

READING JOHN FORD'S *DECEMBER 7TH*: THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURAL
CONTEXT ON THE VISUAL REMEMBERING OF THE PEARL HARBOR ATTACK

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To
Dayton and Maryanna Brown
Thanks, Mom and Dad

Abstract

Visual memory of the Pearl Harbor attack has remained remarkably consistent for over 60 years. Through two major motion pictures (*Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970) and *Pearl Harbor* (2001)) and scores of documentaries, the coding and messages offered by visual images of the attack have remained those of director John Ford's 1943 Navy film *December 7th*.

The acceptance and use of Ford's work as authoritative tends to perpetuate a view of World War II society as unified and cohesive, while ignoring realities of social injustice and ambiguity. This view is reinforced by cultural constructs, including censorship and government propaganda, which forced mass media to present what is now read as an enviably united and heroic society.

John Ford's images and coding, combined with the limiting of messages by censorship, offer a mythic, religiously resonant model for explaining the attack. The maintenance of the Fordian paradigm and the World War II visual construct in subsequent films and documentaries appears to formalize a narrow set of icons that define the attack as a sacred ritual of sacrifice and redemption. It also codifies the hierarchal preeminence of the combat veteran, an important differentiation in a society that blurred the distinctions between the combat veteran and the civilian "production soldier."

After September 11, 2001, the Pearl Harbor attack was invoked as a paradigm for American responses to terrorist attacks. Ford's construct, with its religiously grounded model of sacrifice and redemptive violence, was viewed as an appropriate pattern for response to another surprise attack, without consideration of the source of those images and the constraints and social constructs that shaped them.

The attack on Pearl Harbor is almost unique in its consistency across time. Other attempts to encapsulate momentous events in iconic images have been met by challenges to their authority and public reexamination of their icons, but *December 7th's* authority has never been seriously examined. Despite the film's being openly acknowledged as a re-enactment using special effects, it still is the touchstone for remembering. This dissertation examines why it is so authoritative and how it maintains its dominance of the visual remembering of Pearl Harbor.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vii
Table of Figures.....	viii
Introduction	1
Three Films, One Narrative	1
Theoretical Framework.....	6
Main Dissertation Thesis	15
Methodology.....	18
Scope and Limitations	19
Chapter 1 Historical Overview.....	30
Attack Synopsis	31
Censorship of American Film.....	41
The Office of War Information – Censorship and Propaganda.....	74
Chapter 2 John Ford	113
Authority of Emotion.....	113
Identifying Ford’s Film Constructs	119
Chapter 2 Media Construct	139
December 7 th	139
Synopsis – Unreleased Long Version.....	146
Tora! Tora! Tora! – Ritualization and Iconification.....	181
History and Structure.....	183
Documentaries – Validation and Ritualization.....	226
Disney’s Pearl Harbor – Mythification.....	235
Chapter 3 Conclusions	302
Persistence of Vision	302
Works Cited	325

Table of Figures

Figure 1.1 Pre - Code Images: Ambiguous Role Models.....	58
Figure 1.2 Domestic Messages.....	72
Figure 1.3 “Sacred and Sentimental”.....	76
Figure 1.4 Triumphalism and Religion.....	77
Figure 1.5 Six Themes of the OWI.....	78
Figure 1.6 Historical Links.....	79
Figure 1.7 Identification with History.....	80
Figure 1.8 Appeals to Minorities.....	82
Figure 1.9 The “Production Soldier”.....	85
Figure 1.10 Coercion and the Group.....	86
Figure 1.11 Seven OWI Questions for Hollywood.....	102
Figure 3.1 Miss Kim, The Exotic Female.....	154
Figure 3.2 Toland’s Flight Line.....	158
Figure 3.3 Implied Spies.....	160
Figure 3.4 Baseball and Innocence.....	160
Figure 3.5 Mass in the Wilderness.....	162
Figure 3.6 Ford’s American Boy.....	164
Figure 3.7 Unread Messages –A Censored Re-Staging.....	165
Figure 3.8 Layering Images – Rear screen, Models, Smoke.....	166
Figure 3.9 <i>December 7th</i> ’s Doris Miller.....	167
Figure 3.10 Last Stand –Stock Footage.....	169
Figure 3.11 Toland’s Iconic Zero Fighter.....	170
Figure 3.12 American Dead.....	172
Figure 3.13 Ford’s American Gothic.....	173
Figure 3.14 Warrior Priests and Sorrowing Women.....	175
Figure 3.15 The Enemy as Beast.....	177
Figure 3.16 Separation from the Sacrifice.....	193
Figure 3.17 The Complicit Glance - Shared Responsibility.....	200
Figure 3.18 The Enemy in the Mountain Pass.....	207
Figure 3.19 The Japanese View of the Attack.....	208
Figure 3.20 <i>Tora! Tora! Tora!</i> ’s Doris Miller.....	209
Figure 3.21 Implied Complicity and Historical Error.....	213
Figure 3.22 Secular Group Ritual.....	214
Figure 3.23 Denial of Association with the Sacrifice.....	216
Figure 3.24 Referencing Toland’s Images.....	218
Figure 3.25 Appropriation - <i>Pearl</i> Attack and <i>Pearl Harbor</i> Music Video.....	223
Figure 3.26 Emotional Icons – Religion and Domesticity Threatened.....	236
Figure 3.27 Contemporary Icons - Recalling Images of <i>Titanic</i> and <i>The Right Stuff</i>	239
Figure 3.28 American Idyll.....	251
Figure 3.29 Meeting of Icons.....	253
Figure 3.30 The Valley of Death.....	257
Figure 3.31 Danny Redeemed through Violence.....	267

Figure 3.32 Danny's Crucifixion.....	269
Figure 3.33 Evelyn as Symbol – Mater, Temptress, Solace.....	271
Figure 3.34 Death and Redemption of the Magdalene.....	273
Figure 3.35 <i>Pearl Harbor's</i> Doris Miller – 21 st Century Man.....	279
Figure 3.36 Alien Enemies.....	282
Figure 3.37 Religious Rites – Baptism and Resurrection.....	287
Figure 3.38 Dead Angels.....	288
Figure 3.39 Individualized Death.....	289
Figure 3.40 Rafe and Danny – Redemption and Resurrection.....	291
Figure 4.1 American Ground.....	319
Figure 4.2 Reuse of OWI Themes.....	323

Introduction

Three Films, One Narrative

Visual representations of the December 7, 1941 Japanese surprise attack on Americans at Pearl Harbor Hawai'i are found primarily in three films: the US Navy's *December 7th, 1941* (1943), Twentieth Century Fox's *Tora! Tora! Tora!* (1970) and Disney's recent *Pearl Harbor* (2001). Other films have used the attack as a plot device, including *From Here to Eternity* (1953) and *In Harm's Way* (1965), but these three are the only films that offer detailed re-creations of the attack.

December 7th was produced by director John Ford, who, as then head of the US Navy's Field Photo Unit, turned out informational, intelligence and instructional films for the military and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). Made at the request of the US Navy, the film was intended to reignite the fury and patriotic commitment of 1942 in an American audience grown complacent about the war. It was designed as an unapologetic appeal to its viewer's emotions rather than an historical accounting, and it used images to remind audiences of American heroic feats and the Japanese treachery they had already read or heard about.

Although audiences had seen censored images of the attack in newsreels, *December 7th* linked those images into a coherent narrative of the attack's timeline and events. Mixing actual footage shot during and after the attack with re-creations shot on Twentieth Century Fox's studio lots, the film built the first visual remembering of the attack.

