bogart’s Sgt. Joe Gunn another wartime synthesis of rugged individualist and team player. Yet Joe’s conversion to the collective war effort has long since been made, and he is presented as the ideal leader; in fact, the ranking British officer readily cedes authority to the American tank commander early in the film. The soldiers eventually are won over by the Lulubelle, of course, as are a black British-Sudanese soldier and his Italian prisoner (a sympathetic figure with relatives in America) who join the ragtag unit in its desert journey. Lulubelle’s efficiency is further evinced when the crew shoots down a German fighter plane and captures the pilot, adding a dedicated Nazi to the group. Thus, the group, a diverse amalgam of eleven Allied soldiers and their two Axis prisoners, is complete; it is one of the more remarkable units in any wartime combat film and clearly represents the principal combatants in the Atlantic theater in microcosm.



Humphrey Bogart and director Zoltan Korda discuss a scene in SAHARA (1943).

The first half of SAHARA delineates these various characters—and the varied stakes and views of the nations they represent—as they search with increasing desperation for water and fuel. The group discovers water at a modestly fortified well, where they decide to dig in and try to hold off a division of some five hundred parched Nazis en route to El Alemein. Shifting to a last-stand drama, the Allies are killed one by one by the Germans, who themselves die in massive numbers in their repeated assaults on the well. The two prisoners also are killed, each under tellingly symbolic circumstances. The German pilot murders the Italian for defaming Hitler and Nazism, and then while trying to escape he is killed in a desperate hand-to-hand struggle with the black Sudanese—an obvious comment on Aryan superiority. Eventually the Allied force is down to only two men (including Gunn) and low on ammunition. But the Germans, succumbing to thirst and, because of Gunn’s successful ploys, unaware of the Allied numbers, suddenly surrender. Thus, SAHARA veers from last-stand drama to an upbeat, updated version of SERGEANT YORK, and its positive outcome is underscored as the two survivors and their Nazi prisoners are met by Allied troops who inform them of the victory at El Alemein.

Despite its star-vehicle status, careening patchwork plot, and upbeat resolution, SAHARA is an altogether effective war film—in large part because of the style and visual treatment of the narrative by a production unit which was nearly as diverse as the mili-

tary unit in the film. Of particular note are the director Zoltan Korda and the cinematographer Rudolph Maté, two Hungarian-born émigrés to Hollywood from wartorn Europe (Maté via Germany and France, and Korda from England, where he had worked with his brother, the producer Alexander Korda). The two treated soldiering and combat in a quasi-documentary style, while bringing a stylized poetic realism to the depiction of the otherworldly desert milieu. Maté's camera work was nominated for an Oscar, and the critic James Agee wrote of SAHARA's distinctive style: "It borrows, chiefly from the English, a sort of light-alloy modification of realism which makes the traditional Hollywood idiom seem as obsolete as a minuet."<sup>78</sup>

As Agee suggests, the realism in SAHARA can be attributed in part to European influence, which came not only from the filmmakers directly involved but from the growing number of émigrés working in Hollywood and from the British films showing in the United States at the time. Equally important, however, was the documentary influence that became increasingly pronounced in Hollywood's combat films of the later war years.

#### NONFICTION WAR FILMS, DOCUMENTARY REALISM, AND THE HOLLYWOOD COMBAT FILM

Crucial to the combat film's 1943 surge were the massive advances in news coverage of the fighting overseas, not only in the print media and on radio but in motion picture newsreels and documentaries as well. Roughly 80 percent of all newsreels in 1942 were devoted to the war at home and abroad, and in 1943 that total rose to nearly 90 percent.<sup>79</sup> As Thomas Doherty notes in chapter 12, the six newsreel companies vastly improved their coverage in 1942–1943, moving beyond a headline-service role to provide timely and graphic depictions of military action. This improvement was facilitated by the easing of military restrictions on the filming of actual combat in late 1942 (at FDR's behest) and by rapid improvements in the technology and logistics of combat reporting.<sup>80</sup>

Documentary film coverage improved as well, as in-depth nonfiction war films—both shorts and features, many of them created by top Hollywood filmmakers in the military—became standard screen fare in 1943. Several British war documentaries enjoyed widespread U.S. release and favorable critical response as well. In fact, the Academy Award for best documentary feature in 1943 went to DESERT VICTORY, a British-American coproduction on the Allied campaign in North Africa, while the award for best documentary short went to John Ford's THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY.

Advances in nonfiction war coverage encouraged Hollywood filmmakers not only to dramatize combat but to do so with a greater degree of verisimilitude and historical accuracy. In the process, the narrative and dramatic emphases of combat dramas, as well as the number of Hollywood filmmakers doing documentary work, clearly influenced nonfiction war films. Thus, by 1943 fiction and nonfiction war films were entering a stage of remarkable symbiosis, with combat dramas providing a (belated) fictional counterpart to the newsreel and documentaries, all of which not only depicted major military engagements but also defined and dramatized the war experience for millions of Americans at home.

Regarding the symbiotic interplay of fiction and nonfiction war films, a number of coincidences and parallels are worthy of note. The breakthrough combat film WAKE ISLAND was released in 1942 within weeks of Ford's BATTLE OF MIDWAY, which itself was precedent-setting on several counts. It was the first document of an actual U.S. military engagement, and it was the first to use 16mm Technicolor photography. Moreover, it

was the first battle record by an established Hollywood director; in fact, Ford's hand-held camera work would set the early standard for first-person combat coverage. In 1943, as other Hollywood filmmakers became involved in documentary production, they introduced dramatic qualities and narrative strategies somewhat similar to their fictional counterparts.<sup>81</sup>

Consider William Wyler's film treatment of bombing runs over Germany from a Flying Fortress in MEMPHIS BELLE (1944), and John Huston's treatment of fierce infantry fighting in the Liri Valley in Italy in THE BATTLE OF SAN PIETRO (1945). Among the more important and critically acclaimed wartime documentaries, both films effectively integrate fiction and nonfiction techniques. They extend and intensify the first-person technique of THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY, and as hourlong documentaries they develop strong narrative and dramatic lines to delve the human as well as the military stakes involved. Moreover, the two are documentary versions of Hollywood's dominant combat trends—the specialized unit operating (and confined within) a high-tech warship; and the isolated, interdependent, war-weary infantry unit trudging from one deadly engagement to another.

As documentarians like Ford, Wyler, and Huston dramatized and humanized their wartime subjects, fictionalized accounts of combat developed a more pronounced documentary realism. In 1944–1945, interestingly enough, the number of fictional and documentary combat films released was almost identical (sixteen and fourteen, respec-



The crew of the Memphis Belle pose before their warship in William Wyler's 1944 documentary.



tively), and many critics and historians have argued that these two forms of combat film can (and should) be considered manifestations of the same genre.<sup>82</sup> In fact, James Agee named *SAN PIETRO* and a dramatic feature, *THE STORY OF GI JOE*, as the best films of 1945, and for essentially the same reasons: their direct, unsympathetic, anti-romantic portrayal of professional soldiers in combat, and their gauging of military conflict and outcome in human terms.<sup>83</sup>

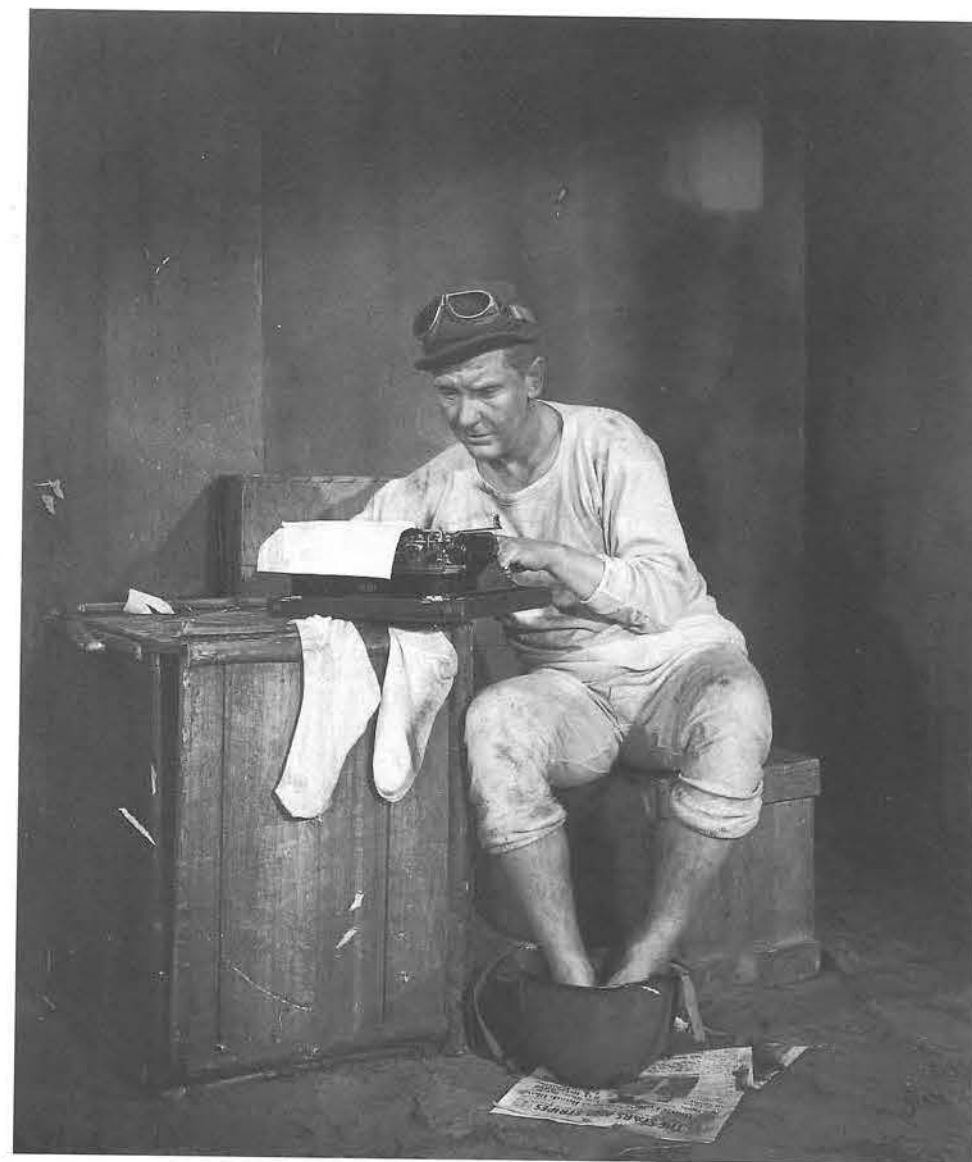
Released in October 1945, *THE STORY OF GI JOE*, directed by William Wellman, was the dramatic counterpart of Huston's *SAN PIETRO*; a grim depiction of an American unit in the Italian campaign, it stars Robert Mitchum as the reluctant unit leader and Burgess Meredith as the war correspondent Ernie Pyle (who had been killed in combat a year earlier). For Agee, *THE STORY OF GI JOE* was "the first great triumph in the effort to combine 'fiction' and 'documentary' film"—an effort he had been tracing since the release of *AIR FORCE* in 1943. Besides Wellman's direction, the "great triumphs" of the film also included its "anti-histrionic casting and acting," which Agee considered crucial to this kind of war film. Indeed, Agee's one misgiving about the otherwise effective *OBJECTIVE BURMA* (1945) was that, for him, it could never quite overcome the onus of being an Errol Flynn picture—a criticism which could be leveled at *SAHARA* (and Bogart) as well.<sup>84</sup>

Remarkably, both *THE STORY OF GI JOE* and *SAN PIETRO* were regarded as antiwar films by some critics, because they were so downbeat in their portrayal of men at war and so sensitive to the psychological and physical trauma involved. *THE BATTLE OF SAN PIETRO*, in fact, so concerned military officials in Washington that it was withheld from distribution until the end of the war in Europe, and then it was released only in an abridged version under the (also abridged) title, *SAN PIETRO*.<sup>85</sup> Agee noted the debate that had arisen over the antiwar issue in his October 1945 review of *THE STORY OF GI JOE*, and his own take was appropriately ambivalent:

Nobody [in the film] is accused, not even the enemy; no remedy is indicated; and though every foot of the film is as full an indictment of war as I ever expect to see, it is clearly also demonstrating the fact that in war many men go well beyond anything which any sort of peace we have known, or are likely to know, makes possible for them. It seems to me a tragic and eternal work of art. (Reprinted in *Agee on Film* [New York: Grossett and Dunlap, 1958], vol. 1, p. 174)

Two other fictional war films released just after the war, *THEY WERE EXPENDABLE* (December 1945) and *A WALK IN THE SUN* (January 1946), also displayed the documentary-style realism of *THE STORY OF GI JOE*, as well as its tone of grim resignation and weary professionalism. Few critics gauged these as antiwar efforts, however. As Roger Manvell points out, the Ford-directed *THEY WERE EXPENDABLE* clearly accepts "the fatalism bred of combat conditions," while it also "brings out the ancient ethos of war, the aspiration to heroism, a profound acceptance of self-sacrifice for the 'cause' of the nation, the near-worship of the charisma of military authority implicit in such terminology as *high command* and *supreme command*."<sup>86</sup> At the same time, these films are willing to consider both the possible breakdown of the group cohesion as well as the price—in both individual and collective terms—of military victory.

Ultimately, the more realistic and somewhat disillusioned combat films of the later war era marked a significant departure from infantry dramas like *WAKE ISLAND*, *BATAAN*,



Burgess Meredith as journalist Ernie Pyle in *THE STORY OF GI JOE* (1945).

SAHARA, and GUADALCANAL DIARY. While sharing many qualities with their flag-waving, heroic, and aggressively prowar antecedents, the differences in style and tone of the later combat films clearly set them apart. Again James Agee offers a useful distinction. In his review of BATAAN, Agee termed the film a "war melodrama" much like WAKE ISLAND, and he went on to describe it as "a small triumph of pure artifice," constrained as it was by its star, its obvious studio setting, and its utterly predictable heroic posturing. While Agee found this anything but "realistic," still he recognized the power and appeal of films like WAKE ISLAND and BATAAN: "We may not yet recognize the tradition, but it is essentially, I think, not a drama but a kind of native ritual dance. As such its image of war is not only naive, coarse-grained, primitive; it is also honest, accomplished in terms of its aesthetic, and true."<sup>87</sup> Hollywood continued to produce this type of ritualized war melodrama with films like DESTINATION TOKYO (1943), WINGED VICTORY (1944), GOD IS MY CO-PILOT (1945), and BACK TO BATAAN (1945)—all sizable hits. And while critics praised the documentary-style combat films, audiences clearly preferred the energetic hokum of war melodramas like A GUY NAMED JOE over the grim realism of THE STORY OF GI JOE.

As noted earlier, Hollywood's production of combat films ended rather abruptly after the war, owing mainly to the industry perception that audiences were no longer interested in them.<sup>88</sup> By late 1945, exhibitors and studio executives alike had developed a firm conviction that for a war-weary populace—not to mention the millions of returning veterans—the war film's appeal ended with the war itself. So as the government and the military rapidly dismantled the nation's vast war machine, the movie industry began reconversion as well, mustering out the war-related themes and formulas that had prevailed for the past four years. This was most evident in the combat film, but the home-front drama also underwent a postwar decline as Hollywood shied away from stories of returning vets, postwar rehabilitation, and the domestic "return to normalcy."

The World War II combat film hardly disappeared altogether, of course. After lying dormant for fully three years, the genre would undergo a remarkable, unexpected resurgence in 1949, keyed by three major hits: BATTLEGROUNDS, TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH, and SANDS OF IWO JIMA. The genre's currency would continue for decades to come, since the American (and Allied) experience of World War II provided a curious parallel to cold war-era films involving U.S. military conflicts in Korea and Vietnam. Despite its later resurgence, however, the World War II combat film could never be the same—nor, for that matter, could the home-front drama. From 1942 to 1945, Hollywood created a parallel universe for a nation at war, an odd amalgam of information and entertainment, of fact and propaganda, of realism and collective national fantasy. Thus Hollywood's war-related output represents a collective cultural experience altogether unique in American film history.

#### CASE STUDY: AIR FORCE AND SINCE YOU WENT AWAY

AIR FORCE and SINCE YOU WENT AWAY provide excellent examples of the combat film and the home-front drama. They reflect other significant wartime trends as well: the relationship between the military and the studios; the increasing authority of top talent and independent producers; the efforts of the OWI as well as the PCA to regulate movie content; and the pronounced wartime distinction between male action films and women's pictures, a function of the marketplace as well as the narrative and thematic qualities of the films themselves. Despite these obvious distinctions, AIR FORCE and SINCE YOU WENT AWAY display a number of significant similarities as well.



Two "fortresses"—the warship Mary Ann in AIR FORCE (1943), and the Hilton family home in SINCE YOU WENT AWAY (1944).





The most basic similarity between the two films is their mutual celebration of distinctive American "fortresses"—one a Boeing B-17 bomber and the other a two-story brick colonial home—while valorizing the occupants and the special wartime rites of each domain. *AIR FORCE* presented the saga of a B-17 Flying Fortress and its crew, whose training flight of 6 December 1941 across the Pacific becomes an odyssey of the disastrous early months of the war—but then culminates in the Battle of the Coral Sea. *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY* is an epic of a different sort, dedicated in its opening credits to "the Unconquered Fortress: the American Home." It charts a year in the lives of a woman and her two daughters, beginning in early 1943 with the departure of the husband and father for active duty. The lives of the three are transformed by the war effort and war-related experiences at home, as well as by the fate of the absent patriarch—who is reported missing in action midway through the year (and the film), and whose reported return to safety provides the story's climactic moment.

*AIR FORCE* was one of many top studio productions initiated immediately after Pearl Harbor. It was made at the behest of Gen. Henry "Hap" Arnold, head of the Army Air Corps and a personal friend of Jack Warner. In early 1942, Arnold began looking to Hollywood for on-screen support, and Warner played a key role in this effort. Warner was commissioned as a lieutenant colonel in the Army Air Corps in April 1942 and assigned as a public relations officer based in Los Angeles. He helped set up the First Motion Picture Unit, a nonfiction production unit housed at the Hal Roach studios that made training films and documentaries for the Air Corps and other military branches. Later in 1942, Warners gave the Air Corps use of its Vitagraph Studios in New York. Jack Warner also took on *AIR FORCE* as a personal and professional project, with assurances from Hap Arnold of full Army Air Corps support.<sup>90</sup>

While Warner monitored the project, *AIR FORCE* actually was produced by the executive-turned-unit producer Hal Wallis and the freelance producer-director Howard Hawks, whose new contracts with Warner Bros. in February 1942 specified *AIR FORCE* as among their initial projects. (Because both contracts also stipulate producer credit, *AIR FORCE* is introduced as "A Howard Hawks Production" yet Hal B. Wallis receives producer credit.)<sup>91</sup> While Warner and Wallis lined up the production, Hawks signed the screenwriter Dudley Nichols in March 1942 to do an original script based, at Arnold's suggestion, on an actual incident. The *Mary Ann*, a B-17 training plane, was separated from its flying group while heading toward Hickham Field in Hawaii on the morning of the Japanese attack. In the course of the film, the *Mary Ann* sees action in several of the major military engagements during the early stages of the Pacific campaign. Nichols completed the script by early summer, shortly after the Battle of the Coral Sea in May, a spectacular air-sea battle and an early Allied victory which provided an ideal culmination to the story.<sup>92</sup>

*AIR FORCE* was an ambitious production by Warners' standards but scarcely a star vehicle; it featured the rising star John Garfield and an ensemble of (available) male feature players, notably Harry Carey. The real star of the film was the *Mary Ann*, an authentic Flying Fortress supplied by the Army Air Corps, along with its facilities at a training base in Florida. Filming on location made the picture a wartime rarity, pushing its cost to about \$2 million, and allowed Hawks to work without direct studio supervision—and without interference from Wallis and the front office.<sup>93</sup>

The minor problems that Warners ran into with the PCA over language and violence were adjusted (or negotiated away) easily enough. The OWI, however, was then in the midst of its campaign to upgrade the accuracy and curb the blatant racism and xeno-

phobia of war films, and the agency was severely critical of the film. In October 1942, with *AIR FORCE* in postproduction and nearing release, the OWI complained that virtually all Asians in the film, both enemy soldiers and "friendly" civilians alike, were depicted as treacherous, bloodthirsty savages. (The Japanese were referred to as "stinkin' Nips," "buck-toothed little runts," and so on.) The film also suggested that Japanese sympathizers and saboteurs were in some ways responsible for U.S. defeats in Hawaii and the Philippines. Despite these complaints, however, the filmmakers did little to mollify the OWI—particularly after receiving approval from the Army Air Corps and the PCA.<sup>93</sup>

*AIR FORCE* was released in early 1943 with considerable fanfare and widespread promotion, including Grossett and Dunlap's publication of John O. Watson's "novelized" version of Nichols's screenplay. The picture returned \$2.7 million and was Warners' fourth-biggest hit among nine 1943 releases which earned at least \$2 million (seven were war pictures). Critical response was mixed: the film's authenticity and semidocumentary style were often praised, while its war melodrama formulaics were routinely criticized.<sup>94</sup>

Any sense of realism in *AIR FORCE* results from three factors: the use of an actual B-17 as the principal set for the picture; the story's depiction of actual war-related events; and the incorporation of newsreel footage at various points in the film, notably in the climactic Battle of the Coral Sea. The story and characters, on the other hand, are standard Hollywood war issue. *AIR FORCE* presents a group of disparate individuals (and two outspoken individualists) who gradually coalesce into a unified, efficient, gung-ho fighting unit. The group hails from all points of the social, ethnic, and geographical map; it includes a Jew, a Pole, an Irishman, a Minnesota farm boy, a Texan, a streetwise New Yorker, and so on—all distinctions that purposefully become meaningless by the end of the film.