Thirty years later, Twentieth Century Fox's backlots and Pearl Harbor would again be the site of a re-creation of the attack. In 1970, the studio released *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, a meticulously detailed account of the attack and the events that led to its success. This film attempted to show audiences an evenhanded, precise reading of facts, distancing itself from the emotional portrayal of *December 7th* and showing the prequel to the attack from both the Japanese and American perspectives.

As one of the most expensive movies ever made at the time of its release, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* was intended by producer Darryl Zanuck to be a warning against complacency and lack of preparedness. He made this purpose clear in full-page ads taken out in the *Washington Post* and *New York Times*, where he wrote, "...the purpose of producing this film is to remind the public of the tragedy that happened to us and to ensure that it will never happen again" (*NYT* June 16 1969, A10).

It would be another thirty years before the attack was the centerpiece of a major Hollywood film. In 2001, Disney studios released *Pearl Harbor*, a high-budget account that again filled the skies above O'ahu with the Japanese warplanes of 1941. This script returned to an emotionally charged perspective of the attack that deliberately recalled mythic, religious and cultural meanings. By using fictitious characters to give an individualized perspective to the narrative, detailed historical accuracy was subordinated to a romantic and heroic view of the attack, although the film was advertised as an accurate re-staging.

Though separated in time and cultural perspective, these three films appear to contain similar socio-political messages that tend to maintain a narrow focus of the attack, while suppressing the same alternative narratives and perspectives. This similarity

appears even though the three films were produced almost thirty years apart from each other. Cultural change over time would suggest that other narratives and themes might be used, or that evolving perspectives about the attack might be expressed. Instead, the similarities between the three films seem larger than their differences, with a remarkable uniformity of perspective and apparent agreement about which images and narratives should be seen and which should be suppressed.

These similarities may occur because the later two films appear to have attempted to claim the authority to describe the attack through the appropriation and reuse of *December 7th*'s messages and coding. *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, though it distances itself from the overt emotional partisanship of *December 7th*, continues the theme of the attack as a betrayal of America, and reinforces the earlier film's images through use of many of the same cultural assumptions. *Pearl Harbor* adopts not only the theme of betrayal, but also returns to *December 7th*'s emotional appeals and director John Ford's signs and codings to reassert the attack's connections to American myth.

Ford's film appears to be viewed as an authoritative narrative of the attack for two main reasons: it is an artifact of the war and it seems to have the ability to evoke the original emotions engendered by the attack. Its place in the World War II film holdings of the US National Archives alongside authentic combat footage seems to allow it a contextual authority inconsistent with its origins on a Twentieth Century Fox studio back lot. As an artifact, it follows the visual pattern of World War II films in its use of censorship and its suppression of ambiguous images and themes.

Specifically designed to evoke emotional memories, the film uses conventions and themes drawn from Ford's highly evocative and successful 1935-1941 films to give

the attack a firm place in American legend, as well as in history. The film continues to achieve this purpose with remarkable effectiveness. It recalls the feelings of betrayal, grief and rage, paired with an emphasis on the ability of the surprised forces to fight back. It offers the solace of religion, and pride in American ability to rebuild its might, as well as promises of revenge and victory. Its special effects and obvious re-creations are forgiven by critics, who acknowledge but discount them, citing the film's ability to evoke an authentic emotional re-creation of the attack's surprise and sorrow as more important than the technical authenticity of its imagery.

Through the repeated use of its images to illustrate the attack, as well as its appearance in almost every documentary and annual news reports of commemoration ceremonies, *December 7th* seems to have become established as a cultural icon. *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor*, in using the earlier film as an authoritative reference, appear to reinforce this authority to represent the attack, and encourage its use in any visual presentation that might aspire to be seen as an authentic re-creation. In doing so, they not only perpetuate the limited perspectives of World War II's censored context, but also present the mythic and religious codings of John Ford's view of pre-war America as historical rather than emotional texts, obscuring a clear identification of the underlying sources of its historical authority

Since there seems to be a cultural trend towards reliance on visual imagery as a tool for learning and transmitting information, *December 7th's* apparent standing as a cultural icon may give it a more than ordinary influence in shaping the Pearl Harbor attack narrative. *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor's* reliance on its perspectives and imagery suggest that this influence has not been diminished by the availability of

alternative written texts and interpretations that have greater complexity. In fact, the survivors who saw the attack, and the relatives of those killed that day appear to prefer *December 7th* as the authoritative visual representation of the attack, publicly protesting the later films when they attempted to shift the focus of its narrative to a broader interpretation.

If the film is to be an authoritative source for attack narrative films, it seems important to understand the underlying messages it offers. The frequent, almost exclusive, use of its images and their important but unread cultural contexts and messages may have an unintended influence on how we remember Pearl Harbor, and how we use that remembering to define America's role in an increasingly interconnected world.

This dissertation attempts to examine the underlying socio-political messages in *December 7th*, including the influence of the themes and codings of director John Ford, who produced the film for the US Navy. It tries to identify those inherent but unread cultural contexts that form the film's underlying messages, and suggest how these selective messages can be validated through their repetition in other major cultural presentations such as *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor*. Because the attack holds such a prominent place in American history, examining how these unacknowledged messages still shape our understanding of American history and self-perception may offer insight on how to approach historical film as a narrative tool.

Theoretical Framework

This dissertation builds on the premise that images can communicate messages that, though they may not be fully understood, are accepted as being part of an authoritative representation of an event. Because film conveys meaning through emotion, both the overt image and the underlying emotional context it communicates are given authoritative weight. Failure to read them can result in limited understanding of and unintended conclusions about the events they represent.

As images are repeatedly used to represent an event, their partially read messages can become icons of that event, particularly if their authority is validated by eyewitnesses. Public familiarity may reinforce these icons, allowing them even more authority, and an ability to imbue the event with their emotional subtexts. Because icons tend to limit complex discourse, events with many facets and alternative narratives may run the risk of being reduced to a few images and simplified emotional responses. Reduction from the complex to the simple may also lead to a failure to challenge those icons that have displayed a proven ability to evoke the emotions considered appropriate for the event. Established icons may also force newer films and documentaries to conform to these responses, rather than challenge their limits.

The use of historical films like *December 7th* can therefore be problematical because their authority to represent their time accurately is often not called in question. Their authenticity is undeniable, their images and voices are exactly what played in theaters during the war. These emotional messages can be assumed to be authentic representations, which can lead to a distorted perception of cultural attitudes and norms.

Unchallenged in their authenticity, they can also perpetuate a limited, and perhaps unrealistic, narrative of the attack.

Authority of Images

Alan Trachtenberg, in *Reading American Photographs*, discusses the “authority” that images can assume. Using the Civil War battlefield photographs of Matthew Brady, he examines how their mere existence can lead to their right and ability to represent an event. This authority comes from two assumptions: 1) that the camera was there to take the photograph or film, and is therefore an eyewitness to the event, and 2) that the pictures it takes are a dispassionate re-creation of the event, unbiased and without their own point of view.

Instead, Trachtenberg believes that photographs, particularly those dealing with combat and war, need to be deconstructed to read their messages and that they must be placed within a larger cultural context to be properly interpreted. He argues that the photographer and the viewer must share cultural and social language to decode the photograph correctly. Photographs that fall outside cultural coding and social expectation will be less acceptable than those that do, and their captioning plays an important role in how the viewer references what they are seeing.

Captioning, in photographs, is the text the photographer uses to instruct the viewer on the image’s contents and message. Trachtenberg stresses the importance of differentiating between what the caption tells the viewer they are seeing, and what the photograph actually shows, suggesting that the “eyewitness” authority of the image is tempered by the cultural constraints of its audience. He states “Precisely because their meaning has seemed so direct and self-evident, the photographs pose a double question of

comprehension: How were they understood at the time, and how should they be understood today?" (71-72)

This is the question posed by *December 7th*. In the most basic sense, the film is considered authoritative because it was produced and seen during the war. Its cultural and social captioning is consistent with documentaries and films of the time and it does not offer messages or images that are remarkable for their cultural dissonance. It resembles other films seen at the time and the newsreel footage it uses is remembered as part of an experience of the war. However, at the time of its release, it was also understood to be a product of censorship, influenced by military objectives, and subject to the patriotic impulses of the social construct. When it assumes its authority as history, these elements must be understood and appreciated.

The film's apparent exclusive right to represent the attack suggests that its authority comes not only from its consistency with memory, but also through its use of specific themes and messages that establish ways of remembering the attack. The repeated use of these same images and messages seems to establish not only an historical function, but also a cultural ritualization of the icons used for remembering.

Ritual Function of the Image

Alan Trachtenberg's assessment of authority was proposed by Walter Benjamin during the early days of film, when he wrote "...photographs become standard evidence for historic occurrences." In his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", he looks at how photographs and film are used for art and ritual devices and argues that, "...for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever-greater

degree, the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. ... Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice - politics” (*Illuminations* 324).

His suggestion, that the reproducibility of film denies it the traditional ritual function of art, does not address the impact of the ability of film to deploy uniform messages to a widely disparate audience. Benjamin sees this reproducibility as stimulating, but not ritualistic. However, in arguing that the cultic function of reproducible art is lost to the political function, he does not address some implications of the group experience, and how repetitive viewing may establish a ritual function for images with a high degree of cultural resonance.

The group experience of an emotionally charged film may establish a collective memory of the event that is sustained and institutionalized by repetition of selected images and suppression of alternative narratives. Viewing of iconic images can become part of a ritual of remembering, a means of re-experiencing the emotions generated by the event rather than the facts of the event. However, as they establish iconic representations of the event, their exclusive use can also limit what narratives are heard and the ways events are placed in historical context.

The ability of film to reach across time, distance and culture seems to make it an excellent channel for establishing images as ritual elements with a more global meaning. The cultic function of art that Benjamin finds in paintings and sculpture can only have ritual significance for the group within its purview, but film’s reproducibility and the exactness of the messages it transmits to unlimited audiences makes it ideal for

establishing ritual icons for very large groups otherwise unreachable. This iconic function is acknowledged in popular culture, but generally not in the use of historical film.

Film tends to remove the abstract and complex that may compromise ritual meanings and offers emotions and codes that require no knowledge and little mediation, expanding the aura of the icon across a larger cultural affiliation. Through this standardization of ritual, icons can establish national meanings and memories even in the face of cultural differences such as race and American regionalism. The perfection of reproducibility maintains the film's cultural contexts, sustaining them over time and gaining them the authority noted by Trachtenberg. It can be argued that film's reproducibility duplicates writing's ability to convey information to unrelated individuals, but retreats from the abstract of the written word to the emotion of the image, at the same time allowing a mass cultural experience that requires only knowledge of film convention and coding.

Emotional Captioning

The ability to transmit exact ritual and cultic meaning to a large population is reinforced by film's characteristic of conveying emotional states rather than dispassionate information. This transmission of the emotional content of knowledge is examined in Leonard Shlain's *The Alphabet versus the Goddess: the Conflict between Word and Image*. Shlain proposes that one of the most revolutionary aspects of writing was that it allowed ideas to be passed on exactly and studied by individuals that have no other contact with each other. They transcended culture, time and space in transmitting information. Written words, however, require literacy training and cognitive skills to

decode, while they tend to remove human contact and emotional interaction from the dissemination of knowledge.

Shlain sees writing as a linear brain function and image decoding as associative and holistic. He posits that the shift from a visual to a word-based culture moved the interpretation of ritual meanings from the oral, group mode to precise definitions interpreted by an elitist minority (51). This moved the transfer of history and memory from the personal, emotional mode of oral tradition and image to the abstract and detached written record.

As words allow the transmission of ideas using precisely defined and agreed upon meanings, film allows the transmission of emotion using codified signs and emotional triggers. The widespread use of film, video and computers to transfer information as images has reintroduced the emotional to the historical narrative. Neil Postman has decried this turn from the word to the image, pointing out what he sees as an American retreat from information to entertainment in *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. He points out that public perceptions and opinions now tend to be drawn from images rather than reading, research and study. He sees the loss of reading and the growth of television as a collapse of the ability to discern, reason and connect information into patterns and logic streams. *December 7th* appears to take advantage of this cultural shift, establishing visual icons and emotional triggers that elicit responses even without an understanding of their cultural subtexting.

Validation of Authority

At the same time that knowledge of events seems to be based on emotional response to familiar icons, the power to establish those rituals and icons is still in the

hands of an elitist group of mediators, and the ability of the individual to affect the ritual meanings becomes more severely restricted than with the written text. Benjamin suggests that increased access to the press would make the public all potential authors who could be reproduced on film (232). Instead, the expanded ability to communicate through the written word has been offset by the dominance of visual media like film and television as the primary means of receiving information. These channels can still only be accessed through a limited number of gatekeepers who choose what topics are newsworthy or of interest to audiences. Even with home video and local television access channels, opportunities for the individual to communicate to very large audiences are still better through magazines, newspapers and internet communications than through mass visual media like film and cable television.

Instead of the publisher/author of written texts, the power to authenticate and display icons seems to rest with the producer/eyewitness, who controls access to visual media channels and narrative content. The producer uses the eyewitness to validate the content of the program, and the eyewitness uses the producer as a channel to promulgate a specific narrative or validate an icon. Benjamin's reproducibility can then become the means for an organized group; with the authority to validate what images will represent an event, to create a new type of mediating function in the construction of visual histories.

An organized group with common goals and viewpoints tends to have more resources and a greater ability to influence producers of mass visual media through strength of numbers and uniformity of message. They can establish narrative threads and select messages and icons while eliminating alternatives to their select viewpoint, using

their collective voice to marginalize individuals and less cohesive voices. These groups, with their exclusive membership, can perhaps perform as a priestly/shamanistic class, by providing and authenticating icons which appear to present the aura of inapproachability and limited access that Benjamin saw in cultic objects (224 -225). This can result in suppression of views outside of the group's desired focus. By appropriating the event, they assume the right to select its icons and therefore dictate the emotional responses to the event.

In the case of Pearl Harbor, survivors of the attack have become the *de facto* mediators and validators of its public icons and memories. Organized into the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association, they have established themselves as interpreters of the attack. They wear a quasi-uniform aloha shirt and garrison cap while routinely visiting the USS Arizona Memorial to perform ceremonies and talk to visitors. The same uniform is worn while they are interviewed for documentaries, or when attending memorial ceremonies. As a group, they establish a single conduit for gaining eyewitness oral histories of the attack, and form a powerful lobbying group to monitor museum displays, film presentations and other activities that seek to interpret the attack. In claiming the right to authenticate visual narratives, they have effectively established a ritualized function where their participation and approval is necessary for any film about the attack. Walter Benjamin's requirement for an aura of inapproachability in ritualized art is provided by these gatekeepers, who appear to have resisted distancing from the emotional and cultural messages of *December 7th* and any expansion of the narrative to include other affiliates such as civilian shipyard workers and the death of civilians in Honolulu.