Like most combat films, *AIR FORCE* is a conversion narrative; its conversion theme operates on several levels. In a general sense, the *Mary Ann* herself is converted from a training ship into a fighting machine, and the crew members into functional components of that machine. In terms of human drama, the story focuses on two converts: Winocki (John Garfield) is a surly loner and flight school washout who eventually accepts his role as a team player and gunner; in fact, he is credited with inventing the tail gun for the B-17. Tex Rader (James Brown) is a professional loner, a pursuit pilot forced to ride in the *Mary Ann* when his fighter is shot down. Tex initially denigrates bombers (while the crew, in turn, dismisses his "pea shooter"), but he eventually takes command of the plane after the pilot is killed and the copilot wounded.

The trajectory of *AIR FORCE* takes the crew from one major Pacific battle to another—from Honolulu to Wake Island to the Philippines. Each stage takes the *Mary Ann* and her crew deeper into the war experience, and each stop is punctuated by a hospital scene which underscores the point. The first involves a nurse at Hickham in Hawaii who is the copilot's sweetheart and the sister of one of the crewmen; she has been wounded during the Japanese attack, indicating the enemy's brutal disregard for helpless women and children. At Wake, the crew visits the wounded base commander, who despite his condition insists on staying with his fliers and the doomed marines trapped on the island. He urges the *Mary Ann*'s crew to proceed to the Philippines, where they encounter heavy combat. The *Mary Ann* is shot down, and Winocki heroically crash-lands the plane after the crew has bailed out and the pilot, Quincannon, has been mortally wounded. The third hospital scene depicts the death of Quincannon, their pilot



The nominal stars of AIR FORCE, John Garfield (left) and Harry Carey (right).

and leader, and is perhaps the most dramatic moment in the film. Scripted by William Faulkner during production, the scene features the dying pilot hallucinating a final takeoff in the *Mary Ann*, going through the various verbal procedures as the crew, at his bedside, assume their respective roles as well. This deathbed experience gives an emotional edge to their individual responsibilities as well as to their "family" unity and motivates the crew to return their warship to action.

Inspired by Quincannon's death, the crew literally rebuilds the plane overnight under the supervision of the crusty, paternal crew chief (Carey), assisted by marines awaiting the imminent Japanese attack. They complete the job just as the enemy swarm the airfield; the *Mary Ann* miraculously escapes and joins the Allied air armada over the Coral Sea just as it intercepts the Japanese fleet en route to Australia. The *Mary Ann* asserts her superiority in the ensuing battle, taking the lead in the attack and sinking several enemy vessels—thus marking an early turning point in the war and also the successful conversion of the *Mary Ann* and her crew into a professional fighting machine.

In precise counterpoint to AIR FORCE, David O. Selznick's SINCE YOU WENT AWAY presents an idealized portrait of the fight waged by women, individually and collectively, on the home front. Unlike many women's pictures and home-front dramas which invoked the war more indirectly, SINCE YOU WENT AWAY was quite clearly a war film, tracing the conversion of home and family—the American community in microcosm—to the war effort. Indeed, it was Hollywood's wartime woman's picture *par excellence*, focusing directly on the American female's experience of World War II. And thus, it

was quite a bit different from the "American Mrs. Miniver" which Selznick set out to produce. Whereas that 1942 MGM film depicts the initial impact of the war on a fully intact British family, SINCE YOU WENT AWAY charts the experiences of a woman and her two daughters in 1943, with her husband overseas and the nation's wartime conversion well under way.

The film was based on a wartime memoir by Margaret Buell Wilder, "Since You Went Away—Letters to a Soldier from His Wife," which had been serialized in *Ladies' Home Journal* and was awaiting publication as a book when Selznick purchased the rights for \$30,000 in early 1943. He brought Wilder to Hollywood from her home in Akron, Ohio, where the story was set, and started her to work on the adaptation while he prepared production.<sup>95</sup> Just as AIR FORCE relied for its authenticity and primary setting on the Flying Fortress, so too did Selznick's production rely on its earthbound domestic fortress—a two-story, seven-room brick colonial. Rather than seek out an appropriate location in some Ohio suburb, however, Selznick had a full-scale house constructed (along with a sizable stretch of its city street) as a standing set inside his studio.

In contrast to the nonstar ensemble in Warners' AIR FORCE, Selznick's production featured three top female stars: Claudette Colbert as Ann Hilton, the stalwart matriarch; Jennifer Jones (a sudden star after THE SONG OF BERNADETTE) as the 17-year-old daughter, Jane; and Shirley Temple as the 14-year-old "Brig" (Bridget). Colbert, significantly enough, had just starred in SO PROUDLY WE HAIL, a story of nurses serving in the battle-torn Pacific and a rather odd admixture of women's weepie and wartime action picture. James Agee, in *The Nation*, dismissed SO PROUDLY WE HAIL as "probably the most deadly-accurate picture that will ever be made of what the war looks like through the lenses of a housewives'-magazine romance."<sup>96</sup> This perspective may have accounted for the film's popular success (it earned \$3 million and was the twelfth-biggest box-office hit of 1943), as well as for Selznick's decision to cast Colbert in SINCE YOU WENT AWAY.

In the three important male roles, Selznick cast Joseph Cotten as Tony Willett, the longtime friend of the Hiltons who for years has been carrying a torch for Ann (from a discreet distance); Monty Woolley, reprising THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER, as the autocratic curmudgeon Colonel Smollett, who rents a room in the Hilton home to help the family make ends meet; and Robert Walker as Corporal Bill Smollett, the colonel's estranged grandson and Jane's love interest. (Walker and Jones were married at the time but would separate during production, with no apparent effect on their portrayal of the innocent young lovers.)

Ever the "creative producer" with a blockbuster mentality, Selznick's creative role and personal stake in SINCE YOU WENT AWAY was exceptional, even for him. The film marked his return to active production after a four-year hiatus; at a cost of \$2.78 million, SINCE YOU WENT AWAY was Hollywood's most expensive production since GONE WITH THE WIND. Selznick also had developed a close personal relationship with Jones (whom he would later wed after she had divorced Walker and he had divorced Irene Mayer Selznick), and he recently had added Shirley Temple to his stable of contract stars. He was adamant that the film redefine the screen image of both stars, as Jones looked ahead to more mature romantic roles and Temple entered her teen years.

Selznick's creative involvement began with an overhaul of Wilder's screenplay, which he began to revise immediately after her return to Ohio in August 1943—only weeks before the picture went into production. Selznick's rewriting continued throughout the 127-day shoot, primarily to keep the picture as current as possible with war conditions



and to build up Jones's role. He eventually rewrote enough of the script to warrant sole screenplay credit, despite Wilder's appeals to SWG. (The film's writing credits read: "Based on an adaptation of her book by Margaret Buell Wilder," and later, "Screen Play by the Producer.") The director John Cromwell tolerated Selznick's last-minute revisions and also his insistence on seeing a camera rehearsal of every scene before it was filmed. Selznick was unhappy with the camera work and lighting, however; he replaced George Barnes (who had won an Oscar for *REBECCA*) with Stanley Cortez, and he later replaced Cortez with Lee Garmes, who finished the shoot.

Production closed in February 1944 after five months of principal photography, and Selznick immediately began editing with Hal Kern while Max Steiner composed the score. The completed picture, with its 205 speaking parts and meandering narrative, runs two hours and fifty minutes—long even by wartime standards, though a half-hour shorter than *GONE WITH THE WIND*. *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY* was released in June 1944 to uniformly respectful but somewhat tepid reviews. Bosley Crowther, for instance, admired the film but considered it "a rather large dose of choking sentiment."<sup>97</sup> Meanwhile, the public took to it in droves; the picture returned rentals of \$4.9 million and was one of the biggest hits of the war.

As a sentimentalized portrait of America's wartime women and the domestic front, *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY* was enormously effective. Indeed, the film's ardent sentimentality is firmly and effectively established from the very outset. The titles play over a shot of the "home fires" in a hearth, followed by a fade-in on an exterior shot of the Hilton home, framed by a leafless tree in a dark, driving rainstorm. A series of dissolves takes the viewer closer to the home, then closes in on a downstairs window, and finally inside. A long tracking shot surveys a cozy, well-appointed den, moving from an empty leather chair to a bulldog on the floor, then across a desk revealing a calendar (it is January 1943), a telegram (Timothy Hilton, USN, has been ordered overseas), and a memento of Tim and Ann Hilton's honeymoon (they were wed in 1925). The shot continues, sweeping past bronzed baby shoes, a picture of Ann and her daughters, and finally back to the window, as Ann returns home after seeing off her departed soldier-husband. Crucial to the emotional impact of the scene is Steiner's score: the "Since You Went Away Theme" flows subtly, seamlessly into strains of standard American tunes—"You're in the Army Now," "Here Comes the Bride," "Lullaby and Goodnight," and so on—with each transition precisely cued to the visuals. (Steiner's score was the lone Oscar winner among the half-dozen nominations.)

This efficient narrative exposition establishes both the back story and the tone of *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY*, and Ann's subsequent arrival and voice-over reverie immediately set the dramatic stakes and plot trajectory as well. "This is the moment I've dreaded," says Ann to herself, "coming back to our home—alone." The remainder of the film charts Ann's efforts to confront and eventually to overcome that dread, which intensifies midway through the film when she learns that Tim is missing in action. But in the final moment of the film, a full year after the opening, Ann learns of Tim's imminent safe return—the consummate reward for her sacrifices and efforts in his absence.

While Tim Hilton's departure and return to safety define the film's overarching narrative development, the more immediate dramatic concerns involve the adjustments of the Hilton women—and the household in general—to the war.<sup>98</sup> In that sense, *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY* represents a consummate wartime conversion narrative. Not only the Hilton females but virtually every other character in the story, as well as the family home and the community at large, are utterly transformed by the war.



Jennifer Jones as Jane Hilton, whose role was built up considerably during the production of *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY*.

The emphasis is on the home, of course, which is a clear equivalent to the *Mary Ann* in *AIR FORCE*—a safe (almost womblike) haven which gives definition and meaning and a sense of unity to its occupants. Significantly enough, when Selznick revised Wilder's story and script, he decided to upscale the Hiltons socially, from a modest middle-class to an upper-middle-class family. This change both amplifies and further idealizes their sacrifices—giving up the master bedroom to the crotchety Colonel Smollett; doing without their devoted housekeeper, Fidelia (Hattie McDaniel), although she does find a way to return part-time; planting a victory garden while giving up meat, eggs, and other staples; and so on.

The conversion of Ann, her daughters, and her household to the war effort dominates the first third of the film, providing what Koppes and Black describe as “a virtual compendium of OWI-approved vignettes of American life as changed by the war.”<sup>99</sup> This first movement of the story culminates in a dramatic episode which recasts the conversion in a larger social context. Hoping to meet Tim briefly before he ships out, the women embark on a long train ride from Ohio to Washington. Their effort to find Tim proves futile, although it provides an opportunity for the Hiltons (and the viewer) to relate their situation and their sacrifices to those of other Americans—from complaining businessmen and dismembered veterans to relocated workers and other self-reliant wartime women. Aptly enough, the excursion concludes in an intimate and distinctly feminine moment, as a woman lets Brig sleep on her breast and explains to Ann that her own daughter, an army nurse, has been missing since Corregidor.

Shortly after the women return home, Tim Hilton is reported missing, thus initiating the second major movement of the story. As Ann copes with the news, the story shifts focus somewhat to daughter Jane, who takes a job as a nurse's aide (caring for disabled veterans), and who experiences first love with the painfully self-effacing Bill Smollett. The two youngsters mature rapidly in the next few months, and they are considering marriage when Bill is sent overseas—to Salerno in Italy, where he is killed a short time later. Jane's grief gives way to stoic resolve, inspired and reinforced by her mother's example. This section of the story ends with Jane dramatically confronting a longtime family friend and self-centered social matron, Emily Hawkins (Agnes Moorehead). Jane forcefully berates Emily's failure to cooperate with the war effort and her criticism of those who do, clearly articulating the role and responsibilities of the female “recruits” serving on the home front.

The film's final section returns the focus to Ann, who begins training as a welder and begins to accept the prospect of life without Tim, all the while keeping the vaguely amorous Tony Willett (Cotten) at bay. Her devotion is rewarded on Christmas Eve when she opens a gift which Tim had left and then, alone with her thoughts of her missing husband, she receives word that Tim has been found and is safe. The emotional crescendo and dramatic climax here provide an apt finale to the tearstained, three-hour saga, underscoring both its appeal as a wartime anthem to the home-front warriors and also, in retrospect, its quite remarkable sentimental excess.

The film's unabashed celebration of the attitudes and ideals of wartime America, and its total immersion in the experiences and conditions of the era, may account for the failure of *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY* to elicit much critical or popular interest over the years, despite its wartime success. As Koppes and Black suggest, “The symbolism and sentimentality of *Since You Went Away* help explain why the picture was a topical smash but suffers badly out of context.”<sup>100</sup> They help explain, too, why the combat films of the era, especially those devoted exclusively to warfare, have sustained greater historical and

popular interest. Jeanine Basinger states that *AIR FORCE* “is a great film, still powerful today. In it, one sees the visual strength a genre must have to endure.”<sup>101</sup> The enduring appeal of the war film is indeed a function of its distinctive iconography, which has not changed significantly over the past half-century, as well as the timeless rituals of male bonding and the prospect of death in a threatening, alien landscape.

Ultimately, however, the similarities between *AIR FORCE* and *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY* are as illuminating as the differences. Both films, most fundamentally, are conversion narratives which trace the adjustments and sacrifices American women and men necessarily had to make for the war effort to succeed. Both redefine family and community, positing a new (albeit temporary) kinship system based on mutual need and commitment to the task at hand. Both depict epic journeys, although of a very different sort: the men in a Flying Fortress, traveling through space and externalizing their war-induced anxieties by fighting and killing; the women in an American domestic fortress, traveling through time and internalizing their anxieties by loving and nurturing—and waiting. Both films end in triumph, although these were only momentary triumphs which could not begin to resolve the larger social and military conflicts the characters still faced. Thus, both *AIR FORCE* and *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY* reinforced the basic idea that only when heroism became routine could the war itself finally be won.



## 8

## *Regulating the Screen: The Office of War Information and the Production Code Administration*

CLAYTON R. KOPPES

Regulating morality and politics on the screen was as critical from 1939 to 1945, during a period of international crisis, as at any time in American film history. While the Production Code Administration (PCA) patrolled moral barricades, major issues arose about the movies' content and their politics. After the PCA tried to eviscerate films against fascism from 1939 through 1941, the U.S. government decided wartime movies were too important to be left to the moviemakers. Through most of the war, the Office of War Information (OWI), the Roosevelt administration's propaganda agency, engaged in the most systematic governmental effort to regulate content that has been seen in any American medium of popular culture.

Together the PCA, policing morality, and the OWI, guarding politics, regulated the American screen more tightly than at any time in its history. The process yielded improvements in film content in certain areas, evasions and outright falsifications in others, high profits, and few great pictures. The unprecedented collaboration between government and the motion picture oligopoly raised questions that go to the heart of issues about control of the media in a democratic society.

### *The PCA and the Prewar Movie Industry*

In the late 1930s, Hollywood and the PCA were still primarily concerned with the sort of pictures that Will Hays liked to describe as "pure entertainment," free of political or social controversy. The PCA under Joseph Breen devoted most of its attention to morality and vulgarity. His forceful administration of the Production Code provided what business prizes most: stability. Critics justifiably deplored the industry's lack of innovation and aversion to serious subjects. Will Hays and the studio heads thought otherwise.

They did not object to the movies' conservative tone and aesthetics, and they were able to make memorable pictures within the Code's strictures. In any case, the industry's profitability since 1934 seemed justification enough. Hays and the Hollywood heads did not want to relive the intense criticism of the early 1930s, which had threatened to bring about tougher censorship (perhaps by the federal government) or antitrust action that would destroy the carefully crafted Hollywood oligopoly.<sup>1</sup>

Although the PCA was a Hollywood fixture by the late 1930s, producers provoked controversies by pushing at the margins of the Code. One of the more recent and celebrated instances, as described in chapter 3, involved David O. Selznick's showdown with Breen over Rhett Butler's final line in *GONE WITH THE WIND* and Howard Hughes's ongoing feud over the revealing shots of Jane Russell's breasts in *THE OUTLAW*. Selznick prevailed, of course, and in fact the MPPDA board of directors not only allowed the line but amended the Code to allow *damn* and *hell* to be used in strictly limited cases.<sup>2</sup> Hughes, on the other hand, was ordered to cut some sixty seconds from *THE OUTLAW*—less than what was first demanded by Breen, who accurately anticipated the more drastic excisions demanded by local censor boards.<sup>3</sup>

The confrontations over *damn* and *décolletage* afforded comic relief in what was to moral guardians a deadly serious struggle over the theme, tone, and subject matter of motion pictures. In fact, the Catholic Legion of Decency rarely found it necessary to disapprove of PCA-sanctioned pictures. Breen had stumbled, however, when he approved MGM's *STRANGE CARGO* (1940). The Legion blasted it with a "C" (condemned) rating—the first such divergence between the Legion and the PCA since 1934—on the grounds that it promoted "naturalist religion." The PCA was dumbfounded at this bit of theological arcana. The controversy was an aberration and faded quickly.<sup>4</sup> The Legion's C rating for MGM's *TWO-FACED WOMAN* in late 1941, shortly after Breen left the PCA for RKO, was an obvious attempt to reassert its authority and to bring Breen's de facto successor, Geoffrey Shurlock, into line.<sup>5</sup> That incident amounted to little, finally, particularly in light of the U.S. entry into the war only a few weeks later.<sup>6</sup>

While battles over marital infidelity, bared breasts, and profanity followed well-worn grooves by the late 1930s, the mounting international crisis that erupted into World War II posed new challenges to the PCA's regulatory apparatus. Hitler's storm troopers, Mussolini's Blackshirts, and the Spanish Civil War offered Hollywood intensely dramatic material. Though most Americans remained resolutely isolationist, many thoughtful observers grew increasingly alarmed about the implications of German, Italian, and Japanese aggression. Hollywood was an intensely political community. Its creative personnel were predominantly liberal to leftist; they were reinforced in the late 1930s by European émigrés who advocated stronger resistance to what they saw as international fascism. Yet little of Hollywood's politics made the transition from the living room or the swimming pool to the screen.

Powerful structural barriers restricted politics on the screen. Hollywood usually eyes "message" pictures coldly, an attitude captured in the bromide attributed to Sam Goldwyn: "If you want to send a message, call Western Union." Like most purveyors of popular culture, the studio moguls tended to view entertainment and social comment as incompatible. Louis B. Mayer's philosophy, said the producer Pandro S. Berman, was that "we were selling beautiful women. . . . And he said if you're selling beautiful women *make* them beautiful. Dress them beautifully. Make them up beautifully. And photograph them beautifully." Many film industry heads were politically and socially conservative. Mayer was a Hoover Republican, and his favorite movies, the Andy Hardy series,



Impromptu wartime conference between PCA chief Joseph Breen (left) and British producer Arthur Rank.

betrayed his nostalgia for a waning Main Street domesticity. Cinema executives' endorsement of the blacklisting of suspected Communists and mere liberals after World War II reflected not merely capitulation to pressure but recognition of their own views.<sup>7</sup>

As seen in previous chapters, foreign trade reinforced Hollywood's caution, since it often meant the difference between break-even and profit. The studio-distributors thus were wary of doing anything that might offend any sizable foreign market. They even went so far as to fire their Jewish employees in Germany when Hitler demanded it. It was no coincidence that studios felt bolder about making antifascist pictures after their films were barred from Germany and Italy in 1940 and the British market thereby assumed greater importance.<sup>8</sup>

The movies' position in American society was paradoxical. Their very popularity gave them power but also encouraged people to attribute great (probably excessive) influence to them. Ongoing anti-Semitic attacks on the Jewish-dominated industry encouraged the moguls, perennially uneasy about their status in their adopted country, to minimize the Jewish presence in the industry and avoid political positions that looked like special pleading for Jewish causes. Will Hays, the master Republican politico and Presbyterian elder, counseled industry self-regulation and avoidance of political controversy on the screen. Politics was not prohibited in the Code, but Hays often invoked the elastic rubric of "industry policy" to pressure studios not to make controversial pictures.<sup>9</sup>

The mounting international crisis in 1937–1938 induced some producers to challenge the institutional barriers to political films. In late 1937, Hitler and Mussolini entered an alliance, which was soon followed by the Fuehrer's *Anschluss* with Austria. The Spanish Republic fell to Franco's Nationalist forces in March 1938, and in September the Munich sellout allowed Hitler to have his way with Czechoslovakia. Some of Hays's lieutenants argued that the screen should be open to more political material, which would be helpful in countering the Justice Department's antitrust suit against the industry in 1938. Filmmakers who attempted projects on the international crisis found, however, that the PCA still threw up roadblocks.<sup>10</sup>

The PCA's institutional bias against political films was reinforced by Breen's anti-Semitism and anticommunism. Although he hid his anti-Semitism in Hollywood, his dislike of Jews poured out in confidential letters to fellow Catholics. "These Jews seem to think of nothing but money making and sexual indulgence," said Breen. "They are, probably, the scum of the scum of the earth." Seemingly unperturbed by the Axis powers' anti-Jewish laws, he dismissed the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League as special pleading. It was "conducted and financed almost entirely by Jews," he said, and used anti-Jewish measures to stir up hostility to Hitler. Breen was sympathetic enough to Mussolini and Hitler in the late 1930s to try to have criticism of their regimes balanced by recognition of their achievements. Like many Catholics, he endorsed Franco and despised the Soviet-aided Spanish Republic. Support for Franco and at least toleration of Hitler and Mussolini was of a piece with the Catholic Church's anticommunism, as was fighting the anti-rightist organizations in Hollywood. Breen believed he was on the front line against red propaganda. In December 1937, he confided to Daniel J. Lord, the Jesuit who had been the Code's chief author, that he was fighting nothing less than a movement to "capture the screen of the United States for Communistic propaganda purposes." This hyperbolic statement strained credulity, but it indicated Breen's determination to block or at least dilute criticism of the right.<sup>11</sup>

In 1938, the independent producer Walter Wanger began work on *BLOCKADE* (1938), which he intended to be sympathetic to the Spanish Republic. Since the screenplay contained no Code violations of any consequence, Breen reluctantly approved it. He insisted, however, that the film avoid identifying either side, a condition that sharply reduced its meaning for the uninitiated. He let stand Henry Fonda's impassioned appeal to the "conscience of the world," since it was cast in vague, general terms. Detached from historical context, the film seems to be a generic war movie. Wanger himself described *BLOCKADE* as nothing more than a "melodramatic spy story and romance in a modern setting—colorful Spain." The Catholic right nonetheless attacked the film as propaganda, the Legion of Decency warned against it, and Martin Quigley editorialized against it in his *Motion Picture Herald*. Some liberals, on the other hand, charged that Hays worked behind the scenes to sabotage exhibitions. The film had a marginally successful run. Under the PCA, the screen could not speak the name of the conflict that was on everyone's lips.<sup>12</sup>

The persistent, politically minded Wanger tried again with a more daring subject, a film based on the journalist Vincent Sheean's best-selling *Personal History*. The reporter-hero discovers Franco's brutality and Hitler's anti-Semitism and rescues several Jews. Breen was unmoved by this factually based material, dismissing it as "pro-Loyalist propaganda . . . pro-Jewish propaganda, and anti-Nazi propaganda." He warned Wanger that the film would cause him "enormous difficulty" and harm the industry. Wanger shelved the project until 1940, when he retitled it *FOREIGN*





Laraine Day and Joel McCrea in Hitchcock's espionage thriller *FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT* (1940).

CORRESPONDENT, hired Alfred Hitchcock for his second Hollywood film, and reduced it to an espionage story with most of the politics left out.<sup>13</sup>

The PCA was as solicitous of Mussolini as it was of Franco. When MGM bought the rights to *Idiot's Delight*, Robert E. Sherwood's Pulitzer Prize-winning play of 1936, the Hays Office expressed opposition to the project. The play offended Mussolini's government because it involved a surprise Italian air attack on Paris and condemned fascism. Trying to meet the objections of the Italian consul in Los Angeles, Breen demanded many changes in the screenplay (which Sherwood himself was bowdlerizing for a fee of \$135,000). Metro agreed to most of them. Breen even carried the script to Rome on his vacation in 1938 and returned with the regime's blessing. The studio finally drew the line when the consul wanted the title changed to further blur any identification with the play. *IDIOT'S DELIGHT* emerged in early 1939 as a showpiece for Clark Gable and Norma Shearer. Its antifascism was tamed, its location moved to "an Alpine never-never land," and its language "denatured into esperanto."<sup>14</sup>

### *The PCA and the War in Europe*

Warner Bros. broke through the dual barriers of studio timidity and PCA resistance with its early-1939 release *CONFESSIONS OF A NAZI SPY*. PCA staffers labeled it "a portentous departure," and it was indeed Hollywood's first explicitly antifascist picture.

*CONFESSIONS* recalled the feisty Warners of the early 1930s. The picture dealt with news as current as the morning's headlines—Nazi spies who were caught and convicted in federal court in New York City. The film reflected the anti-Nazi convictions of its director, Anatole Litvak, and star Paul Lukas, who were German émigrés, and its writer, John Wexley, and other star Edward G. Robinson, who were active in Hollywood's anti-Nazi movement. *CONFESSIONS* explained how Nazism worked and called for American vigilance against the German menace. Hitler still had some defenders in the PCA who argued that the film was unfair because it ignored "his unchallenged political and social achievements" and detailed his dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, matters they considered "extraneous."<sup>15</sup>

Breen had to concede that the evidence produced at the spy trial substantiated the charges against Germany—Warners' reliance on judicial testimony gave the studio a strong defense. But Breen still wanted to stop the picture. As one PCA staffer put it, why should the industry abandon "the pleasant and profitable course of entertainment to engage in propaganda?" Some industry executives, such as Paramount's Luigi Luraschi, doubted the movie was "smart showmanship." Breen advised Jack Warner to scrap the project, warning that several countries, and possibly even some U.S. censor boards, would ban the film. Warners forged ahead, even though several countries obliged the German government by forbidding its exhibition. While *CONFESSIONS* now seems melodramatic and the spy threat inflated, many contemporary critics praised it as indeed a portentous breakthrough in moviemaking. Reflecting the desire of many directors and writers to make more serious films, Wexley termed it "the most exciting and exhilarating work I have ever done in Hollywood."<sup>16</sup>

*CONFESSIONS OF A NAZI SPY* cleared a path for other anti-Nazi films, though the PCA continued to set up roadblocks and detours. When Charles Chaplin decided to put his antifascist political convictions on film in 1938, the Hays Office passed the word that the project was inadvisable. Brooke Wilkinson, head of the British censor board, also indicated that such a film could not play in Britain because of the panel's requirement that a living person could be shown on the screen only if he or she consented. By the time *THE GREAT DICTATOR* was ready for release in September 1940, Poland and France had been humiliated and the Battle of Britain raged. There was little the PCA could reasonably object to in a screenplay that turned Hitler and Mussolini into buffoons and concluded with a plea for universal brotherhood. Breen hailed it as "superb entertainment" and Chaplin as "our greatest artist." The censor sheepishly insisted, however, that the forbidden word *lousy* be removed; Chaplin agreed, sparing all concerned what would have been an even more embarrassing row than that over Rhett Butler's *damn*. Although anti-Nazi films still faced some opposition, Chaplin's political statement made a handsome profit. *THE GREAT DICTATOR* suffered, however, because it bore the stamp of its origins in 1938, when satire was still a plausible tool to use against the Axis. By 1940, Hitler was scarcely a laughing matter, and Chaplin later acknowledged that he would not have made such a film if he had known of the horrors of the death camps.<sup>17</sup>

The boldest anti-Nazi release before Pearl Harbor was the British production *PASTOR HALL* (1940), which portrayed the life of Martin Niemöller, a World War I U-boat captain who became a pacifist minister and was thrown into a Nazi concentration camp. Breen tried to stop American distribution of this "avowedly British propaganda" in June 1940—the very moment Germany overran France—for fear it would expose the industry to charges of "going out of our way to propagandize for the allies." The notion that

exhibiting one such picture among the five hundred or so released annually represented an extraordinary propaganda effort suggested how drastically the PCA narrowed the intellectual scope of the screen. None of the major firms would release it. Breen relented only when James Roosevelt, the president's son, arranged to exhibit it through his Globe Productions (and eventually through UA). The American release version boasted the added cachet of a prologue written by Robert Sherwood and read by Eleanor Roosevelt, although the PCA did cut some of the more violent scenes.<sup>18</sup>

Hollywood's products were more timid, owing particularly to Breen's insistence that they continue to employ the Code formula of not offending any nationality by casting its members as uniformly evil; bad Nazis had to be balanced by some good Germans. Metro's *THE MORTAL STORM* (1940) struck this balance in its essay on anti-Semitism, as did other 1940 releases such as *FOUR SONS*, *ESCAPE*, and *I MARRIED A NAZI* (1940). Fritz Lang, a German émigré, challenged this convention with his *MAN HUNT* (1941). Dudley Nichols's screenplay, submitted to the PCA in March 1941, depicted all Nazis as "brutal and inhuman" and all British as sympathetic. Breen, backed by Hays, demanded that 20th Century-Fox tone down this "inflammatory propaganda" before issuing a seal.<sup>19</sup>

Hollywood skirted the problem of explicit political statements but got its interventionist point across with pictures that glorified the British. In the 1941 releases *A YANK IN THE RAF* and *INTERNATIONAL SQUADRON*, Americans aroused by Britain's peril went off to fly with the Royal Air Force. The parallel with American entry into World War I was exploited for all it was worth in *SERGEANT YORK*, centering on an instinctive pacifist (Gary Cooper as the marksman-hero Alvin York) who wrestles with his conscience, concludes that the Allied cause is just, and enlists. By implication, the United States should follow their examples.<sup>20</sup>

Hollywood was moving to an interventionist beat by the summer of 1941, and the White House was delighted. As Lowell Mellett, one of FDR's media aides, put it: "Practically everything being shown on the screen from newsreel to fiction that touches on our national purpose is of the right sort."<sup>21</sup> Roosevelt sent a special message to the 1941 Oscar ceremony in which he praised the industry's contribution to the defense effort. And months later, as seen in chapter 3, isolationist senators led by Gerald Nye openly attacked the industry for its interventionist propaganda—and were routed by the special counsel, Wendell Willkie, who vigorously defended Hollywood for taking an antifascist line.<sup>22</sup> Yet there was less to the screen's interventionism than might have met the eye. Hays and Breen forced the studios to moderate some positions, and their opposition no doubt deterred some producers from making more antifascist films. Though some institutional restraints would have remained, without the Hays Office Hollywood would have taken a stronger, more frequent stand against the Axis and would have been more sympathetic to American intervention.

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor made the debate about U.S. involvement in the war moot, and it radically affected both the propaganda function and the regulation of motion pictures as well. The wartime Office of Censorship screened all Hollywood products to determine whether to permit their export. The newly formed Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs, headed by the youthful Nelson Rockefeller, worked with the MPPDA to improve the portrayal of Latin America. And the most direct and systematic government regulation ever attempted of a popular American medium occurred under the Office of War Information, the propaganda agency.

### *The OWI in the Early War Years*

Roosevelt created the OWI by executive order in June 1942 in an attempt to bring order from the chaos of the half-dozen overlapping propaganda agencies that had operated before the war. Believing the movies were crucial to the propaganda war, he charged the OWI with establishing a liaison with the motion picture industry. FDR insisted that the OWI avoid the "hate the Hun" excesses of the World War I-era Committee on Public Information (the Creel Committee), which had given movie propaganda a bad name. Experienced newsmen were chosen in the hope that they would give the agency credibility. Heading the OWI was the popular radio commentator Elmer Davis, who insisted that his agency's only goal was to "tell the truth."<sup>23</sup> Promoting a war in which rights and wrongs were clearer than in many conflicts, the OWI committed fewer excesses than most propaganda agencies. But controversy, evasion, and falsification were endemic in a context in which, as the *mot* went, "truth is the first casualty."

Whatever his commitment to the truth, Davis also believed, as he confided to his staff, that "the easiest way to propagandize people is to let a propaganda theme go in through an entertainment picture when people do not realize they are being propagandized." Infusing movies with a memorable but subtle propaganda theme fell to the OWI's Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP). It was run by the former newspaperman Lowell Mellett. His deputy was Nelson Poynter, the 39-year-old liberal publisher of the *St. Petersburg Times*. Operating from a suite in the Taft Building at the corner of Hollywood and Vine, Poynter handled the day-to-day relations with the studios. While these editors' New Deal credentials appealed to the OWI, their lack of experience with film (Poynter seldom even went to the movies) proved to be a serious handicap. Several reviewers, mostly women, analyzed scripts, screened finished pictures, and helped with studio liaison. Dorothy Jones, head of the reviewing unit, devoted her life to movie analysis and political activism; after the war, she wrote a book on the portrayal of Asians in American films and founded Another Mother for Peace. The reviewer Marjorie Thorson parlayed her OWI experience into a job with MGM, where she spent many years as a script doctor.<sup>24</sup>

The BMP insisted that its job was to advise, not to censor. The bureau could not bar production and exhibition of pictures it disapproved. Poynter correctly maintained that the studios could make any films they wanted and distribute them in the United States, so long as they were not treasonable. But the OWI in fact had considerable power. As a government agency in wartime, it had to be taken very seriously; a recalcitrant studio risked accusations of not doing its part. Moreover, the Office of Censorship's control of export licenses gave the government economic leverage that the studios took seriously. Since its recommendations carried weight with the Office of Censorship, the OWI had more than patriotic suasion at its command. As the *Motion Picture Herald* put it: "No one has yet advanced an argument in support of producing a picture known in advance to be doomed to domestic exhibition exclusively."<sup>25</sup>

In the eyes of OWI analysts, Hollywood displayed more zeal about the war than it did political judgment. Bending industry conventions to the OWI's political goals was difficult. The BMP codified its view of the war in the forty-two-page "Manual for the Motion Picture Industry" in July 1942. The first question everyone involved in a production should ask, said the bureau, was, "Will this picture help win the war?" The bureau's war aims were imbued with Vice President Henry Wallace's *Century of the*



*Common Man* (1943), the bible of liberals and left-liberals at war. The BMP manual described the global conflict as a "people's war" between freedom and fascism. The enemy was not the German, Italian, or Japanese people but the ruling elites and their ideologies. An Allied victory promised a world New Deal, which would combine a regulated capitalism with an extension of social welfare programs; America would abandon isolationism to participate in a system of collective security. Many studios, particularly Warner Bros., whose namesakes admired Roosevelt, distributed the manual widely to their staffs. But other studios, notably Paramount, which was headed by the Georgia conservative Frank Freeman, were wary. To many industry executives, OWI doctrine was too statist and internationalist. Beneath the rhetoric of helping the war effort, the moguls fought with their new regulators over how far they would go in the OWI's liberal crusade.<sup>26</sup>

Conflict began in the summer of 1942 as the Bureau of Motion Pictures screened Hollywood's first war pictures. The OWI reviewers found them appalling. *LITTLE TOKYO, U.S.A.*, a B movie from 20th Century-Fox, encapsulated most of what the OWI disliked. OWI reviewers termed it an "invitation to the Witch Hunt!" The film portrayed all people of Japanese descent in the United States as disloyal and as tools in Tokyo's diabolical plot, decades in the making, to attack Pearl Harbor. BMP reviewers also disliked the glorification of extraconstitutional methods; the detective hero tramples all over the Bill of Rights as he ferrets out traitors in "Little Tokyo" in Los Angeles. But the OWI had little leverage. The army cooperated in making the film, and the Office of



*LITTLE TOKYO, U.S.A.* (1942) was precisely the kind of paranoid, jingoistic war film that the OWI railed against in the early war years.

Censorship gave it an export license. In response to the OWI's objections, Fox made a few changes but did not alter the basic story. After all, it was the picture, rather than OWI's pronouncements, that reflected government policy. *LITTLE TOKYO, U.S.A.* taught the propaganda agency a lesson. To have maximum influence, the OWI, like the PCA, had to first have a look at screenplays; once a picture was nearly finished, the studios were likely to make only minor changes.<sup>27</sup>

OWI staffers' frustration mounted as they screened other releases in the fall of 1942. Metro's *THE MAN ON AMERICA'S CONSCIENCE* recklessly strayed into the tinderbox of race relations. The film limned an impossibly noble President Andrew Johnson and in the process traduced his adversary Thaddeus Stevens, the champion of the freed people during Reconstruction. The OWI settled for reshooting some scenes and a change of title to the less provocative *TENNESSEE JOHNSON*. Sometimes the OWI's concerns were warranted; in other cases, the humorless reviewers lost their perspective. They were convinced that Preston Sturges's *THE PALM BEACH STORY*, a satire of the idle rich, was a "libel on America at war" and exactly the wrong kind of escape picture for the time.<sup>28</sup>

Alarmed by such pictures, the OWI became increasingly interventionist. When Poynter read the screenplay for *SO PROUDLY WE HAIL*, Paramount's tribute to the heroic nurses on Bataan, he wrote several pages of suggested dialogue. The finished picture incorporated the thrust of his ideas but not his language, which was more suited to the editorial page than an embattled nurse. Poynter had breached an unspoken but fundamental taboo. Joseph Breen, an industry insider in a way Poynter never could be, might suggest rewriting a line or two, but never whole pages. The conservative Paramount hierarchy was infuriated by the OWI New Dealers' invasion of studio prerogatives.<sup>29</sup>

Compounding Poynter's blunder, Mellett overreached himself. He notified the studios on 9 December 1942 that "it would be advisable" to submit screenplays, and even treatments, to the OWI for early appraisal. Never before had a government agency demanded such control over motion pictures. "CENSORS SHARPEN AXES," bannered *Variety*. Most of the studio heads bitterly criticized the BMP's demand, fretting about the OWI's aspiring screenwriters larding their films with indigestible, liberal dialogue. Recognizing that Mellett's letter was disastrous, the OWI chief, Elmer Davis, quickly backed down and said that submissions were "purely voluntary."<sup>30</sup>

The moguls' outrage at being "censored" would have led the unwary to think Hollywood was a bastion of free speech. In reality, the industry had always lived with censorship. With scarcely a murmur, it had agreed to PCA regulation—a closeted, unaccountable censorship ideologically inspired by a conservative religious minority. The movies accepted censorship by a host of state and local censorship boards, bent to the wishes of pressure groups it deemed important, genuflected to southern racism, and allowed foreign—even hostile—governments to vet screenplays. Yet the industry claimed to be violated when its own government, in wartime, made similar demands. What was at stake was not a First Amendment principle but control of the production process. The PCA was a creature of the industry and had built a stable working relationship with the studios. External censorship boards dealt only with finished pictures, not the production process. Other interventions were episodic. Mellett threatened detailed invasion of studio prerogatives by an outside agency that spoke a language alien to Hollywood and whose minor bureaucrats often bypassed studio executives.