Recognition of their ownership and authority was evident in the making of the revised USS *Arizona* orientation film in 1992 (White, "Moving Pictures" 720) and *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, but the most deliberate and overt acknowledgement of the approval/gatekeeping function of the survivor is seen in the production process of Disney's *Pearl Harbor*. The film's producers not only announced their consultation with survivors, they orchestrated publicity campaigns that showed a ritualized visit to the USS *Arizona* Memorial by the producer, director and stars before the beginning of filming. Survivors and their families were invited to several publicity events and gatherings on the movie set. Although at the time there were objections to the movie's use of a love story as a plotline, the studio seems to have effectively appropriated the Pearl Harbor Survivor's Association by including them in almost every public and several private events. The role of survivors as consultants and overseers for the film, whether actual or not, form an entire chapter in the movie tie-in book *Pearl Harbor: the Movie and the Moment* and were the topic of several newspaper and magazine articles.

It is also implied in the use of survivor's narratives paired with footage from *December 7th* in almost all film documentaries. By using the footage to illustrate the oral histories of attack survivors, the implication is that the survivor's experience can be seen in that film footage. By doing so with a number of different survivors, and adding photos of them as young men, documentaries seem to establish a straightforward role for the film as an authoritative eyewitness.

Attaching emotional triggers to icons that have assumed the authority of the eyewitness allows cultural shorthand that tends to persist unless superseded by equally compelling images. In the case of the Pearl Harbor attack, newer images tend to rely on

the iconic power of *December 7th* and reinforce, rather than challenge, its authority. In terms of authority of context, emotion and stature, its use has become a ritual means of remembering.

While the attack on Pearl Harbor is perhaps the most recognizable of these appropriations, William Langewiesche's *American Ground* suggests a similar appropriation (and association with religion) in the jockeying for preeminence between firefighters and police officers after September 11 2001 (145-170). In much the same way, construction of heroic icons has focused on uniformed groups who not only are readily identifiable, but also have an inherent organizational structure to advance their selected perspectives and icons. Whether dominance of the firemen in the iconography of 9/11 will persist is not yet determined, however, a number of parallels between the constructions of the narrative of both events are suggested through application of the model proposed by this dissertation.

Main Dissertation Thesis

This dissertation suggests that the similarities of perspective, signs and coding found in all three major film narrations about the Pearl Harbor attack stem from their adherence to specific but largely unacknowledged cultural contexts that appeal to specific mythic American beliefs. These stem from the view of American participation in World War II as uniformly heroic and morally redemptive, a view reinforced through censorship of films and propaganda efforts that suppressed alternative views of the war. The cultural context of World War II society limited ways of seeing the war by censoring what images were available to the American public, particularly in newsreel and war short films that gave civilian America its emotional images of the war. Death, blood and uncertainty were

removed from all film presentations, distorting perceptions for an audience who accepted these limits as a wartime necessity. The public had already welcomed the imposition of the Motion Picture Production Code, a system of Hollywood film censorship that had removed violent imagery and images of social deviation from the screen in 1934. Suppressing war images was consistent with expectations of what should be seen in theaters, and Hollywood's conversion to a war footing did not offer any new or radical changes from presentations of morality, social conformity and suppression of disturbing images.

There was no challenge from other media sources that might mitigate the newsreel's messages. Instead, government campaigns and commercial advertising advanced a social construct that replaced war's realities with pervasive images that encouraged the perception of the civilian as actually fighting the war rather than supporting it. Until late 1943, there were no images to counter Madison Avenue's portrayal of war as a noble adventure, conducted by morally incorruptible American forces and dependent on civilian actions. Even after the first image of a dead American was published in late 1943, the main thrust of American war imagery conformed to a socio-political context that sustained the gulf between American perception of war and its realities.

In censoring the American view of war, films not only encouraged a distorted perception of its consequences, they established a historical record that has no contradictory images to balance that censorship. Without that balance, what is left as artifact is a consistent visual record that omits more than it shows. The stresses and inequities of social and military life have no images to illustrate their presence. Only in

written texts are their voices heard. In the “Brave New World” that alarms Neil Postman in his *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, written texts are marginalized by easy, iconic images. Film re-creations have only these conforming images to shape their own interpretations, and their limited visions to use as a base for claims of authenticity.

In the case of a film like *December 7th*, those authentic images are not only censored, they are also crafted by a master filmmaker. They include the emotionally evocative signs and codings of director John Ford, whose specialty was films that added deep mythic and religious resonance to American history and legend. These emotionally appealing, but biased, signs and codes offer the same cultural context as all World War II film images, but because they assign religious and mythic underpinnings to the attack, they may preclude detached analysis and encourage suppression of less emotionally resonant alternative narratives.

The most recent re-creation, *Pearl Harbor*, appears to embrace Ford’s codings and emotional signs in its depictions, and even the overtly dispassionate *Tora! Tora! Tora!* suggests a perspective of the attack as the consequence of social and moral sin. Both adhere to the earlier film’s premises, and continue to validate its messages and constraints. Both *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor* seem to follow World War II’s context of strict censorship and suppression of social conflict to shape the narratives of their presentations. In doing so, they confine the attack narrative to the censored and circumscribed realm of World War II films.

Methodology

The data for this dissertation was obtained by close textual readings of *December 7th* and comparing its narrative and messages to subsequent films that attempt to recreate the attack. Its context and meanings were established through identifying the social and cultural constraints placed on it by World War II visual images and how master filmmaker John Ford used that framework to express his ideas of American ideals and myths.

The film's cultural construct was established through reading critics such as Tom Doherty and Tom Engelhardt, as well as reflection on the newsreels, war shorts and the other mass media messages that saturated the American homefront during World War II. Censorship was examined through readings of cultural criticism, social criticism, historical studies and textual readings of newsreels, war genre films and military documentary films. They form the basis for understanding the larger context of the American home front war experience, including how other media reinforced film's unambiguous censored messages. The same censorship and propaganda constraints were also identified in magazines, posters and commercial advertisements. The interlocking of censorship with Ford's consistent messages of a mythic, heroic and religiously grounded America, as laid out in film criticism and biographies, established the messages presented by *December 7th*, and reiterated in later films and documentaries.

Using this as a base, selected films and documentaries were viewed and compared to *December 7th* to identify patterns of omission and repetition in their narrative threads and interpretations of the attack. This revealed a marked agreement in both the overt visual imagery and the emotional captioning of the various accounts, despite wide

differences in when they were produced. The similarity of visuals, as well as consistency in omissions of elements such as graphic American death, results in all films presenting a uniform narrative of the attack drawn from *December 7th's* paradigm.

The influence of this limited narrative was examined using theories of communication and remembering suggested by Alan Trachtenberg, Walter Benjamin and Neil Postman and reflecting on how the use of visual images to communicate history can influence more recent events such as the American response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Scope and Limitations

This dissertation suggests that there are unread cultural contexts that continue to influence films about the Pearl Harbor attack, and that these are not generally recognized when *December 7th* is used as an authoritative source for building visual re-creations. To explore this thesis, the forces that shape *December 7th* need to be identified and analyzed, and the later two films examined to determine where and how those underlying forces might continue to exert their influences. Trachtenberg asks, “How were they viewed then, and how should they be viewed now?” This question helps provide the framework for understanding the socio-political context that underlies *December 7th* and which reappears in *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor*.

An appreciation of how the World War II cultural context and *December 7th* have shaped the Pearl Harbor attack narrative can be addressed through examination and analysis of their sources and their subsequent expression and reaffirmation.

Understanding the limitations and impact of censorship and social contexts may allow a

means of “seeing what we can’t see” and evaluating what film narratives of the attack contain and omit.

In their book *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies*, Clayton Koppes and Gregory Black suggest two of the main cultural constructs that shaped World War II films. The first is censorship, which was able to limit messages of the films, and the second is propaganda, which inserted some of the cultural signs and codings that give persistent emotional weight to their perspectives and interpretations of events. The two factors suggested by Koppes and Black seem to fall along a continuum, with the mechanics of deliberate censorship at one end and the appeals to emotion in the films of John Ford at the other. In between are shadings from straightforward suppression of military censorship, to suppression paired with the advancement of desired behavior attempted by the Office of War Information, to expression of emotion and attachment to mythic and religious feelings found in both Ford’s films and the products of Madison Avenue. Because censorship and propaganda were highly codified and socially acceptable, for this dissertation establishing their effectiveness is secondary to analyzing how those restrictions shaped and limited the ways Americans saw the war.