Mellett's and Poynter's blunders proved costly indeed for the OWI. In Congress, the conservative coalition of Republicans and southern Democrats, under the guise of cutting government waste, took aim at the liberal propagandists. Part of this opposition

stemmed from Hollywood's complaints. In the spring of 1943, Congress whittled the OWI domestic branch's budget to about 10 percent of its original funding, guaranteeing it would be ineffectual.<sup>31</sup>

Ironically, the virtual demise of the domestic branch enhanced the power of the OWI's Hollywood liaison office. The key to the kingdom of Hollywood lay in the overseas branch. These operations were handled by Ulric Bell, who forcefully presented the case that bad pictures hurt America abroad. The studios thought they were better judges of what American audiences wanted than was the OWI, but they were hard-pressed to counter objections based on foreign and military policy. Bell convinced the Office of Censorship to follow OWI recommendations on almost all pictures; by the summer of 1943, his office had become "an advance guard for the Office of Censorship," said the *Motion Picture Herald*. The OWI could now block exhibition, a power that always made the studios more tractable. As the Allied offensive liberated enemy territory, the agency's ability to help the box office interested Hollywood even more. The standard package the liberators handed out included food, DDT louse killer, and OWI-approved movies. As industry executives realized that the OWI wanted "only to be helpful, their attitudes change[d] remarkably," observed Robert Riskin, a top screenwriter who worked for the OWI overseas branch.<sup>32</sup>

### *The OWI and Hollywood's Portrayal of the Allies*

By the autumn of 1943, the once-antagonistic demands of propaganda and popular culture began to dovetail. The result was not unlike the process by which the PCA came to be accepted in Hollywood. As the studios learned that working with the OWI brought predictability and profit without damaging the moguls' control of production, they were only too ready to cooperate. The results were visible in all areas of Hollywood production—the home front, the allies, the enemy, and the hope for a peaceful postwar world.

The OWI's hopes for a suitable treatment of the home front were well realized in David O. Selznick's monumental *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY* (1944). Bell praised the "corking story," and his successor, William Cunningham, thanked Selznick for his "splendid cooperation with this office." As seen in chapter 7, the film traces the experience of an idealized middle-class Ohio family as they cope with the father departing for war, the mother getting a factory job, and a daughter losing a boyfriend in battle; on a snowy Christmas Eve, the family receives the report of the father's return to safety. Selznick included a host of OWI-approved vignettes to promote the war effort: the family cheerfully enduring travel on a crowded train, a sailor ponying up five months' salary for war bonds, a well-heeled businessman improbably willing to pay 100 percent in income tax, and a stout matron praising the taste of margarine in comparison to butter. *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY*, concluded *Commonweal's* reviewer, Philip Hartung, was "the definitive home-front movie . . . until a realist comes along to show us what life is really like in America during World War II."<sup>33</sup>

A realist would have found abundant dramatic material in the tensions that suffused the home front. Not surprisingly, neither the PCA-limited studios nor the OWI's propagandists wanted to really tackle those issues. Instead, they crafted a message of reassurance as Americans tried to cope with the bewildering gender, racial, and labor conflicts that Selznick papered over in his idyll of Ohio middle-class domesticity.

Working women raised anxieties that the OWI was eager to dispel. The agency reported "all cheers and hosannas" for RKO's *TENDER COMRADE* (1943), a Ginger Rogers vehicle that was Hollywood's most systematic treatment of women's wartime role. With a screenplay by the Communist Party member Dalton Trumbo, *TENDER COMRADE* praised working women, scolded women who hoarded scarce war goods or indulged in the black market, and gave women some of the good speeches that usually went to men about what we were fighting for. Yet for all the film's supposed feminism, the OWI failed to notice that the film remained imprisoned in Hollywood gender conventions. Women are most intent on catching a man; the film implies that, when the war ends, they will leave the assembly line without complaint for their "normal" place in the kitchen and the nursery. Nor did the all-male production staff allow the heroine to grieve over her husband's death in combat. Instead, they converted this private moment into a platform for instructing wives and sweethearts on how to place their loved ones' deaths in geopolitical perspective.<sup>34</sup>

The OWI also hoped to use the movies to improve race relations—one of the most conspicuous wartime problems. Jim Crow still suffused American law and mores, and the United States fought for democracy with a rigidly segregated army and navy. Race riots seared major cities like Detroit. The OWI paid lip service to a campaign led by Walter White, head of the NAACP, and Wendell Willkie, chairman of the 20th Century-Fox board, to improve the depiction of blacks. Some advances were made in improving what had been, with few exceptions, a dismal record. In a few instances, blacks won better roles, although they were often limited, like Lena Horne's role in *STORMY WEATHER*, to the cinematic ghetto of the song-and-dance revue. In other cases, they were dignified minor roles, such as Leigh Whipper helping to avert a lynching in *THE OX-BOW INCIDENT*, and *LIFEBOAT's* Canada Lee being treated at times as an equal by his fellow survivors, though his previous occupation as a pickpocket is also highlighted. MGM's *BATAAN* sped up the integration of combat units by a decade by adding Kenneth Spencer to a platoon, if in a distinctly secondary position.<sup>35</sup>

On balance, however, Hollywood's vision was little changed by government oversight. *TENNESSEE JOHNSON*, the first major battle over racial issues, was also the last, since the OWI was not willing to go beyond mild admonitions to the studios about race. Lowell Mellett asked Metro to scrap the nearly completed picture, not because it was unfair to blacks but because it threatened domestic unity. The studio refused, and the OWI was content with some reshooting that softened Thaddeus Stevens's villainy, used Andrew Johnson to spotlight upward mobility and the American dream, and preached progress through the ballot box instead of bullets. The last was surely an ironic message for blacks, who won their freedom in the crucible of war and then saw their right to vote systematically denied by legal chicanery and violence. *TENNESSEE JOHNSON* included only two black characters and barely hinted of slavery. "Writing out" black characters and racial issues was easier than relearning race relations for wartime Hollywood. Throwbacks to pre-World War II images continued. Selznick transposed Hattie McDaniel from her role as Scarlett's devoted slave in *GONE WITH THE WIND* to the Hiltons' live-in maid, suggestively named Fidelia, in *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY*. Ann Hilton can no longer afford Fidelia during the war, but this devoted soul nonetheless returns to cook and clean for the white folks—for free—when she gets off work at the factory. The critic James Agee noted sardonically that, brimming with "malapropisms, comic relief, and mother wit," Fidelia "satisfied all that anyone could possibly desire of a Negro in restive times."<sup>36</sup>



The OWI was willing to fight harder for labor unions, a key component of the Roosevelt coalition. Membership in unions doubled during the war, and their members were a big part of the movie audience. In the original screenplay for his epic *AN AMERICAN ROMANCE* (1944), MGM's conservative King Vidor glorified his rags-to-riches industrialist hero and implied that unions were violent, subversive organizations. The OWI insisted that labor move from the streets to the conference table. Metro's E. J. Mannix "yelled and screamed," Poynter reported, and charged that the OWI forced him to make a "new deal picture." The agency and the studio eventually agreed to show moderate unions and reasonable management as cooperative rather than antagonistic, in contrast to an early version in which management dispersed strikers with riot police and tear gas. As the union president said, in *AN AMERICAN ROMANCE*, borrowing from the OWI manual, "Efficient production demands cooperation between labor and management."<sup>37</sup>

Having won a position of power in American politics, moderate labor unions could be accommodated, albeit reluctantly, on the screen. But race and gender raised divisive issues that the national discourse was only beginning to address and often preferred to bury. Both propaganda monitors and popular culture marketers found safe harbor in an illusory national unity.

Just as the home front had to be remodeled into an idealized America, so too were the Allies airbrushed into progressive democracies. This effort required Hollywood to modify some of its cherished stereotypes of foreigners (specifically the British and Chinese) and to tackle a subject it had long avoided—the Russians. The results were misleading and in some cases grossly deceptive—in their own ways as bad, or worse, than Hollywood's old stereotypes. Where Hollywood once tended to exoticize foreigners, the OWI taught how much they resembled Americans.

Great Britain presented the fewest problems. Although Americans generally admired and trusted the British, the OWI feared that hatred of imperialism and the class system might undermine that support. With Churchill determined to hang on to the empire, the OWI decided to ignore the issue. When MGM wanted to re-release *KIM*, and RKO *GUNGA DIN* (1939), two Kiplingesque adventures that glorify imperialism, the OWI appealed to the studios to leave them on the shelf, and they agreed. The class issue bedeviled Metro's *THE WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER* (1944), peopled by condescending aristocrats who acted as if the war were being fought to preserve Ashworth Manor. Although the studio submitted eighty pages of script changes in response to OWI criticisms in 1943, the film's warm aristocratic haze remained. The studio paid for its indulgence in 1944 when the OWI overseas branch ruled the film could not be shown in the lucrative British market. Ironically, two films that the OWI considered models of how to deal with the class issue—MGM's Oscar-winning *MRS. MINIVER* and Fox's *THIS ABOVE ALL*—were both released in 1942 before the OWI began its regulatory efforts. Both films projected a unified Britain, mobilized for war, in which class lines were being dissolved. If the class system proved more durable than these warmhearted films depicted it, they were nonetheless popular propaganda for Americans who believed they were all resolutely middle-class.<sup>38</sup>

"Give us a Mrs. Miniver of China and Russia," Poynter implored studio executives. He was asking the impossible, but Hollywood tried to comply.<sup>39</sup> The Chinese reality scarcely fit either the OWI or Hollywood image. Roosevelt envisioned China as a major power that could serve as one of the "four policemen" of the postwar world. But the country was riven by civil war between Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists and Mao Tse-

tung's Communists, neither of whom resembled FDR's democratic ethos. The OWI wanted China portrayed as "a great nation, cultured and liberal," that had been fighting the Axis since 1933 and was evolving toward democracy. This political mythmaking clashed with Hollywood's mythic China, which veered between the simple, lovable peasantry of *THE GOOD EARTH* (1937) and the sinister factionalism of *SHANGHAI EXPRESS* (1932). Hollywood capitalized on China's exotic background for several pictures released in 1942 before the OWI began work. The propaganda agency disliked all of them, such as the John Wayne vehicle *FLYING TIGERS*, because they showed Americans winning the war single-handedly and the Chinese relegated to inferior positions.<sup>40</sup>

The OWI converted Hollywood to its own myth, with results that were as politically dubious as the studios' prewar fantasies, and certainly more tedious cinematically. The original screenplay for MGM's *DRAGON SEED*, based on Pearl Buck's novel of the same title, offended the OWI by showing the Chinese as backward illiterates with little political consciousness. The drastically revised screenplay, submitted in 1943, adopted the OWI's vision of politically astute Chinese mobilized for the "people's war." Both the OWI and Hollywood preferred a Westernized China. Since Asians were unthinkable in the leading roles, *DRAGON SEED* starred (most improbably) Katharine Hepburn, who was Orientalized with slanted eyes.<sup>41</sup>

The OWI took pride in another propaganda victory—*KEYS OF THE KINGDOM*, starring Gregory Peck as a Roman Catholic missionary in early-twentieth-century China. The OWI objected bitterly to the initial screenplay, by the star writers Nunnally Johnson and Joseph Mankiewicz, which showed a backward China beset by marauding warlords.



Walter Huston (center) and Katharine Hepburn (far right) in *DRAGON SEED* (1944).

The agency rejected the studio's idea of an easy fix—a prologue stating that the film dealt with an earlier China. To the OWI, the screenplay should show the Nationalist forces battling for a new, modern, unified China. T. K. Chang, the influential Chinese consul in Los Angeles, seconded the OWI. Twentieth Century-Fox finally agreed and adopted the OWI's political analysis. As always when Catholicism was portrayed, Catholic priests stood by to oversee church matters. Released in 1944, *KEYS OF THE KINGDOM* shows Republican Nationalist forces fighting for a new China, and peasants' mud huts are transformed into what elated OWI reviewers described as "neat, little brick places with considerable feeling of civilization about them." The China that Hollywood constructed under OWI regulation offered a reassuring—if grossly inaccurate—tribute to a modern China that was awakening, under Western political and religious tutelage.<sup>42</sup>

Remodeling the image of the Soviet Union was an even more daunting task than Great Britain and China presented. Before the war, Hollywood made few movies about the Soviet Union; the industry had no market there, and Russian subjects did not seem likely to be popular with Western audiences. The PCA was prepared to veto a picture favorable to the Soviets, as Lewis Milestone found in 1934 when Breen warned him against making "Red Square." The most memorable prewar Russian film was *NINOTCHKA* (1939), in which Melvyn Douglas, an émigré Russian count, induces Greta Garbo, a Communist dominatrix, to defect by plying her with capitalist luxuries and romantic love. In place of such sly satire, Hollywood collaborated with the OWI during the war to humanize the Russians and whitewash Stalinism. As *Variety* said: "War has put Hollywood's traditional conception of the Muscovites through the wringer, and they have come out shaved, washed, sober, good to their families, Rotarians, brother Elks, and 33rd Degree Mason."<sup>43</sup>

The most important—and controversial—wartime film about the Soviet Union was Warners' *MISSION TO MOSCOW* (1943). The Warners eagerly accepted Roosevelt's request that they make a picture from the memoirs of Joseph E. Davies, who as ambassador to Moscow from 1936 to 1938 displayed a credulous sympathy for the Soviet experiment. Davies worked closely with the studio and twice reported personally to Roosevelt on the film's progress. While the OWI took a backseat in these negotiations, some of its favorite themes emerged, particularly the isolationists' folly and the Soviets' devotion to collective security. In *MISSION TO MOSCOW*, the Soviet Union became a pleasant land of consumerist plenty, the dreaded secret police bumbling Keystone Kops, Stalin an omniscient world statesman, and the massive purges of the 1930s necessary measures to root out a fifth column. The OWI called the film "a magnificent contribution" and superb entertainment—a judgment in which Jack Warner happily concurred.<sup>44</sup>

To political critics, the film should have been titled, as the bitter joke went, "Submission to Moscow." Breen abhorred the film's politics. But ever the realist, he realized that the PCA had to yield to Washington on wartime political matters. Ruefully noting Davies's and the OWI's sanction of the film, he said: "In the face of all this, it seems to me that we . . . can do little but approve the material." He cautioned Warners, however, that the film would arouse "considerable protest." It did. Outraged editorialists and dogged pickets harried the film; most of the protest was generated by the right wing, but some emanated from tough-minded anti-Stalinist leftists. (In 1947, as the cold war and red-baiting intensified, Jack Warner withdrew *MISSION TO MOSCOW* from release and delivered Howard Koch, whom he had pressured to write the screenplay, to the wolves of the House Un-American Activities Committee.) Nor was the long, talky

film as entertaining as the OWI and Jack Warner had hoped. "This mishmash is directly and firmly in the tradition of Hollywood politics," said the *New Republic's* Manny Farber. "A while ago it was Red-baiting, now it is Red-praising in the same sense—ignorantly. To a democratic intelligence it is repulsive and insulting."<sup>45</sup>

Every major studio except Paramount enlisted with a Russian picture, but they tried to minimize the politics. The OWI and the Soviet embassy read the screenplays. The best known was Samuel Goldwyn's *THE NORTH STAR* (1943), written by Lillian Hellman and directed by William Wyler. *THE NORTH STAR* tried to humanize average Russians and to valorize their resistance to the German invaders, but it succeeded mainly in Americanizing them. Metro offered a musical tribute with *SONG OF RUSSIA* (1943); romance leavens politics in United Artists' *THREE RUSSIAN GIRLS* (1943); love and resistance are joined in RKO's *DAYS OF GLORY* (1944); and a band of teenagers thwart the Wehrmacht almost single-handedly in Columbia's *BOY FROM STALINGRAD* (1943). The last Russian film, Columbia's *COUNTER-ATTACK* (1945), boasted a screenplay by John Howard Lawson, a Communist Party member, who worked in many of the OWI's points. But by the time of its release in 1945, mounting doubts about Soviet-American friendship led Columbia to downplay ideology for straightforward action.<sup>46</sup>

The propagandists tried to get the studios faithfully to translate national policy about the Allies to the screen. In this they were, perhaps regrettably, successful. The results too often were ludicrous: a classless Britain (or worse, a romanticized aristocracy) devoid



Hollywood's efforts to celebrate—and romanticize—Russia's war with Germany included *THE NORTH STAR* (1943).



of imperial ambitions; a progressive, unified China under Chiang Kai-shek instead of a desperately poor society plagued by corruption, brutality, and civil war; and a benign Soviet Union led by an avuncular, farsighted Stalin. Although the movies took on particular colorations because of the OWI's intervention, they reflected a national disposition, which Roosevelt encouraged, to construct artificial allies and avoid hard questions. Experienced political journalists, epitomized by Henry Luce's *Time* and *Life*, constructed the Britains, Chinas, and Soviet Unions they thought would be useful to their political agendas.<sup>47</sup> For all their encomiums to "the truth," neither the White House, the OWI, the news media, nor Hollywood was willing to run the risk that the public would draw the wrong conclusions during wartime from a "warts and all" portrait.

### *The OWI and Hollywood's Portrayal of the Enemy*

The care which the OWI lavished on the portrayal of the Allies was mirrored by its concern for the correct image of the enemies. The propaganda agency warned against the simplistic "hate pictures" which stirred up irrational hatred during World War I and thwarted postwar peace efforts. The enemy, insisted the OWI, was the doctrine of fascism and its ruling cliques, not the German or Japanese people. The Allies would win, but only with a supreme effort against these "cunning, tough, cruel" foes. Movies that showed wisecracking Yanks effortlessly knocking off the enemy deceived the public about how tough this war was. With its penchant for adapting the formulas of Westerns and gangster pictures to the war, Hollywood needed the OWI's correctives. If anything, the propagandists underestimated the brutality of the enemy, particularly Germany, about whose anti-Semitism the OWI remained too cautiously mute.<sup>48</sup>

The portrayal of the Japanese was the single most intractable problem government regulators faced. Pictures such as *LITTLE TOKYO, U.S.A.* established the themes of diabolical Japanese conspiracy and revealed a deep-seated American racism. The OWI was timid, and largely unsuccessful, in challenging these racist representations. Most movies showed all Japanese as fanatically devoted to the emperor, routinely practicing despicable battlefield tactics, and lacking any redeeming qualities. They were not individuals but, as explained in Frank Capra's "Why We Fight" documentary *KNOW YOUR ENEMY—JAPAN* (1945), "photographic prints off the same negative." One of the few individualized Japanese characters was the propaganda minister in *BEHIND THE RISING SUN* (1943), who realized his country's cause was wrong and committed suicide. In such films as *BATAAN* (1943), *GUADALCANAL DIARY* (1943), and *THE PURPLE HEART* (1944), the Japanese were little more than beasts who took naturally to jungle fighting. Faced with the virulent hatred of the Japanese, the OWI seldom fought such portrayals, choosing to block export licenses only in the most flagrant cases.<sup>49</sup>

While the PCA deferred to the OWI on political questions, its preoccupation with profanity and individual guilt remained intact. In Zanuck's *THE PURPLE HEART*, a young Chinese man murders his traitorous father. The OWI praised the politically conscious character as an exemplar of the new freedom-loving China. But Breen ruled out parricide, even in the cause of democracy, and insisted that the son be tried by the Japanese for murder. The PCA chief also tried to protect the screen from profanity even when it peppered the exact words of none other than General Joseph "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell in a prologue to the Errol Flynn vehicle *OBJECTIVE BURMA*. Breen initially vetoed Stilwell's comment that U.S. forces took a "hell of a licking," only to reverse himself. But the PCA

chief refused to allow the general to say "by God" on the screen because the expression was "intrinsically objectionable." Meanwhile, the PCA allowed repeated references to the Japanese as "dirty yellow rats," "blasted monkeys," and the like to litter the screen.<sup>50</sup>

The Germans received a much more nuanced treatment than the Japanese. As fellow Caucasians, they did not suffer from anti-Asian racism, and they had not launched a surprise attack on American territory. Moreover, the endemic horror of Nazism, culminating in the Holocaust, was inadequately grasped by Americans during the war. In contrast to the evil Japanese mass, Hollywood followed the OWI's lead and created individual German characters and distinguished between good Germans and evil Nazis.

The divergence between German and Japanese representations appears starkly in the 20th Century-Fox release *THE MOON IS DOWN* (1943). The German officers are sharply differentiated characters. While some officers are Nazi villains, Lt. Tonder is an innocent, handsome, likable farm boy who doubts Hitler's sanity and hates occupation duty in Norway. When he meets his death at the hands of a Norwegian war widow—an opportunity to salute the resistance movements—it is as a fellow human being, not a diabolical enemy.<sup>51</sup>

Dramatizing the resistance movements was a key theme in 1942–1943, since American army contact with the Germans was slow to develop. In *THIS LAND IS MINE* (1943), a collaboration of the leading talents Jean Renoir and Dudley Nichols, Charles Laughton delivers an impassioned oration against Nazi tyranny. The OWI wanted his speech to stir the townspeople to active uprising, but the agency rested content with the unusually detailed exploration of Nazi ideology. *CASABLANCA*, probably the most famous film from the war, provided a human story of the war's effects and of various modes of resistance. To the OWI, however, Rick's cynicism persisted too long. They wanted the picture to end not with the immortal line, "This could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship," but with Humphrey Bogart declaiming about the Four Freedoms. Luckily, Hollywood's sense of story overrode the OWI's political agenda. The OWI approved *CASABLANCA* for export, except to North Africa, where America's tangled relations with Vichy France made the subject too touchy.<sup>52</sup>

However much the OWI wished for serious examinations of Hitlerism, PCA restrictions would have blocked any film that did more than hint at Nazi horror. Paramount and the OWI worked unusually closely to make *THE HITLER GANG* (1944) a credible explanation of Nazism, only to find the PCA using the Code to block them. The film was not without its problems. Straining for a link between popular ideas of personal perversion and brutal statecraft, Paramount suggested that an impotent Hitler had a perverted attraction to young girls and that many Nazis were homosexual (the latter notion a travesty in view of Nazi persecution of gays). Breen objected that *THE HITLER GANG* contained "an orgy of bestiality and brutality such as the civilized world has never witnessed." That was, of course, the point Paramount and the OWI were trying to make. Breen insisted that such material be cut, including a blasphemous speech a Nazi had actually given. The OWI was not willing to fight the PCA over sex and blasphemy, just as the PCA deferred, however unhappily, to the OWI on politics. After five months of struggle, Paramount capitulated to the PCA. Even if Paramount and the OWI were wrong about some particulars, their instincts about Nazism's utter depravity were right. This was something which Americans gradually came to comprehend after the war and which millions of Europeans knew from firsthand experience during the war. The PCA, however, was determined to insulate Americans from all but faint intimations of the nature of the enemy.<sup>53</sup>

Both the PCA and the OWI wanted depictions of battlefield violence to be carefully contained. The PCA strictly enforced the Code's warnings against gruesomeness. The OWI encouraged a modicum of battlefield realism in order to prepare the public for casualties, but within rather antiseptic limits. The propagandists primarily wanted to ensure that Hollywood employed a "people's army" with ethnically, religiously, and geographically diverse platoons whose members articulated what they were fighting for. For the most part, battle films, such as *WAKE ISLAND* (1942), made combat look no more deadly than a football game. Combat pictures often were a variant on a proven genre—the success story. As the OWI wished, dedicated men carry out their civic virtue and are rewarded with the promise of a better life. *PRIDE OF THE MARINES* (1945) followed the real-life story of a Philadelphia marine who was severely wounded in the Pacific and then restored to health by a loving nurse in a well-equipped service hospital. Virtually the only exception to such formulae was William Wellman's *THE STORY OF GI JOE* (1945), based on Ernie Pyle's memorable dispatches. Its gritty, documentary-style realism, avoidance of false heroics, and laconic acknowledgment of the randomness of death gave the film an uncharacteristic, uncomfortable verisimilitude. Nevertheless, *THE STORY OF GI JOE* offered only a glimpse of realism about the war, a perspective that both the OWI and the PCA, for their own reasons, wished to ignore.<sup>54</sup>

### Conclusion

Eager to close down war agencies, President Harry Truman abolished the OWI effective 31 August 1945. For three years the propagandists policed film politics while the PCA maintained its accustomed watch over morality and propriety. Hollywood, initially fearful of government demands, learned that propaganda and popular culture were remarkably compatible—and even highly profitable. The studios proved to be surprisingly compliant, once they were reassured that the OWI would not impair their control of production and learned that cooperation paid big dividends with foreign distribution. The OWI's Bureau of Motion Pictures noted happily that from September 1943 to August 1944 the studios changed screenplays in 71 percent of the cases where the agency made suggestions or registered objections.<sup>55</sup>

The OWI added a degree of seriousness and political sophistication to wartime filmmaking. The agency labored within the constraints that the historian Robert A. Rosenstone has noted of feature films: "Dramatic features put individuals in the forefront of the historical process, which means that the solution of their personal problems or their individual redemption substitutes itself for the solution of historical problems."<sup>56</sup> *SINCE YOU WENT AWAY*, *TENDER COMRADE*, and *PRIDE OF THE MARINES* were cases in point. In some instances, the OWI's intervention improved wartime representations: labor unions received better treatment than they otherwise might have, important distinctions were made between the German people and their Nazi overlords, and the ideals for which the Allies fought received more recognition than filmmaking conventions ordinarily allowed. In many cases, however, the OWI supplanted old Hollywood myths with new ones cut to fit wartime fashion. Too often they entailed evasion, distortion, and outright falsification.

The OWI avoided the excesses of the World War I Creel Committee, and the agency was different in kind from the Nazi and Soviet propaganda agencies. The OWI's regulation of Hollywood was not so bad as state control of the cinema in Germany and the

Soviet Union (where, ironically, the studios ground out chiefly nonpolitical escape pictures during the war).<sup>57</sup> And yet in its short life, the American propaganda agency raised in a milder form the danger that government regulation may reinforce the narrow range of opinions expressed by a popular culture oligopoly as it follows a corporate strategy of limiting the scope of permissible content.

Breen's Production Code Administration held to its rigid interpretation of the Code in the face of wartime social upheaval. Moral standards were in flux as a restless nation—and particularly young adults—experienced unprecedented challenges to social conventions. Marriage, birth, and divorce rates soared. Cut loose from their home communities, millions of Americans experienced new sexual freedom. They now enjoyed the experiences the Production Code forbade the movies to display openly or without condemnation. Breen detected "a distinct tendency toward moral laxity" in the material which the studios submitted. But he saw the Code as an expression of unchanging moral precepts. He assured Will Hays that the PCA "uniformly and impartially rejected all such unacceptable material." Lapses from Breen's earlier watchfulness could be cited: the chorus line in the Carmen Miranda spectacle *THE GANG'S ALL HERE* (1943) that swings giant papier-mâché bananas in and out between their legs; the light treatment of marriage in Preston Sturges's madcap *THE MIRACLE OF MORGAN'S CREEK*; the adultery and murder that gave *DOUBLE INDEMNITY* a "sordid flavor." Yet the quiescence of watchdog groups, notably the Legion of Decency, testified to Breen's ability to steer films clear of dangerous territory.<sup>58</sup>

Breen needed all his resolve as the PCA faced new regulatory challenges after the war. With the Legion dug in behind the PCA, every inch of liberated footage in Hollywood would be hard fought. Postwar films like *DUEL IN THE SUN* prefigured growing opposition to the PCA. From 1939 through 1945, the PCA and the OWI had steered Hollywood through upheavals in morality and politics. Most of the challenges since mid-1934 had focused on particular points of interpretation. By the late 1940s, however, the very notion of the Code came under attack. The Code—and indeed the very structure of the industry—was living on borrowed time. The stability—and the concomitant limitations—that such regulation of content had brought to the industry would face an unprecedented threat in the changing economic, cultural, and moral climate of postwar America.



- picture deal for \$150,000 per picture plus 10 percent of the gross revenues above \$1.5 million, as well as story and role approval—a remarkable contract by current industry standards. Cagney pact of 7 July 1939, THE BRIDE CAME COD file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
76. Garfield first attracted attention in a minor role in a 1938 woman's picture for Warners, FOUR DAUGHTERS. The long-term pact was signed 13 February 1939; DUST BE MY DESTINY file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
  77. Raft contract, 15 June 1939, BACKGROUND TO DANGER file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
  78. Bogart contract, 31 December 1937, THEY MADE ME A CRIMINAL file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
  79. Walsh contract, 16 May 1939, Walsh legal file, Warner Bros. Archives, Department of Special Collections, Doheny Library, University of Southern California (hereafter Warner Archive, USC).
  80. See Hellinger deal (option taken at \$1,750 per week) of 1 July 1940, Hellinger legal file, Warner Archive, USC. The Walsh deal was more complicated. In its original contract of 13 May 1939, Warners inserted a clause indicating that 30 days after the preview of THE ROARING TWENTIES it could exercise the first of five yearly options (at \$1,750 per week)—which the studio did in August 1939. See Jack Warner to Hal Wallis, 21 August 1939 (outlining the option pickup), Walsh legal file, Warner Archive, USC.
  81. See HIGH SIERRA file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
  82. Letter of 21 March 40, quoted in Rudy Behlmer, ed., *Inside Warner Bros. (1935–1951)* (New York: Viking, 1985), p. 126.
  83. John Huston, *An Open Book* (New York: Knopf, 1980), p. 79.
  84. Thomson, *A Biographical Dictionary of Film*, p. 595.
  85. *NYTFR*, 25 January 41.
  86. See Hellinger to Wallis, 17 February 1941, and also Warners' "release" of Hellinger, 10 March 1941, Hellinger legal file, Warner Archive, USC.
  87. See Wald reassignment as "associate producer" on 29 March 1941. See also Wald's new contract (as "Supervisor") of 19 July 1941. Wald legal file, Warner Archive, USC.
  88. See the contract of 26 May 1941, IN THIS OUR LIFE file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
  89. For a detailed treatment of the making of THE MALTESE FALCON, see Rudy Behlmer, *America's Favorite Movies* (New York: Ungar, 1982).
  90. Quoted in Behlmer, *Inside Warner Bros.*, p. 151.
  91. See billing memoranda of 10 June 41 and 8 September 41, THE MALTESE FALCON production file, Warner Archive, USC.
  92. *New York Times*, 4 October 1941, n.p.
  93. See ch. 2, "Hollywood Turns Interventionist" (pp. 17–47), in Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*.
  94. National Board quoted in the 1940 *Film Daily Year Book*, p. 81.
  95. Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, p. 30.
  96. *Motion Picture Herald*, 7 September 1940, p. 47.
  97. Russell Earl Shain, *An Analysis of Motion Pictures About the War Released by the American Film Industry, 1939–1970* (New York: Arno, 1976), pp. 31, 61.
  98. Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, p. 32.
  99. *New York Times*, 8 September 1940, p. x3.
  100. *New York Times*, 22 September 1940, p. x3.
  101. *NYTFR*, 21 June 40.
  102. *NYTFR*, 3 August 40. In his review, Crowther suggests that THE MAN I MARRIED was in fact the first Hollywood film to use the term "Jew."
  103. Shain, *An Analysis of Motion Pictures*, pp. 31, 61.
  104. Roger Manvell, *Films and the Second World War* (New York: Delta, 1974), pp. 15–17, 86–92.
  105. *Motion Picture Herald*, 2 November 1940, p. 9.
  106. *Motion Picture Herald*, 30 August 1941, p. 15.
  107. Information on the Abbott and Costello films was culled from production files on IN THE NAVY and other Universal films co-starring the comedy team in the Universal Collection, Department of Special Collections, Doheny Library, University of Southern California (hereafter Universal Collection, USC).
  108. Navy Lt. Cdr. A. J. Bolton to Universal production supervisor A. J. Murphy, 14 March 1941, IN THE NAVY production file, Universal Collection, USC.

109. Joe Breen to Universal's Maurice Pivar, 20 March 1941; transcription of 31 March 1941 phone conversation between Arthur Lubin and Navy Lt. Cdr. Herman Spitzel; IN THE NAVY production file, Universal Collection, USC.
110. Alex Gottlieb to Arthur Lubin et al., 17 May 1941 (with script revisions attached); Herman Spitzel to Lubin, 21 May 1941; IN THE NAVY production file, Universal Collection, USC.
111. Information on EAGLE SQUADRON culled primarily from the Walter Wanger Collection, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theatre Research, State Historical Society, University of Wisconsin—Madison (hereafter Wanger Collection, UW—M), as well as the Walter Wanger file, Selznick Collection, UT.
112. Summary of Wanger-UA productions, 28 April 1945, Wanger Collection, UW—M.
113. Watt and Schoedsack to Wanger, 20 August 1941, EAGLE SQUADRON file, Wanger Collection, UW—M.
114. Watt to Wanger, 19 September 1941, EAGLE SQUADRON file, Wanger Collection, UW—M.
115. See correspondence between Wanger and Raine, 30 September 1941 and 1 October 1941, EAGLE SQUADRON file. On FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT costs, see undated summary of "negative cost," FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT production file. Details are specified in Wanger's Universal contract of 15 November 41, EAGLE SQUADRON file. All in Wanger Collection, UW—M.
116. Wanger contract with Universal Pictures, 15 November 1941, EAGLE SQUADRON file, Wanger Collection, UW—M.
117. See income summaries of 31 October 1942 and 29 May 1943, EAGLE SQUADRON file, Wanger Collection, UW—M.

#### CHAPTER 5 (The Motion Picture Industry During World War II)

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2. R. A. C. Parker, *Struggle for Survival: The History of the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 131.
3. John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 219; Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front, 1941–1945* (New York: Putnam's, 1970), pp. 67, 114, 141. For more on unemployment in the United States, see Richard S. Kirkendall, *The United States, 1929–1945: Years of Crisis and Change* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), pp. 121, 214.
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5. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?*, p. 135; Parker, *Struggle for Survival*, p. 143.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 133.
8. Nelson Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 111.
9. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?*, p. 70.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 351.
11. On the marriage rate, see Susan Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne, 1982), p. 164. According to Hartmann (pp. 169–170), the birthrate during the Depression had hovered between 18 and 19 births per 1,000 population, the lowest in the nation's history. The rate rose above 20 per 1,000 in 1941, peaked at 22.7 in 1943, then declined during the last two years of the war, when the number of men overseas reached a sustained peak.
12. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?*, p. 94.
13. Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home*, pp. 133–134.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 123–124; see also Leila J. Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939–1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 150–153.
15. Lichtenstein, *Labor's War at Home*, p. 125.
16. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?*, p. 388.
17. Parker, *Struggle for Survival*, p. 143.

18. *Ibid.*, 124-125.
19. *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 January 1945, p. 13.
20. *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 December 1941, p. 17. See also Garth Jowett, *Film, the Democratic Art: A Social History of American Film* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), p. 311.
21. On training films, see *Motion Picture Herald*, 1 August 1942, p. 8; on reissues, see *Variety*, 26 September 1945, p. 9; *Motion Picture Herald*, 16 June 1945, p. 13.
22. *Wall Street Journal*, 26 January 1942, p. 1.
23. Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York: Free Press, 1987), p. 58-60; *Motion Picture Herald*, 20 June 1942, p. 9.
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27. Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, p. 69.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 323.
29. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?*, p. 181.
30. *Wall Street Journal*, 29 October 1942, p. 1; *Motion Picture Herald*, 17 October 1942, p. 13.
31. *Motion Picture Herald*, 2 January 1943, p. 8.
32. *Motion Picture Herald*, 7 October 1944, p. 9.
33. 1943 *Film Daily Year Book*, pp. 37, 150.
34. *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 March 1943, p. 9; *Motion Picture Herald*, 5 June 1943, p. 28.
35. *Variety*, 5 January 1944, p. 12.
36. *Variety*, 6 May 1942, p. 6.
37. *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 May 1943, p. 22; *Variety*, 15 April 1942, p. 7; *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 May 1943, p. 22.
38. *Motion Picture Herald*, 31 October 1942, p. 28; *Variety*, 11 November 1942, p. 22.
39. *Variety*, 18 October 1944, p. 6.
40. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?*, p. 184.
41. *Motion Picture Herald*, 21 February 1942, p. 8. See also "Beachhead Bijou," in *Look* magazine, *From Movie Lot to Beachhead*, pp. 104-105.
42. *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 January 1945, p. 9.
43. 1943 *Film Daily Year Book*, p. 77; *Motion Picture Herald*, 22 January 1944, p. 9; *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 October 1945, p. 8. These figures contradict a common assumption of the period, expressed in *Look's From Movie-Lot to Beachhead*: "War movies do not appeal to fighting men, nor do Westerns. Men who have seen real shooting do not care for the synthetic variety," (p. 105).
44. *Motion Picture Herald*, 22 January 1944, p. 38.
45. *Look* magazine, *From Movie Lot to Beachhead*, p. 104.
46. *Motion Picture Herald*, 16 May 1942, p. 9.
47. *Variety*, 7 April 1943, p. 3.
48. *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 July 1944, p. 9.
49. *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 January 1945, p. 9.
50. *Motion Picture Herald*, 6 October 1945, p. 8; 1946 *Film Daily Year Book*, pp. 147-148.
51. *Look* magazine, *From Movie Lot to Beachhead*, pp. 82-83; Jowett, *Film, the Democratic Art*, pp. 314-315.
52. *Variety*, 12 April 1944, p. 10; *Motion Picture Herald*, 6 October 1945, p. 61; 1946 *Film Daily Year Book*, p. 148.
53. *Motion Picture Herald*, 30 October 1943, p. 9.
54. Otto Friedrich, *City of Nets* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), p. 108.
55. *Motion Picture Herald*, 2 October 1943, p. 8.
56. *Motion Picture Herald*, 14 March 1942, p. 8.
57. *Motion Picture Herald*, 11 May 1942, p. 65; *Motion Picture Herald*, 8 August 1942, p. 13.
58. *Variety*, 8 April 1942, p. 5.
59. *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 August 1942, p. 31.
60. *Variety*, 6 January 1943, p. 47.
61. *Look* magazine, *From Movie Lot to Beachhead*, p. 204.
62. 1946 *Film Daily Year Book*, pp. 145-146; *Look* magazine, *From Movie Lot to Beachhead*, p. 205.
63. *Variety*, 15 April 1942, p. 7.
64. *Variety*, 8 April 1942, p. 9.
65. *Variety*, 18 November 1942, p. 5.
66. *Motion Picture Herald*, 15 July 1943, p. 13.
67. *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 June 1942, p. 29; *Motion Picture Herald*, 11 July 1942, p. 8; *Motion Picture Herald*, 18 July 1942, p. 9; *Motion Picture Herald*, 15 August 1942, p. 9.
68. *Variety*, 5 September 1945, p. 7. Note that, according to the 1944 *Film Daily Year Book* (p. 49), the average run of a Hollywood feature still was only four and a half days.
69. *Motion Picture Herald*, 30 October 1943, p. 12.
70. *Variety*, 3 January 1945, p. 1.
71. *Motion Picture Herald*, 16 June 1945, p. 13; *Variety*, 26 September 1945, p. 9. Among the pictures scheduled for reissue in 1945-1946 were NAUGHTY MARIETTA (1935), WATERLOO BRIDGE (1940), NORTHWEST MOUNTED POLICE (1940), CALL OF THE WILD (1935), IMITATION OF LIFE (1934), AIR FORCE (1943), and THIS GUN FOR HIRE (1942). Republic also announced plans to reissue seven Gene Autry films first released between 1935 and 1940.
72. *Variety*, 3 May 1944, p. 3; *Variety*, 14 June 1944, p. 3.
73. *Variety*, 1 August 1945, p. 5.
74. 1941 *Film Daily Year Book*, p. 41; *Variety*, 6 December 1944, p. 5; 1946 *Film Daily Year Book*, p. 51. The number of houses playing double bills increased from a reported 10,350 in 1941 (60 percent of the theaters in operation) to 12,280 (64 percent) in 1945.
75. 1942 *Film Daily Year Book*, p. 49; 1946 *Film Daily Year Book*, p. 49.
76. 1943 *Film Daily Year Book*, p. 48; 1944 *Film Daily Year Book*, p. 47; 1946 *Film Daily Year Book*, p. 49.
77. *Motion Picture Herald*, 8 April 1944, p. 34.
78. Joel W. Finler, *The Hollywood Story* (New York: Crown, 1988), p. 15; Jowett, *Film, the Democratic Art*, p. 475.
79. *Variety*, 6 January 1943, pp. 1, 58.
80. *Variety*, 5 January 1944, p. 9.
81. *Variety*, 8 March 1944, p. 7.
82. *Variety*, 29 November 1944, p. 1 (on Broadway stage); *Variety*, 13 December 1944, p. 1 (on the music industry).
83. *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 September 1945, p. 9.
84. *Motion Picture Herald*, 3 February 1945, p. 53.
85. *Motion Picture Herald*, 10 June 1944, p. 9.
86. *Variety*, 4 November 1942, p. 7; *Motion Picture Herald*, 7 November 1942, p. 8.
87. *Motion Picture Herald*, 28 November 1942, p. 29.
88. *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 May 1944, p. 8; 1946 *Film Daily Year Book*, pp. 649-670.
89. *Variety*, 11 October 1944, p. 3.
90. Marcia Landy, *British Genres: Cinema and Society, 1930-1960* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 25-31.
91. *Variety*, 11 October 1944, p. 3; *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 January 1945, p. 8.
92. *Motion Picture Herald*, 19 June 1943, p. 29; *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 February 1944, p. 26; *Variety*, 17 May 1944, p. 3; *Motion Picture Herald*, 4 August 1945, p. 22.
93. 1946 *Film Daily Year Book*, pp. 649-651.
94. *Variety*, 9 August 1944, p. 3. There were 4,579 theaters in South America (including 1,680 in Argentina, the largest market) and 2,368 theaters in Central America (including 1,410 in Mexico); 1946 *Film Daily Year Book*, p. 49.
95. On output, see *Motion Picture Herald*, 6 January 1943, p. 27; *Variety*, 19 April 1944, p. 18; *Motion Picture Herald*, 5 August 1944, p. 24. On strikes and labor discord, see *Motion Picture Herald*, 19 August 1944, p. 54; *Variety*, 16 August 1944, p. 13; *Motion Picture Herald*, 3 March 1945, p. 9.
96. Charles Ramirez Berg, *Cinema of Solitude* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), pp. 14-15.
97. *Variety*, 26 July 1944, p. 19.
98. *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 August 1944, p. 8; *Motion Picture Herald*, 20 May 1944, p. 9; *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 January 1945, p. 9.
99. *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 April 1944, p. 8; *Motion Picture Herald*, 20 May 1944, p. 8; *Variety*, 30 August 1944, p. 15; *Motion Picture Herald*, 5 August 1944, p. 24.