Censorship affected every film seen in America during the war. Various factors, including the Office of War Information (OWI) conformed to the baseline imposed by the Production Code Administration and the U.S. military, adding their cultural and emotional appeals to develop a cultural context that stressed sacrifice and group primacy. This construct, promoted by OWI and other war support activities, encouraged an association of the war with American history, legend and religion, themes that were

appropriated by commercial advertising as they used the war to sell consumer goods. As that occurred, the expression of the themes of group ethos and sacrifice moved from the straight mechanics of censorship to the use of propaganda techniques and methods to advance a single, unambiguous view of America and the war.

Although censorship can be used as a tool of propaganda by suppressing alternative messages, propaganda is generally directed towards attempts to persuade to a specific point of view, rather than suppressing alternatives. It does this through emotional appeals and shaping of information to its needs. Though generally used as a pejorative term in America, stemming from misuse of government propaganda in World War I, propaganda in World War II was expected and accepted, even if its messages were not wholly believed by the general populace. It included attempts at shaping public opinion and behavior by the OWI as well as war shorts and informational films like *December 7th*. Though not part of an official government program, Madison Avenue linked commercial advertisements to the war to exploit patriotism, assisting government propaganda efforts by agreeing with their cultural premises. To examine propaganda, its expressions in posters, films and advertisements will be used along with historical and critical studies.

The signs and codings of *December 7th*, with their references to American myth and religion, will be considered propagandistic for the purposes of this dissertation. Falling under the general heading of propaganda are John Ford's themes and messages, which will be approached using film criticism and biographies, cultural criticism of the larger context of the Western film, and deconstruction of *December 7th* and other films.

The film criticism model of the *auteur*, which in part argues that some individuals can shape their films to reflect personal beliefs and agendas, provides the framework for examining Ford's personal experience in his films and for viewing the work as a unified whole with reoccurring themes and messages. Themes and messages identified and analyzed by film critics in studies of Ford and his work and in critiques and analyses of larger cultural issues such as the Western in American myth, place Ford's themes into a broader context of the genre film.

The grouping of films by genre, including the Western, the World War II film and the Gangster film provides a means of categorizing and interpreting the elements found in films. Kathryn Kane uses the model of genre to deconstruct combat films of World War II and establish their parameters and conventions, and her work in *Visions of War* provides a model for linking Ford's messages to the larger body of war films that reiterate the same messages and offer the same Code-censored experience of war. *December 7th* falls under the World War II genre, which Richard Slotkin, in *Gunfighter Nation*, views as an outgrowth of and cousin to the Western genre. This linkage will be used to establish the continuity of conventions from Ford's other works to his documentary *Battle of Midway* and *December 7th*.

The second part of Trachtenberg's question "...and how are they viewed today?" is explored by a close textual reading and deconstruction of *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor* for reiteration of its themes. The 60-year spacing between the first and latest films is large enough so that generational, political and social changes should be clearly identifiable. Technological advances in film, including computer-generated imagery along with loosening of censorship in American films would also suggest that the attack

sequence should be markedly different for each film. Their similarity argues for the influence of *December 7th*. They validate *December 7th's* icons and messages and its assumption of the mantle of authority proposed by Trachtenberg. The film's repetition and reuse, without addressing the contextual background of its messages gives it its ritual function, establishing its coded messages as icons of emotional power and mythic import.

No film could contain all the narrative threads of the attack, but most of these have never had a visual representation, including the civilian losses and experiences, the sinking of the USS *Utah* (like the USS *Arizona*, a tomb for unrecovered casualties), the contributions of civilian shipyard workers and a myriad of other accounts. The proliferation of documentaries about the attack would suggest a means of presenting alternative narratives and promoting a variety of viewpoints. Instead, these works also seem to follow *December 7th's* premise, both in the attack's cultural meanings and in the messages that are allowed and suppressed. Most of these productions use Ford's images to present the attack, and do not stray far from his view. Instead, various written texts of the attack are the sources to remember these alternative narratives, and provide the balanced, fuller image of the event that is missing from film representations. They also provide background for understanding the context of references recognizable to *December 7th's* 1943 audience, but which are obscure to all but the most knowledgeable moviegoer today.

The problem presented by the use of World War II historical films, including Ford's, is that the censorship and propaganda remain, without the wartime understanding of their presence and perspective. Seldom in the use of *December 7th* is the distinction made between the film's idealized and censored version of events, and the more

ambiguous and complex reality of the era. In a context such as the USS *Arizona* Memorial, where the intent is to remember and honor the dead, its limitations are perhaps desirable. In a larger context of reference for a nationally traumatic event, it may become problematic. Identifying the cultural subtexts that film carries, with its strengths and limitations may help us appreciate how they continue to shape recent events like 9/11.

In the interval between 9/11 and this writing, some similarities in the response to both may be developing. These appear to include the formation of a gatekeeping group that attempts to control the messages of 9/11's images and a similar linkage of religion, history and 9/11 through icons. Although preliminary, they suggest that there may be an emerging pattern for the process of incorporating film into historical text that does not take into account the cultural underpinnings suggested by this dissertation. Comparison of the iconification and ritualization of the Pearl Harbor attack and 9/11 may offer suggestions of a pattern of use for historical visual narrative.

Though it focuses on films that depict a single event, this dissertation draws conclusions that may apply to all World War II non-fiction films, i.e., that the cultural contexts that limit and shape *December 7th* also shape all newsreels, war shorts and government informational and instructional films. These contexts are recognized in works like George Roeder's *The Censored War*, and Lee Kennett's *For the Duration...*, but only Tom Doherty's *Projections of War* gives more than a passing reference to how present-day audiences may misread what the films show us. In attempting to identify these contexts, this dissertation looks at the aims and objectives of censorship, the OWI and Madison Avenue, and stresses the actual omissions and presentations, rather than the social struggles and accommodations that led to their adoption.

In focusing on the results of censorship and propaganda, rather than their causes, the areas of race and gender, which were so narrowly interpreted on screen, are not reviewed in depth. Sex and Pearl Harbor barely meet, even in Disney's *Pearl Harbor*, which was advertised as a love triangle. In that film, sex is subordinated to the larger themes of betrayal and redemption, and the lack of emotional connection that ensues from that focus is in large part responsible for the film's poor reception. Race, in the persona of MessMate 2nd class Doris Miller, is the perpetuation of an OWI icon in a campaign for national unity and worthy of a paper in its own right.

Films examined in this study are limited to *December 7th*, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor*, as they are the only American films that center on a re-creation of the attack. Ed Rampell, in his *Pearl Harbor in the Movies* (2001), lists about 60 films that reference the attack, but reading the plot line reveals that they use it as a plot device, rather than the focus of the film. *From Here to Eternity* and *In Harm's Way* are examples of this use of the attack. Both those films use it as a watershed event to resolve their plots or force their characters to action, rather than depicting the attack itself. Both the Pearl Harbor television mini-series, *Pearl* (1978) and *Winds of War* (1983) also fall into this category, and although *Pearl* features an extensive staging of the attack, the footage was lifted almost entirely from *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and is examined in that context.