100. *Motion Picture Herald*, 10 March 1945, p. 8.
101. *Motion Picture Herald*, 16 September 1944, p. 14.
102. *Motion Picture Herald*, 11 February 1939, p. 28.
103. *1944 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 67; *Motion Picture Herald*, 16 January 1947, p. 17.
104. *Motion Picture Herald*, 7 August 1943, p. 17.
105. *Variety*, 24 January 1945, p. 1. The view was voiced by Ulrich Bell.
106. *Variety*, 24 January 1945, p. 3; *Variety*, 21 March 1945, p. 1; *Motion Picture Herald*, 28 July 1945, p. 28; *Variety*, 1 August 1945, p. 3; *Motion Picture Herald*, 11 August 1945, p. 9; *Variety*, 22 August 1945, p. 13.
107. *Motion Picture Herald*, 28 July 1945, p. 28.
108. *1946 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 53.
109. *Motion Picture Herald*, 7 April 1945, p. 8; *Motion Picture Herald*, 28 April 1945, p. 8.
110. *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 September 1945, p. 9; *Motion Picture Herald*, 6 October 1945, p. 9.
111. *Variety*, 19 December 1945, p. 1.
112. *Motion Picture Herald*, 7 February 1942, p. 8; *Motion Picture Herald*, 4 April 1942, p. 17.
113. *1942 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 79.
114. *Motion Picture Herald*, 23 May 1942, pp. 13–14.
115. Quoted in *Variety*, 19 August 1942, p. 5.
116. *Motion Picture Herald*, 22 August 1942, p. 12.
117. Quoted in *Motion Picture Herald*, 2 January 1943, p. 9.
118. *Motion Picture Herald*, 20 February 1943, p. 9.
119. *Motion Picture Herald*, 12 June 1943, p. 17.
120. *Motion Picture Herald*, 15 May 1943, p. 17; *Motion Picture Herald*, 30 September 1944, p. 8.
121. *Variety*, 20 January 1943, p. 7.
122. *Motion Picture Herald*, 1 January 1944, p. 8. Decisions on these cases ran about 50–50 between distributor and exhibitor.
123. *Motion Picture Herald*, 9 September 1944, p. 13.
124. *Motion Picture Herald*, 30 September 1944, p. 8.
125. *Motion Picture Herald*, 1 January 1944, p. 27.
126. *Motion Picture Herald*, 19 February 1944, p. 15.
127. *Variety*, 13 December 1944, p. 3.
128. See, for example, *Motion Picture Herald*, 24 October 1942, p. 23; and *Motion Picture Herald*, 15 April 1944, p. 13.
129. *Motion Picture Herald*, 31 March 1945, p. 20.
130. *Motion Picture Herald*, 2 June 1945, p. 9.
131. *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 October 1945, pp. 15, 18.
132. *Motion Picture Herald*, 24 November 1945, p. 16; *Variety*, 21 November 1945, p. 11.
133. *Variety*, 19 December 1945, p. 1; see also *Motion Picture Herald*, 22 December 1945, p. 23.
134. David Prindle, *The Politics of Glamour* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), p. 39.
135. For figures on IATSE and CSU membership, see *Variety*, 3 January 1945, p. 41; *Variety*, 14 March 1945; and Friedrich, *City of Nets*, p. 247. Reported figures tend to vary widely (the very point, of course, of the jurisdictional conflicts); some saw CSU by 1945 as reaching a stage of near-parity with the IATSE.
136. *Variety*, 3 January 1945, p. 41.
137. *Variety*, 9 February 1944, p. 8; *Motion Picture Herald*, 26 February 1944, p. 9.
138. *Variety*, 26 April 1944, p. 1.
139. *Variety*, 5 July 1944, p. 3; *Motion Picture Herald*, 8 July 1944, p. 29.
140. *Variety*, 20 December 1944, p. 4. The tally was 1,451 votes for SPU to SAG's 456.
141. *Motion Picture Herald*, 6 January 1945, p. 46; Prindle, *The Politics of Glamour*, p. 38.
142. *Motion Picture Herald*, 14 October 1944, p. 39.
143. *Variety*, 3 January 1945, p. 41.
144. *Variety*, 14 March 1945, p. 1; *Motion Picture Herald*, 17 March 1945, p. 16; *1946 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 81.
145. *Variety*, 6 June 1945, p. 8.
146. *Motion Picture Herald*, 2 June 1945, p. 25; *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 October 1945, p. 13.
147. Friedrich, *City of Nets*, p. 248; *Variety*, 11 July 1945, p. 12; Prindle, *The Politics of Glamour*, p. 39.

148. *Motion Picture Herald*, 18 August 1945, p. 19.
149. *Motion Picture Herald*, 20 October 1945, p. 35.
150. Friedrich, *City of Nets*, p. 249; *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 October 1945, p. 13.
151. *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 October 1945, p. 13; *Variety*, 31 October 1945, p. 2; *Motion Picture Herald*, 10 November 1945, p. 40.
152. *Variety*, 9 January 1946, p. 79.

#### CHAPTER 6 (The Hollywood Studio System, 1942–1945)

1. Richard Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front, 1941–1945* (New York: Putnam's, 1990), p. 181. For an excellent survey of Hollywood's initial response to Pearl Harbor, see ch. 1, "Prologue to War," in Editors of *Look* magazine, *From Movie Lot to Beachhead: The Motion Picture Goes to War and Prepares for the Future* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1945), pp. 4–25.
2. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?*, p. 178; Leonard Mosley, *Zanuck: The Rise and Fall of Hollywood's Last Tycoon* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1984), p. 179.
3. Joel W. Finler, *The Hollywood Story* (New York: Crown, 1988), p. 280. The Big Five released 1,268 pictures in the five prewar years, and only 788 from 1942 to 1946. The Little Three during these two periods released 615 and 607, respectively.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 31, 286–287. For a detailed accounting of studio revenues and profits, see appendix 4.
5. According to the U.S. government (in statistics compiled in its antitrust suits), the majors' theater holdings on the eve of World War II were: Paramount, 1,273; Warner Bros., 557; 20th Century-Fox, 538; RKO, 132; Loew's/MGM, 122.
6. *Motion Picture Herald*, 9 May 1942, p. 17.
7. *Variety*, 12 August 1942, p. 5.
8. For figures on the 1942–1943 season, see *Variety*, 2 September 1942, p. 3. According to *Variety* (3 November 1943, p. 5), for the 1943–1944 season Fox scheduled only 27 pictures on a total budget of \$36 million; Paramount and MGM each planned to spend \$40 million on about 30 pictures; and Warners budgeted 24 pictures at \$30 million.
9. *1946 Film Daily Year Book*, summary, p. 43.
10. *Variety*, 28 October 1942, p. 5.
11. According to a study cited in *Motion Picture Herald* (11 November 1944, p. 41), the studios at that time were equipped to produce over 700 features per year; the output for the previous year was less than 400.
12. For figures on stockpiling, see *Variety*, 22 April 1942, p. 7; *Variety*, 25 February 1942, p. 5; *Motion Picture Herald*, 22 August 1942, p. 33; *Motion Picture Herald*, 20 June 1942, p. 14; *Variety*, 22 July 1942, p. 5; *Variety*, 28 October 1942, p. 5; *Variety*, 30 December 1942, p. 5; *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 February 1942, p. 13; *Variety*, 27 October 1943, p. 5; *Motion Picture Herald*, 12 February 1944, p. 13; *Motion Picture Herald*, 26 August 1944, p. 23. Note that the figures vary widely owing to two factors: the way companies defined a "completed" film (some still in the later stages of post-production were included among stockpiled films); and the relatively high concentration of releases during the holidays (Thanksgiving to New Year's).
13. *Variety*, 7 March 1945, p. 9; *Motion Picture Herald*, 26 May 1945, p. 13.
14. *Variety*, 21 November 1945, p. 3.
15. *Variety*, 29 April 1942, p. 22; Tino Balio, *United Artists: The Company Built by the Stars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), pp. 192–193.
16. *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 January 1944, p. 33.
17. Balio, *United Artists*, p. 188.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 189.
19. Todd McCarthy and Charles Flynn, eds., *Kings of the B's* (New York: Dutton, 1975), p. 32. Monogram's wartime net income was in the \$100,000–200,000 range.
20. *Variety*, 5 January 1944, p. 55.
21. *Variety*, 12 April 1944, p. 7.
22. *Variety*, 9 January 1946, p. 36.
23. McCarthy and Flynn, *Kings of the B's*, p. 24; *Variety*, 12 April 1944, p. 7; *Variety*, 9 January 1946, p. 36. The definition appeared in the latter piece, which recapped 1945 trends and ran under the headline "Exploitation Pictures' Paid Off Big For Majors, Also Indie Producers."

24. See Wheeler Dixon, ed., *Producers Releasing Corporation: A Comprehensive Filmography and History* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 1986).
25. See obituary in *Motion Picture Herald*, 21 March 1942, p. 9. Kent's death has been erroneously (and frequently) reported elsewhere as occurring in 1941.
26. Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), p. 89.
27. *1943 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 53; see also Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System*, pp. 131-132.
28. *Motion Picture Herald*, 9 July 1942, p. 23; *Variety*, 4 March 1942, p. 5.
29. *Variety*, 4 March 1942, p. 5.
30. Jack Warner to Foy, 6 September 1941 (releasing Foy from contract of 6 June 1938), Foy legal file, Warner Archive, USC.
31. Agreement between Warner Bros. and Wallis of 12 January 1942 (releasing Wallis from contract of 27 June 1935); new Wallis contract of 2 February 1942; both in Wallis legal file, Warner Archive, USC. Hellinger contract of 26 February 1942, Warner Archive, USC. Hawks contract of 12 February 1942, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
32. *Variety*, 1 April 1942, p. 6.
33. *The Screen Writer*, July 1945, p. 40. Fox reportedly had 42 under contract, Columbia 39, Warners 34, and Paramount 33.
34. *Variety*, 18 February 1942, p. 3.
35. There was considerable disagreement between Welles and Chaplin about the extent of Welles's contributions to both the script and the finished product. See, for example, Chaplin's *My Autobiography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1964), pp. 418-419, and Barbara Leaming, *Orson Welles* (New York: Penguin, 1985), pp. 219-221.
36. *Variety*, 16 February 1944, p. 7.
37. Balio, *United Artists*, pp. 172-174, 186-187; John Douglas Eames, *The MGM Story* (New York: Crown, 1975), p. 203.
38. *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 March 1943, p. 8. Note that FANTASIA saw only limited release on a roadshow basis in 1940 but was not put into general release by RKO until 1942. See also Doherty, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 68.
39. Ernest Borneman, "Rebellion in Hollywood: A Study in Motion Picture Finance," *Harper's*, October 1946, pp. 337, 338-339. When he wrote the article, Borneman was director of foreign distribution for the National Film Board of Canada.
40. Balio, *United Artists*, p. 190.
41. On Cagney, see Kevin Hagopian, "Declarations of Independence: A History of Cagney Productions," *Velvet Light Trap* 22 (1986), pp. 16-32. On Goldwyn, see A. Scott Berg, *Goldwyn: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1989), pp. 381, 545.
42. Borneman, "Rebellion in Hollywood," p. 339.
43. *Variety*, 5 January 1944, p. 13; *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 January 1944, p. 33.
44. *Motion Picture Herald*, 11 November 1944, p. 29; *Variety*, 1 November 1944, p. 3.
45. Wanger's contract of 10 April 1942 for ARABIAN NIGHTS became the model for future Universal deals. Wanger Collection, UW—M.
46. Wanger signed the five-picture deal with Universal on 6 April 1945, with each picture set up on roughly the same terms as the earlier contracts. The Diana contracts were signed 13 March 1945; Wanger Collection, UW—M. For a detailed treatment of both the formation of Diana Productions and the making of SCARLET STREET, see Matthew Bernstein, "Fritz Lang, Incorporated," *Velvet Light Trap* 22 (1986), pp. 33-52. See also Bernstein, *Walter Wanger: Hollywood Independent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 197-216.
47. *Variety*, 9 January 1945, p. 77.
48. Lewton to Selznick, 10 December 1942, Lewton correspondence file, Selznick Collection, UT.
49. *Variety*, 14 July 1943, p. 5.
50. *Variety*, 28 April 1943, p. 5; *Variety*, 14 July 1943, p. 5.
51. Contract of 12 January 1942 (to take effect on 2 February 1942), Wallis legal file, Warner Archive, USC. Regarding Warners' central-producer setup, note that Wallis's contract stated that "for several years past" he had been "the executive having general charge and supervision of substantially all the Class-A motion picture photoplays produced by the Company."
52. Contract of 12 February 1942, THE BIG SLEEP file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.

53. On Hellinger's departure in 1941, see Hellinger to Jack Warner, 17 February 1941. See also new contract of 26 February 1942. Both in Hellinger legal file, Warner Archive, USC.
54. See agreement of 10 June 1943 between Davis and Warners in A STOLEN LIFE legal file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M. A STOLEN LIFE (1946) was the one picture produced under the auspices of B.D. Inc.
55. *Variety*, 17 May 1944, p. 3; *Variety*, 25 May 1944, p. 3; *Variety*, 21 June 1944, n.p.
56. *Variety*, 16 August 1944, p. 1.
57. Schary legal file, Selznick Collection, UT.
58. See the synopses of the "Rapf Group" and the "Rapf-Schary unit" producers meetings, 3 April 1941-17 November 1941; Schary Papers, UW—M.
59. NYTFR, 4 April 1942.
60. Recapitulations of 2 June 1942 and 4 March 1943, MGM Unit 43 (the Rapf-Schary unit), Schary Papers, UW—M.
61. See minutes of MGM executive committee meetings, 20 January 1943 and 9 February 1943, Schary Papers, UW—M.
62. Schary legal file, Selznick Collection, UT.
63. Schary to Selznick, 8 December 1943, Selznick Collection, UT. See also *Variety*, 5 April 1944, p. 2.
64. Selznick to Schary, 1 March 1944 (on title suggestion); Selznick to Schary and Dan O'Shea, 20 July 1944 (on title test); both in Selznick Collection, UT.
65. *Variety*, 19 July 1944, p. 34.
66. Vanguard Films income statement of 21 June 1946, I'LL BE SEEING YOU production file, Schary Papers, UW—M. Production information on the film also is included in both the Schary Papers at UW—M and the Selznick Collection, UT. Rogers had a profit-sharing arrangement as well; her share came to \$162,000.
67. *Variety*, 25 April 1945, p. 3.
68. See agreements of 31 May 1947, 11 September 1947, 13 November 1945, et al. between Vanguard (Selznick) and RKO, Selznick Collection, UT.
69. *Variety*, 9 September 1942, p. 15; *Motion Picture Herald*, 10 April 1943, p. 15. *Advertising Age* cited in the *Variety* story.
70. *Variety*, 14 April 1943, p. 7.
71. *Motion Picture Herald*, 25 September 1943, p. 9.
72. *Motion Picture Herald*, 14 April 1944, p. 19.
73. *Variety*, 5 January 1944, p. 54. The theory of compensating production values was made graphically clear in the headline to this story: "\$7,500,500 in Literary Buys by Pix As Offset to Loss of Male Stars."
74. *Variety*, 3 January 1945, p. 30.
75. See YANKEE DOODLE DANDY file, Warner Legal Collection, UWM.
76. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?*, pp. 285-286; *Motion Picture Herald*, 4 July 1942, p. 50.
77. *Variety*, 3 June 1942, p. 1; *Variety*, 5 January 1944, p. 14.
78. NYTFR, 3 March 43. In his review of the film, Bosley Crowther provides a detailed account of the story's rather odd journey from page to screen.
79. *Motion Picture Herald*, 3 April 1943, p. 14.
80. *Ibid.*; *Variety*, 4 January 1944, p. 14.
81. *Variety*, 5 January 1944, p. 54.
82. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
83. *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 January 1945, p. 27.
84. *Motion Picture Herald*, 1 April 1944, p. 9.
85. *Variety*, 3 January 1945, p. 30.
86. *Motion Picture Herald*, 17 March 1945, p. 9.
87. *Variety*, 13 June 1945, p. 3; *Variety*, 4 July 1945, p. 3.
88. *Variety*, 14 November 1945, p. 1.
89. *Variety*, 5 January 1944, p. 54.
90. *Motion Picture Herald*, 8 May 1943, p. 9.
91. Shannon James Kelley, "Gallup Goes Hollywood: Motion Picture Audience Research in the 1940s" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas—Austin, 1989), pp. 2, 12.



92. This information is culled from various ARI reports in the Selznick Collection, UT. See also *Variety*, 5 August 1942, p. 3; *Variety*, 1 September 1943, p. 1.
93. Kelley, "Gallup Goes Hollywood," p. 101.
94. 1946 *Film Daily Year Book*, p. 43.
95. On movie promotion and particularly the role of pressbooks, see Maria LaPlace, "Producing and Consuming the Woman's Film: Discursive Struggle in *Now, Voyager*," in *Home Is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film*, Christina Gledhill, ed. (London: BFI, 1987), pp. 138–166; Barbara Klinger, "Much Ado About Excess: Genre, Mise-en-Scène, and the Woman in *Written on the Wind*," *Wide Angle* 11 (1989), p. 4; Mary Beth Haralovich, "The Proletarian Woman's Film of the 1930s: Contending with Censorship and Entertainment," *Screen* 31, no. 2 (Summer 1990), pp. 172–187. On early motion picture promotion, see Janet Staiger, "Announcing Wares, Winning Patrons, Voicing Ideals: Thinking About the History and Theory of Film Advertising," *Cinema Journal* 29, no. 3 (Spring 1990), pp. 3–31. On commercial tie-ins, see Jane Gaines, "The Queen Christina Tie-ups: Convergence of Show Window and Screen," *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 11, no. 1 (1989), pp. 35–60.
96. Mary Beth Haralovich, "Mandates of Good Taste," *Wide Angle* 6, no. 2 (1984), pp. 50–57. For more information on studio still photographers and their work on poster art and publicity, see Haralovich, "Film Advertising, the Film Industry, and the Pin-up: The Industry's Accommodations to Social Forces in the 1940s," *Current Research in Film*, vol. 1, ed. Bruce Austin (New York: Ablex, 1985), 127–164.
97. All references to the MILDRED PIERCE pressbook materials are from the MILDRED PIERCE pressbook, Warner Archive, USC.
98. Mary Beth Haralovich, "Advertising Heterosexuality," *Screen* 23, no. 2 (July–August 1982), pp. 50–60; see also Klinger, "Much Ado About Excess," pp. 20–21.
99. LaPlace, "Producing and Consuming the Woman's Film," p. 141. In his study of Edith Head, Robert Gustafson finds that clothing is not often explicitly modeled after costumes; "The Power of the Screen: The Influence of Edith Head's Film Designs on the Retail Fashion Market," *Velvet Light Trap* 12 (1982), pp. 8–15. For more on fashion and film, see Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog, eds., *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body* (New York: Routledge, 1990), esp. Maureen Turim, "Designing Women: The Emergence of the New Sweetheart Line," pp. 212–228.
100. In his biography of Crawford, Bob Thomas discusses her hard work on MILDRED PIERCE and argues that the studio early on realized the potential of the Crawford performance. Thomas reports that a publicity campaign for an Academy Award for Crawford was launched when "Wald sensed that something extraordinary was happening" during production. *Joan Crawford* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978), pp. 145–149.
101. This explanation of the actress is akin to what Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery found in their study of how Crawford's star image developed over the decades. She was a "self-made star" with the "strength of character to overcome all material obstacles" and a "regenerating star [with the] unique power to transform herself to meet demands"; *Film History: Theory and Practice* (New York: Knopf, 1978), pp. 178–181. Richard Dyer argues that "stars are examples of the way people live their relation to production in a capitalist society. . . . [T]hey articulate a dominant experience of work itself under capitalism." *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), pp. 6–8.
102. *Los Angeles Times*, 8 October 1945, p. 9; 11 October 1945, sect. 2, p. 8; 12 October 1945, sect. 2, p. 9.
103. *Los Angeles Times*, 17 October 1945, sect. 1, p. 11; 26 October 1945, sect. 2, p. 3.
104. *Chicago Tribune*, 9 December 1945, p. 3; 30 December 1945, sect. 1, pp. 1, 6; 16 December 1945, p. 6 (graphic); 25 December 1945, p. 25.

#### CHAPTER 7 (Wartime Stars, Genres, and Production Trends)

1. Report of 8 December 1941, CASABLANCA production file, Warner Archive, USC. For an excellent analysis of the story and script development of the film, see ch. 9 in Rudy Behlmer, *America's Favorite Movies* (New York: Ungar, 1982), which is devoted to the film. Wallis recalls first reading the play on 12 December. For Wallis's account, see Hal Wallis and Charles Higham, *Starmaker: The Autobiography of Hal Wallis* (New York: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 83–93.

2. Irene Lee's role in both pursuing and securing the project is detailed by Aljean Harmetz in *Round up the Usual Subjects: The Making of Casablanca* (New York: Hyperion, 1992), pp. 17–18. Harmetz also states flatly that "Hal Wallis was the creative force behind *Casablanca*," noting "how thoroughly he shaped the movie, from the quality of the lighting to the exact details of the costumes" (p. 29).
3. Dana Polan, *Power and Paranoia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986).
4. The Editors of *Look* magazine, *Movie Lot to Beachhead: The Motion Picture Goes to War and Prepares for the Future* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1945), pp. 70, 77.
5. The 1,500 figure is from SAG; *Variety*, 6 January 1943, p. 58. *Look* put the total of male stars at 49; *Movie Lot to Beachhead*, p. 58. See also *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 August 1942, p. 8; *Variety*, 7 October 1942, p. 1.
6. On Gable, see *Motion Picture Herald*, 16 October 1942, p. 8; on Stewart, et al., see *Motion Picture Herald*, 17 June 1944, p. 9; *Look* magazine, *Movie Lot to Beachhead*, pp. 60–71.
7. *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 November 1943, p. 8; *Motion Picture Herald*, 1 April 1944, p. 9; *Variety*, 13 December 1944, p. 3; *Variety*, 7 February 1945, p. 3. De Havilland's case went to the appellate state supreme court in late 1944 and early 1945. Prior to that judgment, the studios simply added the time an actor was on suspension to the "end" of the contract period, thus making it impossible to wait out one's contract.
8. John Taylor, *Storming the Magic Kingdom* (New York: Knopf, 1987), p. vii; *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 November 1943, p. 9; *Motion Picture Herald*, 15 January 1944, p. 8.
9. See "Foxhole Circuit," in *Look* magazine, *Movie Lot to Beachhead*, pp. 82–85.
10. *Motion Picture Herald*, 6 March 1943, p. 8; *Variety*, 10 March 1943, p. 21; *Motion Picture Herald*, 11 March 1944, p. 8.
11. The top 25 stars for each of these years were as follows:

#### 1942

1. Abbott and Costello
2. Clark Gable
3. Gary Cooper
4. Mickey Rooney
5. Bob Hope
6. James Cagney
7. Gene Autry
8. Betty Grable
9. Greer Garson
10. Spencer Tracy
11. Dorothy Lamour
12. Bing Crosby
13. Tyrone Power
14. Walter Pidgeon
15. Bette Davis
16. Ann Sheridan
17. Errol Flynn
18. Wallace Beery
19. Judy Garland
20. Red Skelton
21. John Payne
22. Rita Hayworth
23. Lana Turner
24. Cary Grant
25. Humphrey Bogart

#### 1943

1. Betty Grable
2. Bob Hope
3. Abbott and Costello
4. Bing Crosby
5. Gary Cooper
6. Greer Garson
7. Humphrey Bogart
8. James Cagney
9. Mickey Rooney
10. Clark Gable
11. Judy Garland
12. Alice Faye
13. Bette Davis
14. Tyrone Power
15. Alan Ladd
16. Cary Grant
17. Errol Flynn
18. Wallace Beery
19. Spencer Tracy
20. Dorothy Lamour
21. Jean Arthur
22. Walter Pidgeon
23. Claudette Colbert
24. Red Skelton
25. Lana Turner

#### 1944

1. Bing Crosby
2. Gary Cooper
3. Bob Hope
4. Betty Grable
5. Spencer Tracy

#### 1945

1. Bing Crosby
2. Van Johnson
3. Greer Garson
4. Betty Grable
5. Spencer Tracy

6.	Greer Garson	Bogart/Cooper
7.	Humphrey Bogart	Bob Hope
8.	Abbott and Costello	Judy Garland
9.	Cary Grant	Margaret O'Brien
10.	Bette Davis	Roy Rogers
11.	Wallace Beery	Abbott and Costello
12.	Dorothy Lamour	Betty Hutton
13.	Walter Pidgeon	Ingrid Bergman
14.	Judy Garland	Bette Davis
15.	Faye/Skelton	Alan Ladd
16.	Ginger Rogers	Dane Clark
17.	Mickey Rooney	Joseph Cotten
18.	Claudette Colbert	Claudette Colbert
19.	Irene Dunne	Walter Pidgeon
20.	O'Brien/Cagney	Fred MacMurray
21.	Barry Fitzgerald	Danny Kaye
22.	Roy Rogers	Gregory Peck
23.	Betty Hutton	Ginger Rogers
24.	MacMurray/Bergman	John Wayne
25.	Deanna Durbin	Mickey Rooney

12. Motion Picture Herald, 29 January 1944, p. 9; Motion Picture Herald, 23 June 1945, p. 8.
13. For the FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS deals, see the Ingrid Bergman contract of 6 August 1942 and the deal memo of 10 October 1942, Bergman legal file, Selznick Collection, UT. For the SARATOGA TRUNK deals, see the 8 April 1942 deal between Warners and Goldwyn for Sam Wood, and the contracts of 22 February 1943 (for Bergman) and 23 February 1943 (for Cooper), SARATOGA TRUNK legal file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
14. *Variety*, 3 January 1945, p. 1.
15. IN SOCIETY file, Universal Collection, USC.
16. *Motion Picture Herald*, 3 April 1943, p. 29; *Motion Picture Herald*, 11 December 1943, p. 9; *Motion Picture Herald*, 18 November 1944, p. 8.
17. *Variety*, 8 April 1942, p. 7.
18. *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 January 1945, p. 8.
19. Contracts of 7 June 1943 and 10 June 1943, Davis legal file; Warner Archive, USC.
20. Stanwyck contract of 16 December 1943, CHRISTMAS IN CONNECTICUT file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
21. Russell contract of 3 April 1944, ROUGHLY SPEAKING file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
22. Crawford contract of 10 April 1944, MILDRED PIERCE file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
23. Wald casting memo of 15 May 1944, MILDRED PIERCE file, Warner Legal Collection, USC.
24. Bogart contract of 3 January 1942 in PASSAGE TO MARSEILLES file; Cagney contract of 7 July 1939 in THE BRIDE CAME COD file; 1 July 1941 modification of Flynn contract of 17 August 1938 in EDGE OF DARKNESS file; all in Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
25. Contract of 31 December 1941, Warners story file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
26. Bergman contract of 24 April 1942, CASABLANCA file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
27. Wallis and Higham, *Starmaker*, p. 91.
28. Contracts of 20 October 1943 and 8 November 1943, TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
29. Hawks signed "Betty Bacal" to a personal contract in May 1943 for \$100 per week; Warners picked up her contract (as "Lauren Bacall") in early 1944, while TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT was still in development. In 1945, during production of THE BIG SLEEP, Warners renegotiated her contract—now as "Betty Bogart"—and increased her salary to \$1,000 per week. See Betty Bacal contract of 3 May 1943 and Lauren Bacall contract of 3 May 1944 in TO HAVE AND HAVE NOT file; Betty Bogart contract of 26 July 1945, THE BIG SLEEP file; Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
30. See "The Hawksian Woman," in Joseph McBride, *Hawks on Hawks* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 98–102.
31. *NYTFR*, 12 October 1944.

32. See drafts of 11 September 1944 and 26 September 1944, THE BIG SLEEP script file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
33. Reprinted in James Agee, *Agee on Film*, vol. 1 (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1958), p. 121.
34. Charles K. Feldman to Jack Warner, 16 November 1945, quoted in Rudy Behlmer, ed., *Inside Warner Bros. 1935–1951* (New York: Viking, 1985), pp. 248–249.
35. See, for example, Hawks's description of the adaptation in an interview with Joseph McBride in *Hawks on Hawks*, pp. 103–105. Hawks relates the oft-told anecdote about the writers contacting Chandler about the murder of a particular character (Owen Taylor, Bacall's chauffeur), and Chandler himself admitted that he did not know the identity of the killer.
36. Quoted in Eric Smoodin, *Animating Culture: Hollywood Cartoons from the Sound Era* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1993), p. 169.
37. See Christopher Finch, *The Art of Walt Disney* (New York: Abrams, 1973), pp. 92, 108.
38. *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 January 1945, p. 28.
39. For a detailed historical treatment of Hollywood animation, see Leonard Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic: A History of American Animated Cartoons* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980). See also Mitchell Alan Abney, "The Economical and Institutional Value of Cartoons: A Case History of the Warner Bros. Cartoon Division" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas—Austin, 1996).
40. Maltin, *Of Mice and Magic*, pp. 250–251.
41. *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 October 1945, p. 8.
42. *NYTFR*, 17 June 1943.
43. See Ed Buscombe, *The BFI Companion to the Western* (London: BFI Publishing, 1988), pp. 426–427. There were 110 Westerns out of a total of 488 films made in 1942, 103 of 397 in 1943, 95 of 401 in 1944, and 80 of 350 in 1945.
44. Zanuck first pursued Joseph Cotten for the role of Wilson, but Selznick refused to loan his contract player for the role. See Selznick to Zanuck, 9 August 1943; Zanuck to Selznick, 13 August 1943; both in Selznick Collection, UT.
45. Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York: Free Press, 1987), pp. 322–324; *Motion Picture Herald*, 16 September 1944, p. 9.
46. On the OWI response, see Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, p. 321; on the army camp prohibition, see *Motion Picture Herald*, 12 August 1944, p. 9.
47. *Motion Picture Herald*, 23 September 1944, p. 46; *Motion Picture Herald*, 30 September 1944, p. 56. Zanuck later claimed the picture lost \$2 million; see *Variety*, 20 March 1946, p. 3.
48. *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 May 1943, p. 8; *Motion Picture Herald*, 24 July 1943, p. 8.
49. Linda Williams, "Feminist Film Theory: *Mildred Pierce* and the Second World War," in E. Deidre Pribam, ed., *Female Spectators* (New York: Verso, 1988), pp. 12–29.
50. David A. Cook, *A History of Narrative Film* (New York: Norton, 1981), p. 467; David Bordwell, in David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristen Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style and Mode of Production to 1960* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), p. 76.
51. Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 253.
52. Deborah Thomas, "How Hollywood Deals with the Deviant Male," in Ian Cameron, ed., *The Movie Book of Film Noir* (London: Verso, 1992), p. 59. On the issue of *film noir* as a male form, see also Andrea Walsh, *Women's Film and Female Experience* (New York: Praeger, 1984); and Frank Krutnik, *In a Lonely Street: Film Noir, Genre, Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
53. Paul Schrader, "Note on *Film Noir*," *Film Comment*, Spring 1972, p. 16. Note that the critic-turned-filmmaker Schrader developed many *noir* techniques in his own work, most notably perhaps in his script for TAXI DRIVER (1976) and in AMERICAN GIGOLO, which he wrote and directed in 1979.
54. Bordwell, "The Bounds of Difference," pp. 75–76.
55. Cook, *A History of Narrative Film*, pp. 467–468.
56. Breen openly opposed both projects and was particularly critical of Warners' efforts to adapt MILDRED PIERCE. In a letter of 2 February 1944 to J. L. Warner, Breen wrote of the initial studio treatment: "The story contains so many sordid and repellent elements that we feel that the finished picture would not only be highly questionable from the standpoint of the Code, but would, likewise, meet with a great deal of difficulty in its release. . . . In the face of all this, we respectfully suggest that you dismiss this story from any further consideration." MILDRED PIERCE PCA file, Warner Archive, USC.



57. Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, 1974), pp. 195–196.
58. Thomas Elsaesser, "Tales of Sound and Fury: Observations on the Family Melodrama," *Monogram* 4 (1973), p. 11. For a particularly detailed and illuminating study of the female Gothic cycle during the 1940s, see Diane Waldman, "Horror and Domesticity: The Modern Gothic Romance of the 1940s" (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1981).
59. Raymond Chandler, "The Simple Art of Murder," *Atlantic Monthly*, October 1944, p. 59.
60. Lewis Jacobs, "World War II and the American Film," *Cinema Journal*, Winter 1967–1968, p. 21.
61. Dorothy B. Jones, "The Hollywood War Film: 1942–1944," *Hollywood Quarterly* 1, no. 5 (October 1945), pp. 2–3. Jones's study is cited in Jowett and Jacobs as well. The variance between Shain's and Jones's total release figures for the period is not surprising given inconsistencies between the official and actual release dates.
62. *Variety*, 6 January 1943, p. 58; *Variety*, 4 January 1944, p. 54.
63. Figures are taken from an accounting of Hollywood's leading all-time box-office hits, organized by decade, in *Variety*, 24 February 1996, pp. 168–169.
64. The first reference, according to various sources, was in a Rapf-Schary B picture, A YANK ON BURMA ROAD, which was reviewed in the *New York Times* on 29 January 1942. See also Richard Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front, 1941–1945* (New York: Putnam's, 1970), p. 176; and Jeanine Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), pp. 26, 281.
65. Buscombe, *The BFI Companion to the Western*, pp. 243–244; Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, p. 61.
66. *Motion Picture Herald*, 19 September 1942, p. 9.
67. *Variety*, 25 November 1942, p. 7.
68. Dorothy Jones, "Hollywood War Films, 1942–1944," *Hollywood Quarterly* 1 (October 1945), pp. 12–13.
69. Walter Wanger, "The OWI and Motion Pictures," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Spring 1943, pp. 103–104.
70. Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film*, pp. 30, 37.
71. *NYTFR*, 2 September 1942; *Newsweek*, 13 August 1942, p. 260.
72. Quoted in Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, p. 248.
73. *1944 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 105. The films were RANDOM HARVEST, FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS, YANKEE DOODLE DANDY, THIS IS THE ARMY, CASABLANCA, THE HUMAN COMEDY, WATCH ON THE RHINE, IN WHICH WE SERVE, SO PROUDLY WE HAIL, and STAGE DOOR CANTEEN.
74. Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film*, pp. 42, 21–22.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 37–55.
76. Jacobs, "World War II and the American Film," p. 19; Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film*, p. 37.
77. Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film*, pp. 62–63.
78. James Agee, review in *The Nation*, 8 October 1943, reprinted in *Agee on Film*, vol. 1, p. 53.
79. *1943 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 152; *1944 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 144. The figure for 1943 in the latter is 87.7 percent.
80. *Motion Picture Herald*, 11 September 1943, p. 8.
81. Roger Manvell, *Films and the Second World War* (New York: Delta, 1974), p. 176; *Variety*, 10 June 1942, p. 3; *Motion Picture Herald*, 5 September 1942, p. 8.
82. The figures on fiction and nonfiction war-film output are from Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film*, pp. 281–283. Basinger is among the critics and historians who treat these two forms as variations of the same narrative paradigm.
83. James Agee, "The Best of 1945," *The Nation*, 19 January 1946, reprinted in *Agee on Film*, vol. 1, p. 186.
84. James Agee, review in *The Nation*, 15 September 1945, reprinted in *Agee on Film*, vol. 1, p. 173.
85. Richard Meran Barsam, *Nonfiction Film* (New York: Dutton, 1973), p. 196; *Agee on Film*, vol. 1, p. 186.
86. Manvell, *Films and the Second World War*, p. 190.
87. James Agee, review in *The Nation*, 13 July 1943, reprinted in *Agee on Film*, vol. 1, p. 45.
88. See, for example, *Variety*, 8 August 1945, p. 1; *Motion Picture Herald*, 18 August 1945, p. 19; *Motion Picture Herald*, 8 September 1945, p. 18; *Variety*, 31 October 1945, p. 1; *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 December 1945, p. 9.