The documentary films of the Pearl Harbor attack consistently use the footage of *December 7th* to illustrate the attack. A better understanding of the nature of the film has led to a more consistent use of its authentic portions in those made after 2001, rather than the studio re-creations, but the film appears with regularity, even in documentaries having only peripheral mention of the attack. The use of its footage in documentaries can be seen

as a strong argument for *December 7th*'s authority, particularly when paired with oral histories by survivors. These films are similar enough that point-by-point analysis of their usage becomes repetitious, therefore only a representative sample is used to illustrate the authority garnered by *December 7th* through its repeated usage, particularly when used in tandem with the human eyewitness of the attack survivor.

The role of the survivor in validating and limiting the visual narrative is established in two ways. The first is the how these eyewitnesses allow themselves to be seen and through their appearance, endorsing those narratives and their omissions. The second is their role in embracing or rejecting the visual presentations of the three films examined in this dissertation. Benjamin suggests an aura of inapproachability for a ritualized, cultic work of art, and as the gatekeepers for authenticity of public representations of the attack, their opinions tend to be heard. These survivors appear to adhere to a single perspective and narrative construct consistent with *December 7th*. Along with establishing survivors as a means of ritualizing our remembering of the attack, the linkage established between the survivors and the USS *Arizona* Memorial by documentary films seems to have allowed them a gatekeeping function in the interpretation of the Memorial.

Although a thorough critique of museum interpretation is outside the scope of this study, research and observation indicate that exhibits in the Memorial follow the same unread cultural contexts about the attack discussed here and its orientation films, both old and new, not only follow the same structure as *December 7th*, but also use the same contexts, signs and codes. The USS *Arizona* Memorial Visitor's Center shows a film as an orientation and introduction to the Memorial's meaning before visiting the sunken

battleship. This film has been a magnet for controversy about how the narrative is shaped. Geoff White has done seminal work on the Memorial's role in American memory, including his "Moving Pictures: The Pearl Harbor Films." His work supports the theories offered in this dissertation and, though its focus is on "how they are viewed now," they are used to support arguments of a commonality of theme and omission.

Japanese films about the attack, including *I Bombed Pearl Harbor* (1961) and its predecessor *Hawaii-Marei Oki Kaisen (The War at Sea from Hawaii to Malaya)* (1942) give the Japanese perspective of the attack, and provide an alternative visual narrative of the attack, but they do not deal with American cultural memories and constructs and are therefore not examined in detail. Interestingly, *I Bombed Pearl Harbor* repeats the plot of its 1942 predecessor, in an echo of the American use of *December 7th*. It draws its images and some of its plotline directly from the earlier film, and both of these appear in the Japanese sequences in *Tora! Tora! Tora!*.

Ford's films addressed in this dissertation are limited to those beginning in 1935 and ending in 1947, a demarcation that agrees with Tag Gallagher in his book *John Ford*. The year 1935 is six months after the enforcement of the Production Code Administration's Code, which makes a logical start point for this study, even though Ford, by inclination and temperament was never in great conflict with the PCA. (The first PCA Seal of Approval was given to his *The World Moves On*) This was also the period when Ford directed many of the films that have become icons of American history, what critic John Baxter calls the "Frontier films." They include the seminal Western *Stagecoach* (1939), *Drums Along the Mohawk* (1939) and *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939). A closing date of 1947 encompasses *They Were Expendable* (1945) and *The Fugitive*

(1947), films that hint at changes in Ford's pre-war rhetoric. Their shift in emphasis provides validation for positing a constant thematic expression in Ford's pre-war films.

This limitation precludes exploration of the establishment of John Wayne, and to a lesser extent Henry Fonda, as models for the self-perception of American combat veterans from the immediate post-war through Korea and Vietnam. Ford, himself a combat veteran, put much of himself into his films, and his gradual shift from a mediating pre-war hero (*Stagecoach*, *Young Mr. Lincoln*), to the alienated Cold War loner (*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence*, *The Searchers*), may be able to be correlated to the frustrations and alienations voiced by writers Paul Fussell in *Wartime* and Joseph Heller in *Catch-22*.

Although books about the attack are the single most important source for a true understanding of the events of December 7, 1941, their place in this dissertation is unfortunately limited. Written texts provide the wide vista of narratives and alternative views of the attack needed to understand and appreciate its influence on American culture and self-image, but this dissertation concerns itself with how those varied and nuanced narratives are excised from the visual remembering in favor of a few emotionally, mythically resonant icons. Though they are critical to an understanding of the facts of the attack, they are used here to establish the presence of other important narratives that have been consistently suppressed in films rather than examined in their own right. What is left is the visual expression of cultural contexts, which this dissertation suggests are shaped by emotional connections to American myth and legend, as well as religious roots. Its relevance may lie in the connections drawn between the Pearl Harbor attack and the World Trade Center attack of 2001, four months after the release of *Pearl Harbor*. The

trope of betrayal, the loss of innocent life, and the call for violent retribution are similar to that of December 1941, as is the perception of the religious underpinnings of the attack and the attackers as markedly alien to American thought. But, by building a response to terrorism based on the cultural contexts and emotional icons of Pearl Harbor as seen through the lens of *December 7th*, we need to have a clear understanding of how we view it, now and then.

Chapter 1 Historical Overview

Film narratives of the Pearl Harbor attack are built on two bases: they recount a limited narrative of events that occurred during the attack, based on historical facts and they reiterate and reaffirm underlying cultural and constructs that shape how those facts are presented. Historical data detailing the events of the attack are found in the many texts written in the 1980s and 1990s, the period after the fiftieth anniversary of the attack, but well after *Tora! Tora! Tora!* was released in 1970. The most complete are the minute-by-minute reconstructions such as Stanley Weintraub's *Long Day's Journey into War*, and Gordon Prange's works on the subject: *At Dawn We Slept, December 7th, 1941: the Day the Japanese Attacked Pearl Harbor* and *Pearl Harbor: Verdict of History*. These works and many more, carefully footnote and correlate each detail of the event, relying on research and documents to authenticate their conclusions to describe the attack, rather than arguing a particular point of view.

Many other works focus on a single aspect of the attack, such as Burl Burlingame's *Advance Force – Pearl Harbor*, which examines the use of two-man submarines in the attack. Others collect the personal experiences of individuals, such as Edward Sheehan's *One Sunday Morning* and Lawrence Rodrigg's *We Remember Pearl Harbor*. A third group, known as the revisionist, or conspiracy, theorists include John Toland's *Infamy: Pearl Harbor and its Aftermath*, James Rushberger's *Betrayal at Pearl Harbor: How Churchill Lured Roosevelt into WWII*, and Robert Stinnett's *Day of Deceit: The Truth about FDR*. These works do not dispute the facts of the attack itself, but deal

with possible scenarios for assigning responsibility for America's failure to detect the Japanese plans, suggesting betrayal by high placed government officials.

All three films assume an audience's familiarity with the attack, and that they can identify specific events from viewing familiar images presented in rapid sequence. They omit details of location and consequence that are part of the attack's cultural legacy, while still presenting them as emotionally resonant icons. Therefore, a brief synopsis of the attack may be useful.

Attack Synopsis

Japan and the United States had been in conflict for some time before the attack, centering on trade issues and Japan's military expansion into China. President Roosevelt placed an embargo on steel, oil and scrap metal for Japan, which most scholars identify as a main underlying cause of Japan's decision to go to war with the United States. Tension over issues of colonialism and the refusal of the United States to allow immigration status equal to other countries also contributed to simmering conflict between the countries, including the United States support of Chinese against the Japanese invasion of Manchuria.

Preparations for war on the Japanese side began the year before the attack, beginning when Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, feeling that war with the United States was inevitable, proposed the idea of attacking the American fleet as it sat in Pearl Harbor. The concept was received with doubt by the Japanese Military Command even though such an attack had been an academic exercise for Japanese Military Schools for years. Planners were also aware of Hector Bywater's 1925 book, *Great Pacific War: a History of the American-Japanese Campaign of 1931-33*, which outlined how to mount such an

attack. The attack was theoretically possible, since Japan was already a formidable naval power, capable of superb strategy. Their ability to succeed at bold naval maneuvers had been proved in their surprise attack on Russian-held Port Arthur in early February 1904.

The Japanese objective in attacking the American fleet was to cripple the ability of America to project its military power into Asia for a time estimated to run as long as eighteen months. This would be enough time for Japan to seize the oil, metals and rubber assets of Southeast Asia, while European colonial rulers were distracted or occupied by Nazi Germany. The Japanese assumed that if they could delay Americans long enough to establish military strongholds, they could negotiate a truce that would leave those resources in their hands.

Admiral Yamamoto was allowed to proceed with sorting out the difficulties of planning and equipment, including one of the most difficult problems, development of aerial launched torpedoes that would not ground themselves in the shallow Pearl Harbor. For the experimental trials, a Japanese harbor that physically resembled Pearl Harbor was used, and torpedoes were fitted with wooden fins to create very shallow dive patterns. These modifications required re-training of torpedo bomber crews, which also took place in the remote harbor. This harbor can be seen in *Hawaii-Marei Oki Kaisen* (1942) and *Tora! Tora! Tora!*.

Information about the fleet at Pearl Harbor was provided by spies working out of the Japanese Consulate in Honolulu. Japanese intelligence officers, posing as consulate staff, used tourist tours and the hills surrounding Pearl Harbor to observe the fleet's activities. Their job was made easier by Admiral Kimmel's predecessor, Admiral Richardson, who had instituted a strict schedule of arrivals and departures for the fleet.

This schedule usually kept all major ships, including the aircraft carriers and battleships, in the harbor over weekends. Although suspicions of civilian spying by Japanese-Americans are still suggested in a few books and in the films, including *Pearl Harbor*, intelligence about the movements and status of the US fleet appears to have been easily available to the casual observer. Navy activities are still clearly visible to residents of Pearl City and 'Aiea, who live in the hills above the Navy base.

As Japan prepared for war, President Roosevelt and America were focused on the events in Europe, where Nazi Germany was establishing its empire. The Japanese were not considered a large threat, since they were perceived as incapable of launching an effective military attack against American interests, except in American held Philippines. Both the racial and military inferiority of Japan was widely accepted both by the public and military strategists, who ignored the fact that Japan's military had been seasoned and refined in the decade-long war in China, and that they had beaten the Russians against great odds in the 1900s. Instead, US military intelligence thought that the Japanese could only extend their sea power to the coastal areas of Asia.

As part of its focus on Europe, the Navy had moved several ships from the Pacific Fleet to Europe. Ensuing protests by Admiral Richardson capped his long-running disputes with the Navy and President Roosevelt and resulted in his being replaced by Admiral Husband Kimmel. Kimmel kept many of Richardson's routines and patterns. However, a shortage of reconnaissance planes forced him to cut back on long-range patrols of the Island's perimeter, a deficiency that aided the Japanese attacking force in reaching O'ahu undetected. A new warning device, radar, was being established on

Opana Point on the Northern side of O'ahu to make up for the loss of aircraft, but the crews were in training and the radar was only active a few hours a day.

The defense of the Territory of Hawai'i was the responsibility of Army Lt. General Walter Short, Commander of the Hawaiian Department. Responsible for protection of the fleet when it was in port, he held the mistaken belief that the fleet was in place to protect Army facilities and installations from attack and invasion. Working from this perspective, he positioned his men and equipment in ways that emphasized defense of the Army's facilities and equipment, rather than protecting the fleet from an attacking force.

Short was one of many that suspected the local Japanese of plotting sabotage, and assumed that his airfields and shore batteries would be primary targets. This agreed with the general belief that the greatest danger was sabotage of the military and the Territory's infrastructure by the large Japanese population rather than a military attack on Hawaii by a large force. In 1941, there were about 140,000 people of Japanese heritage in the Territory of Hawai'i, many of them Japanese, rather than American citizens. Immigration agreements between the United States and Japan made achieving US citizenship extremely difficult for Japanese. Many also wished to retain a Japanese citizenship for a variety of reasons, which made them suspect in the eyes of Americans. The Japanese consulate in Honolulu's main pre-war function was to register Japanese born in Hawai'i as Japanese citizens. In part because they were denied full status as citizens, the Japanese maintained strong cultural ties to Japan, including Shinto and Buddhist temples, and running their own language and cultural schools. After the attack, these institutions were

held up as evidence of “hyphenated Americanism” and both schools and temples were closed in Hawai‘i.

To defend against this perceived threat, Short instituted extensive anti-sabotage measures, keeping ammunition stored under lock and key, sometimes in bunkers miles from the anti-aircraft battery positions. Aircraft at Hickam and Wheeler Air Fields were gathered in tight groupings in the center of the ramp for easy defense against ground attack with their controls cabled and guns removed so they could not be stolen. This positioning made them easy to guard, but extremely difficult to move. General Douglas McArthur, commanding in the Philippines, also clustered his aircraft against sabotage, losing most of them in the Japanese attack on the Philippines on December 8, eight hours after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

A series of warning messages about Japanese activities had been sent to Admiral Kimmel and General Short in the fall of 1941. These messages, in particular the “war warning” message of 27 November, have become a point of debate for revisionist historians, who disagree whether they constitute a clear declaration of imminent war, or were one of series of general, and vaguely worded informational missives. In response to warnings from Washington, Short had placed the military on alert, and taken precautions to prevent sabotage by local Japanese-Americans. But because the messages included cautions against disturbing civilians, these activities were not always apparent to observers and did not focus on an outside enemy.

In Washington D.C., the Americans had managed to break the Japanese diplomatic codes, using a top-secret machine nicknamed “Magic.” They were receiving and reading all communications to the Japanese embassy in Washington D.C., including

the 14-part ultimatum that was intended to open the war. "Magic" itself was so secret that President Roosevelt did not see the raw data, and Admiral Kimmel did not have a machine in Honolulu.

The machine's secrecy worked against its effectiveness, since only a small number of people knew the codes had been broken and that the intelligence had a high degree of credibility. Since Lt. Col. Rufus Bratton, in charge of the machine, had already predicted the attack would occur in the weeks before, his intelligence group's information was not given the attention it might have. Bratton also intercepted and decoded the ultimatum, and had copies of it translated to English before the Japanese ambassador did. Even if his analysis had been widely disseminated, the other factors, including racism, which argued against Pearl Harbor being the target of a Japanese attack, may have kept the information from benefiting Admiral Kimmel and General Short. The perception that the Japanese were more likely to attack in the Philippines or Singapore decreased the sense of urgency to notify commanders in Hawai'i.

The decoded ultimatum of 6 December did not mention an attack, but ordered the embassy to burn papers and equipment, a strong indication that one was imminent. Bratton used the deciphered ultimatum to persuade his superiors that an attack was imminent, and messages were sent to Admiral Kimmel in Hawai'i and General Douglas MacArthur, who was commanding forces in the Philippines. However, due to atmospheric disturbances the direct military radio signal to Hawai'i was unusable, and the messages to Kimmel and Short would be encoded and sent by telegram. Because they had not been marked "urgent," Western Union did not handle them as priority deliveries, and they would not be received and decoded until well after the attack. Although the

Japanese had intended that their declaration of war be presented to the United States before the attack in accordance with accepted international law and practice, lack of a proficient typist delayed completion of the transcription and the declaration was not presented until well after the attack.