89. Behlmer, *Inside Warner Bros.*, p. 165; Wallis and Higham, *Starmaker*, p. 78; *Motion Picture Herald*, 10 October 1942; *Motion Picture Herald*, 6 October 1945; see also Max Wilk, ed., *The Wit and Wisdom of Hollywood* (New York: Atheneum, 1971), pp. 261–262.
90. Contract of 12 January 1942, Wallis legal file, Warner Archive, USC; Howard Hawks contract of 12 February 1942, THE BIG SLEEP file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M.
91. Dudley Nichols agreement of 25 March 1942 and contract of 9 July 1942, AIR FORCE file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M. For background on the production, see Wallis and Higham, *Starmaker*, pp. 79–82; and Joseph McBride, *Hawks on Hawks*, pp. 90–93.
92. The location shoot facilitated Hawks's usual practice—which caused continual problems with Wallis—of revising the shooting script during production. In fact, Wallis, as nominal executive producer, ordered Hawks and company back to the studio in August 1942, before they had finished shooting the film. Hawks flatly refused. See Wallis's account in *Starmaker*, pp. 80–81; see also Behlmer, *Inside Warner Bros.*, p. 237. On the production of AIR FORCE, see Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, pp. 78–79.
93. Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, p. 79.
94. Watson agreement in AIR FORCE legal file, Warner Legal Collection, UW—M; box-office figures in *Variety*, 5 January 1944, p. 54.
95. See Ronald Haver, *David O. Selznick's Hollywood* (New York: Knopf, 1980), pp. 333–343, for detailed treatment of the production of SINCE YOU WENT AWAY; see also Rudy Behlmer, *Memo from David O. Selznick* (New York: Viking, 1972), pp. 337–347.
96. James Agee, review in *The Nation*, 25 September 1942, reprinted in *Agee on Film*, vol. 1, p. 51.
97. *NYTFR*, 21 July 1944.
98. Walsh, *Women's Film and Female Experience*, p. 99.
99. Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, p. 156.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 156.
101. Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film*, p. 44.

## CHAPTER 8 (Regulating the Screen)

1. On the controversies over films in the late 1920s and early 1930s and the formation of the PCA, see Richard Maltby, "Censorship, Self-Regulation and the Hays Office," in Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930–1939* (New York: Scribner's, 1993); Leonard J. Leff and Jerold L. Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1990); Lea Jacobs, *The Wages of Sin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Censored* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Steven Vaughn, "Morality and Entertainment: The Origins of the Motion Picture Production Code," *Journal of American History* 77 (1990), 39–65; Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence* (New York: Knopf, 1990), ch. 1; and Clayton R. Koppes, "Film Censorship: Beyond the Heroic Interpretation," *American Quarterly* 44 (December 1992), 643–649.
2. Leff and Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono*, ch. 5.
3. Breen to Hays, 28 March 1941, THE OUTLAW case file, PCA Files, Motion Picture Association of America Files, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Center for Motion Picture Study, Beverly Hills, Calif. (hereafter PCA Files); Leff and Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono*, pp. 111–118.
4. Francis S. Harmon to Breen, 15 March 1940 (telegram); Breen to Harmon, 4 April 1940; Breen to Hays, 15 April 1940; all in STRANGE CARGO file, PCA Files.
5. Breen to Louis B. Mayer, 13 and 17 June 1941; PCA staff memorandum to files, n.d., ca. December 1941; *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, 2 December 1941; TWO-FACED WOMAN file, PCA Files; Geoffrey Shurlock oral history, Louis B. Mayer Library, American Film Institute, Los Angeles, Calif., p. 250.
6. Shurlock oral history, p. 257; Leff and Simmons, *The Dame in the Kimono*, pp. 118–121.
7. Pandro S. Berman oral history (interviewed by Barbara Hall), Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Center for Motion Picture Study, Beverly Hills, Calif., p. 104. On the studio executives, see generally Leo Rosten, *Hollywood: The Movie Colony, The Movie Makers* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1941), pp. 30–39, 133–162, and Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (New York: Pantheon, 1988).

8. Ruth Vasey, "Foreign Parts: Hollywood's Global Distribution and the Representation of Ethnicity," *American Quarterly* 44 (December 1992), p. 618.
9. Breen to Mayer, 31 January 1936, IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE file, PCA Files; *New York Times*, 15 June 1935; Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), pp. 338–347.
10. Richard Maltby, "It Can't Happen Here": The Politics of Censorship in Hollywood, 1936–1939." unpublished paper read at American Studies Association annual meeting, Costa Mesa, Calif., 6 November 1992. Although some Hays Office staffers in New York and Washington pressed for greater freedom for political pictures, Breen continued to resist. Any weakening on his part must take account of not only the antitrust threat but the swiftly moving international scene—which had created great tension by the summer of 1939—and the outbreak of the war against Poland on 1 September 1939.
11. Breen to Wilfrid Parsons, 10 October 1932, quoted in Vaughn, "Morality and Entertainment," p. 63; Breen to Daniel J. Lord, 5 December 1937, Daniel J. Lord Papers, Jesuit Missouri Province Archives, St. Louis, Mo. (emphasis in original). On the issue of fascism and American film in the late 1930s, see Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (New York: Free Press, 1987), ch. 2; Maltby, "Censorship, Self-Regulation, and the Hays Office"; and Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979). On American Catholics' diverse views toward Mussolini, see John P. Diggins, *Mussolini and Fascism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 185–197, 329–333.
12. Breen to Wanger, 4 January 1938, BLOCKADE FILE, PCA Files; Larry Ceplair, "The Politics of Compromise in Hollywood: A Case Study," *Cineaste* 7, no. 4 (1978), pp. 2–7.
13. Breen to Wanger, 18 June 1938, PERSONAL HISTORY file, PCA Files.
14. R. Caracciolo to Breen, 8 June 1937 and 20 June 1938; Breen to Mayer, 26 August 1938; all in IDIOT'S DELIGHT file, PCA Files. John Mason Brown, *The Worlds of Robert E. Sherwood* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), p. 338.
15. K.L. to Breen, n.d.; Breen to Hays, 30 December 1938, CONFESSIONS OF A NAZI SPY file, PCA Files; Eric J. Sandeen, "Confessions of a Nazi Spy," *American Studies* (1979), 69–81.
16. Breen to Warner, 30 December 1938, CONFESSIONS OF A NAZI SPY file, PCA Files.
17. Breen to Al Reeves, 6 September 1940, THE GREAT DICTATOR file, PCA Files; Charles Chaplin, *My Autobiography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1964), p. 392.
18. Breen to Francis Harmon, 8 June 1940; Breen to James Roosevelt, 7 July 1940; both in PASTOR HALL file, PCA Files.
19. Breen to Hays, 4 March 1941, MAN HUNT file, PCA Files.
20. See SERGEANT YORK production file, Warner Archive, USC.
21. Mellett to FDR, 17 March 1941, White House—1941 folder, Lowell Mellett Papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y. (hereafter Mellett Papers).
22. U.S. Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce, *Propaganda in Motion Pictures: Subcommittee Hearing on S.R. 152, 77th Cong., 1st sess., 9–26 September 1941*; Gerald Nye, "War Propaganda," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 15 September 1941, 720–723; Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, pp. 40–47.
23. The fullest account of OWI relations with Hollywood is found in Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*. See also Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On? The American Home Front, 1941–1945* (New York: Putnam's, 1970); Sydney Weinberg, "What to Tell America: The Writers' Quarrel in the Office of War Information," *Journal of American History* 55 (June 1968), 76–88; Allan M. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information, 1942–1945* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1978); and Bernard F. Dick, *The Star-Spangled Screen: The American World War II Film* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1985).
24. Davis to Byron Price, 27 January 1943, box 3, records of the OWI, record group 208, Federal Records Center, Suitland, Md. (hereafter OWI Files); Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, pp. 56–60; Dorothy Jones, *The Portrayal of China and India on the American Screen* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1955).
25. Nelson Poynter, interviewed by Clayton R. Koppes, St. Petersburg, Fla., 8 January 1974; *Motion Picture Herald*, 10 July, 24 July, and 14 August 1943.
26. "Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry," summer 1942, box 15, OWI Files.

27. Feature review, LITTLE TOKYO, U.S.A., 9 July 1942, box 3518, OWI Files; script review, "Air Force," 27 October 1942, box 3515, OWI Files; Larry Suid, ed., "Air Force" (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).
28. Mellett to Mayer, 25 November 1942; feature review, TENNESSEE JOHNSON, 1 December 1942; both in box 3510, OWI Files; Dorothy B. Jones to Poynter, 6 November 1942; feature review, THE PALM BEACH STORY, 4 November 1942; both in box 6, Mellett Papers.
29. Poynter to Mark Sandrich, 28 October 1942; "The Chaplain Speech—So Proudly We Hail," 25 November 1942; "Re Janet's Speech," 25 November 1942; all in box 3511, OWI Files; Poynter interview, 1974.
30. Mellett to various studios, 9 December 1942; excerpts from Davis press conference, 23 December 1942, both in box 1443, OWI Files; *Variety*, 23 December 1942; William Goetz to Gardner Cowles, 22 December 1942, box 12a, OWI Files.
31. Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, pp. 134–137.
32. *Motion Picture Herald*, 10 July 1943; Riskin to Bell, 22 October 1943, box 3510; Riskin to Edward Barrett, 12 August 1944; both in box 19, OWI files; *Wall Street Journal* quoted in Ian Jarvie, *Hollywood's Overseas Campaign: The North Atlantic Movie Trade, 1920–1950* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 384.
33. Bell to Selznick, 28 September 1943; Cunningham to Selznick, 21 July 1943; feature review, SINCE YOU WENT AWAY, 20 July 1944; all in box 3525, OWI files; *Commonweal* 40 (1944), pp. 374–375.
34. Bell to Riskin, 10 December 1942, OWI Files.
35. On blacks and World War II films, see Koppes and Black, "Blacks, Loyalty, and Motion-Picture Propaganda in World War II," *Journal of American History* 73 (September 1966), 383–406.
36. James Agee, *Agee on Film* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1958), p. 108.
37. Poynter to Mellett, 12 November 1942; script review, "America," 5 November 1942; both in box 3525, OWI Files.
38. Mellett to Goldwyn, 20 August 1942; Goldwyn to Mellett, 22 August 1942; both in box 1433b, OWI Files; script review, "The White Cliffs of Dover," 1 March 1943, box 1556, OWI Files; feature review, THE WHITE CLIFFS OF DOVER, 10 March 1944; Ferdinand Kuhn Jr. to Bell, 24 March 1944; both in box 3529, OWI Files.
39. OWI logs, 13 June 1942, box 1556, OWI Files.
40. "Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry," summer 1942, box 15, OWI Files.
41. Script reviews, "Dragon Seed," 10 and 15 September 1942; feature review, DRAGON SEED, 3 July 1944; both in box 3525, OWI Files.
42. Script review, "Keys of the Kingdom," 19 January 1944; Cunningham to Sailor, 13 April 1944; both in box 3518, OWI Files.
43. *Variety*, 28 October 1942.
44. Feature review, MISSION TO MOSCOW, 29 April 1943, box 3523, OWI Files; David E. Culbert, ed., *Mission to Moscow* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1980).
45. Breen to Warner, 1 July 1943, MISSION TO MOSCOW production file, Warner Archive, USC; Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 129; *New Republic*, 10 May 1943, p. 636.
46. See Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, ch. 7.
47. See in particular the special Soviet issue of *Life*, 29 March 1943, in which Davies was featured as the principal commentator on Soviet affairs. On the American media's approach to the Soviet Union during the war generally, see Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, "The Soviet Palimpsest: The Portrayal of Russia in American Media in World War II," unpublished paper read at Second Annual US-USSR Symposium on History of World War II, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y., 19–23 October 1987; and Clayton R. Koppes, "Conference Calls: Representations of American-Soviet Relations in American Media from Quebec to Yalta," unpublished paper read at CIS/US/GB symposium on History of World War II, Yalta, Crimea, Ukraine, 23–28 April 1992.
48. "Government Information Manual for the Motion Picture Industry," summer 1942, box 15, OWI Files.
49. Feature review, BEHIND THE RISING SUN, 8 June 1943; Cunningham to Little, 11 September 1944; both in box 3522, OWI Files.



50. Breen to Jason Joy, 14 October 1943, THE PURPLE HEART file, PCA Files; Breen to Warner, 21 December 1944; Susan Seidman to Hays, OBJECTIVE BURMA file, PCA Files.
51. Warren Pierce to Joy, 2 December 1942; Bell to Riskin, 23 February 1943; both in box 3521, OWI Files.
52. Riskin to Bell, 8 January 1943, box 3510, OWI Files.
53. Breen to file, 8 September 1943; Breen to Luraschi, 9 August 1943; Breen to Hays, 6 July 1944; all in HITLER'S GANG file, PCA Files.
54. "The Manual for the Motion Picture Industry," 27 April 1943; feature review, PRIDE OF THE MARINES, 11 July 1945; both in box 15, OWI Files.
55. "Report on Activities, 1942–1945," 18 September 1945, box 65, OWI Files.
56. Robert A. Rosenstone, "Like Writing History with Lightning: Historical Films/Historical Truths," *Contention: Debates in Society, Culture, and Science* 2 (Spring 1993), p. 195.
57. On Soviet films, see Peter Kenez, *Cinema and Soviet Society, 1917–1953* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), ch. 9; on German movies, see David Welch, *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983).
58. Joseph Breen, PCA annual report, 23 February 1945, PCA Files.

### CHAPTER 9 (The Postwar Motion Picture Industry)

1. John Keegan, *The Second World War* (New York: Viking, 1989), p. 219. Payne is quoted in David Halberstam, *The Fifties* (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1993), p. 116.
2. Keegan, *The Second World War*, pp. 590–591.
3. *Wall Street Journal*, 5 July 1946, p. 2; *Wall Street Journal*, 11 January 1949, p. 2.
4. See, for instance, *Wall Street Journal*, 23 December 1948, p. 1.
5. *Wall Street Journal*, 20 June 1946, p. 1; *Wall Street Journal*, 3 January 1947, p. 1.
6. On trust-busting, see *Wall Street Journal*, 28 August 1947, p. 1.
7. *Wall Street Journal*, 17 February 1947, p. 1; *Wall Street Journal*, 6 March 1947, p. 1; *Wall Street Journal*, 19 September 1949, p. 1.
8. *Wall Street Journal*, 28 August 1947, p. 1; *Wall Street Journal*, 3 June 1948, p. 1.
9. In late 1945, shortly after Johnston succeeded Hays as president of the MPPDA, its title was changed to the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA).
10. Johnston quoted in *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 April 1946, p. 14.
11. *Wall Street Journal*, 11 July 1946, p. 1; the story appeared under the page-one subhead "Foreign Sales Pushed 'Good Propaganda,' Potent Trade Stimulus." See also *Variety*, 21 August 1946, p. 3.
12. Thomas Guback, *The International Film Industry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969), p. 92.
13. On the sustained wartime rate of increase, see *Variety*, 13 February 1946, p. 7; *Motion Picture Herald*, 20 April 1946, p. 23; *Motion Picture Herald*, 2 November 1946, p. 14. On box-office grosses, see Christopher H. Sterling and Timothy R. Haight, *The Mass Media: The Aspen Institute Guide to Communications Industry Trends* (New York: Praeger, 1978), p. 187; Joel Finler, *The Hollywood Story* (New York: Crown, 1988), pp. 30–31.
14. Sterling and Haight, *The Mass Media*, p. 184; *Variety*, 21 August 1947, p. 31. Note that both SARATOGA TRUNK and ROAD TO UTOPIA were released in late 1945.
15. *Wall Street Journal*, 2 January 1947, p. 16; *Wall Street Journal*, 20 May 1947, p. 1.
16. The *Motion Picture Herald* was especially ardent in its postwar optimism. One typical example: on 8 November 1947, the *Herald* reported on the analysis by "experts and statisticians" based on Treasury Department data which refuted the "prophets of pessimism." According to their analysis, "the prosperous days of the war years have not gone, and there is no reason to suppose they will fade in the foreseeable future" (p. 12).
17. Reported in *Motion Picture Herald*, 23 February 1946, p. 8.
18. *1950 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 71; based on MPAA estimates.
19. *Wall Street Journal*, 16 September 1949, p. 1; *Wall Street Journal*, 29 November 1949, p. 1.
20. *Variety*, 2 October 1946, p. 5; *Variety*, 29 January 1947, p. 5; *Motion Picture Herald*, 26 April 1947, p. 12; *Wall Street Journal*, 14 October 1947, p. 1.

21. *Variety*, 16 November 1949, p. 7.
22. *Variety*, 12 July 1948, p. 9.
23. *Variety*, 6 March 1946, p. 3; *Variety*, 13 March 1946, p. 25; *Motion Picture Herald*, 26 June 1948, p. 36.
24. According to Sterling and Haight, the number of "four-wall theaters" wired for sound in the United States actually increased during the early Depression, which hit while many theaters had not yet converted to sound. Most of the closings involved silent houses. The overall decline was from 23,344 house theaters in 1929 to 15,273 in 1935 (*The Mass Media*, p. 35).
25. *Variety*, 27 March 1946, p. 9; *Motion Picture Herald*, 28 September 1946, p. 8; *Variety*, 5 January 1949, p. 30.
26. Figures for the other postwar years were \$63 million in 1947, \$105 million in 1948, and \$160 million in 1950. Simon N. Whitney, "Antitrust Policies of the Motion Picture Industry," in Gorham Kindem, ed., *The American Movie Industry: The Business of Motion Pictures* (Carbondale: University of Illinois Press, 1982), p. 188.
27. On "nabes" versus downtown theaters, see *Wall Street Journal*, 20 May 1947, p. 1. On nabes versus drive-ins, see *Wall Street Journal*, 9 July 1948, p. 1. On the Gallup study, see *Variety*, 23 February 1949, p. 5. On teenage audiences, see *Variety*, 10 August 1949, p. 5; on the "lost audience," see *Variety*, 26 October 1949, p. 3.
28. *Variety*, 16 November 1949, p. 10.
29. *Fortune*, 4 April 1949, p. 140.
30. Sterling and Haight, *The Mass Media*, p. 187. See also *Motion Picture Herald*, 15 January 1949, p. 12.
31. On Eagle-Lion/PRC, see *Motion Picture Herald*, 23 August 1947, p. 28.
32. *1948 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 185.
33. See, for instance, "Foreign Films Pour Into U.S. Market; 190 on Way," *Motion Picture Herald*, 27 December 1947, p. 17; *Variety*, 27 July 1949, p. 13.
34. *New York Times*, 18 December 1949, p. x5; *New York Times*, 25 December 1949, p. x5. See also Douglas Gomery, *Shared Pleasures: A History of Movie Presentation in the United States* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), pp. 183–193.
35. Korda quoted in *Motion Picture Herald*, 16 December 1946, p. 14.
36. See *Motion Picture Herald*, 3 January 1948, p. 23; *Motion Picture Herald*, 11 December 1948, p. 20; *1950 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 71; *Variety*, 4 January 1950, p. 175. Some sources report Hollywood's postwar foreign revenues as somewhat higher. The figures reported here are supported by other studies (Guback in *The International Film Industry*, for instance), but they remain even less reliable than figures on domestic earnings.
37. *Variety*, 7 January 1948, p. 31.
38. *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 September 1946, p. 23.
39. *Motion Picture Herald*, 19 October 1946, p. 19.
40. *Variety*, 31 July 1946, p. 3.
41. *Motion Picture Herald*, 3 August 1946, p. 69; *Variety*, 16 October 1946, p. 3.
42. *1948 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 46; *1949 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 47.
43. On the British quota, see *Motion Picture Herald*, 1 June 1946, p. 9; *1947 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 41; *Motion Picture Herald*, 1 February 1947, p. 48.
44. Cripps quoted in *Motion Picture Herald*, 25 January 1947, p. 48; on the economic slump, see *Motion Picture Herald*, 18 January 1947, p. 30; see also *Variety*, 5 March 1947, p. 3.
45. *Motion Picture Herald*, 21 June 1947, p. 19; *Motion Picture Herald*, 5 July 1947, p. 21; *Motion Picture Herald*, 23 August 1947, p. 28; *Motion Picture Herald*, 21 June 1947, p. 19.
46. *Motion Picture Herald*, 9 August 1947, p. 13; *Variety*, 13 August 1947, pp. 1, 3, 5; *Motion Picture Herald*, 16 August 1947, p. 12; *1948 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 45.
47. *Motion Picture Herald*, 16 August 1947, p. 12, 16.
48. *Motion Picture Herald*, 15 November 1947, p. 24. Rank announced plans to spend \$37 million on 44 pictures in 1948, while Korda reportedly planned to spend \$20 million on 13 films.
49. *Motion Picture Herald*, 20 December 1947, p. 22.
50. *Motion Picture Herald*, 13 March 1948, p. 13; *Variety*, 17 March 1948, p. 1; *Motion Picture Herald*, 29 March 1948, p. 13.
51. *Variety*, 14 April 1948, p. 9.
52. *1949 Film Daily Year Book*, p. 47; Balio, *United Artists*, p. 233.