The Japanese attack force departed for Hawai'i in late November under radio silence, and their carriers reached position 200 miles north of O'ahu on 6 December. Attached submarine forces had moved into place outside Pearl Harbor, assigned the task of launching a new weapon: two-man miniature subs designed to penetrate the harbor and launch torpedoes against the docked fleet. The crew of these small submarines considered the attack a one-way mission, and the only survivor would be Ensign Kazuo Sakamaki, who was taken prisoner after his submarine beached at Bellows on the East shore of O'ahu. He would be the first Japanese prisoner of war in World War II.

The first wave of Japanese attack planes launched in the dark before dawn the next morning, December 8 in Tokyo. Flying in formation towards the coast of O'ahu, the attack force was picked up by the Army radar at Opana Point on northern O'ahu. The radar's crew had stayed past their shift end to late to practice with the new equipment and picked up the radar paint of the huge formation. They called back to their Operations Center with their detection, which a young Lieutenant on duty assumed was a flight of B-17 bombers, expected in from California at about 8 am. The formation was ignored and the radar was shut down.

One of the miniature submarines attempted to follow a ship into the Harbor, and was spotted by the destroyer *Ward*, on patrol with a new skipper at the helm. The *Ward* fired upon it and rolled depth charges, destroying the submarine. Because the previous

weeks had been filled with reports of false sightings, the report was held for verification, instead of an alert being issued and patrols sent out.

Undetected, and flying at 9000 feet, the first wave of fighters, dive bombers, high-level bombers and torpedo bombers maneuvered into position to attack military installations at Hickam and Wheeler Army Air Fields, Kaneohe Naval Air Station, the smaller air fields at Bellows and Ewa and the Navy fleet at Pearl Harbor. In the first minutes of the attack, dive-bombers destroyed the closely spaced fighters at both Wheeler and Hickam, while fighters strafed Kaneohe, destroying many of the PBY reconnaissance planes. The loss of the reconnaissance planes meant that the attackers could return without the pursuit that could reveal their carrier's location. Torpedo bombers attacked the anchored fleet, rapidly capsizing the target ship *Utah*, the battleship *Oklahoma* and the minelayer *Oglala*, and sinking the battleships *Arizona*, *California* and *West Virginia*.

Several other smaller ships were damaged or sunk in the first wave of attack and the hangers and planes on Ford Island's air field were destroyed and on fire. A few minutes after the attack began, on time, but unarmed and out of fuel, the B-17s expected from Mainland arrived. Some attempted to land at Hickam while others scattered to find alternative landing places, under fire from Americans who thought they were enemy planes. Americans fired at everything in the sky with every weapon they could find, including handguns and rifles. In the chaos, inexperienced gun crews fired training ordinance and badly calibrated munitions, most of which fell into Honolulu and other civilian communities, starting fires and causing sixty-eight deaths and wounding thirty-five people.

The Americans had a small reprieve between attacks, but at 9 o'clock, the second wave arrived. The slower torpedo bombers were absent from this wave, since the Japanese rightly assumed that the Americans would put up a strong defense. Perhaps as many as twenty fighters managed to become airborne from the smaller airfields at Haleiwa and Bellows, adding to the defensive fire from anti-aircraft guns, small arms fire and machine guns. The battleship *Nevada*, attempting to sortie for the open sea, came under heavy attack, but was beached to avoid being sunk in the narrow harbor channel. Under repair in the huge dry docks, the battleship *Pennsylvania* was badly damaged and the destroyers *Downes* and *Cassin* set on fire. The destroyer *Shaw* was destroyed in a massive explosion, which was captured in a spectacular photograph. Hangers at Hickam and Kaneohe came under attack again, resulting in severe damage, and planes at Bellows that had escaped the first wave were destroyed. The small Marine field at Ewa sustained heavy damage as Japanese aircraft attacked it on their way home after both waves.

The planned third wave was never launched, and that decision spared the American ship repair facilities, the submarine base and the oil and fuel tank farm. Admiral Nagumo, commander of the task force, knowing that the aircraft carrier *Enterprise* was in the area, elected to conserve the fleet and head back to Japan. In retrospect, his failure to launch the third wave and destroy these resources would negate the whole purpose of the attack. With the ship repair facility able to begin immediate reconstruction of the damaged fleet, the eighteen months of free operations in the Pacific that the Japanese hoped to gain was radically shortened. Salvage began almost immediately after the attack, and all but two of the battleships, the *Arizona* and the *Oklahoma* would be returned to service before the end of the war. The fuel stored at Pearl

Harbor was available for aircraft carriers and submarines to begin operations immediately, rather than waiting for re-supply from the European-focused Mainland. In the long term, the absence of battleships also forced the Navy to look to the aircraft carrier as a primary fighting platform, a change in strategic thinking that would shape the war in the Pacific.

American losses included twenty-one vessels, including seven battleships were sunk or badly damaged, 323 planes destroyed and 2,403 people killed, including forty-eight civilians. Japanese losses were fifteen dive-bombers, nine fighters, five torpedo planes and all five of the miniature submarines. Congress declared war on Japan the next day. Because the attack had occurred on a Sunday morning, and without warning, it took on meanings and aspects that were unintended and unrelated to the actual military consequences. The unintended “sneak attack” was used to demonize the Japanese, and helped rationalize the internment of thousands of Japanese-Americans during the war. The idea of an alien enemy sweeping down on an unsuspecting settlement recalled the stealthy Indian attacks of the pioneers and the Wild West, and allowed America to view itself as an innocent under attack by an immoral enemy, in the vein of Custer’s Last Stand and the Alamo. The timing of the attack on a Sunday morning was tactically appropriate, since it was known the ships would be in harbor, but its significance resonated strongly with a mostly Christian America. The correlation between the Sunday attack and the heathen Japanese would be a staple of media and propaganda, and some allusion can be seen in almost every visual narrative of the attack.

These religious, racial and cultural associations made the attack even more shocking to Americans than the surprise. As a result, the government was able to impose

restrictions and rationing that a more considered entrance into war may not have permitted. In Hawai'i, and to some extent the West Coast, where an invasion was feared, martial law was imposed. On the West Coast, the round-up and internment of Japanese – Americans, and a growing sense of security after the battle at Midway resulted in an easing of martial law, but in Hawai'i, where most Japanese-Americans were not interned, it would not be lifted until the war's end. Across the United States, along with government roundups of suspected sympathizers and spies and internments, mail, telephone and telegrams were all subjected to censorship and government surveillance.

Censorship of American Film

Military Censorship and the Media

This complete control of mass communications allowed the government to limit the American view of the war, resulting in a filmic representation of the war that bore little resemblance to the lives actually lived at the time. Military censorship of communications exerts a strong, continuing influence in the remembering of World War II because it shaped the newsreels and other films now used as references and illustrations for documentaries. In limiting the ways civilian America saw the war then, they limit how we are allowed to see it now.

The legal basis for that power came from the Espionage Act of 1917, which had been retired immediately after World War I as offensive to American ideals, but which was re-instituted on the day of the attack. The Act granted wide-ranging authority to control the media and public speech, and during World War I had penalties including imprisonment and up to \$10,000 fine for persons found guilty of aiding the enemy,

obstructing military recruiting, disloyalty or for supporting insubordination to the government (Campbell *Reel America* 56).

The military began to exercise that control the day after Pearl Harbor by confiscating all footage taken by official and civilian photographers and instituting a blackout on information about military activities. It was February 27 before the release of newsreel footage shot by Universal cameraman Al Brick, and even then, information on American losses was censored to conceal most of the damage (Doherty, *Projections of War* 232). Of the eight battleship, three cruisers, three destroyers and four auxiliary vessels sunk or damaged, the government only allowed the newsreel to reveal the loss of the USS *Arizona*, the target ship USS *Utah*, the venerable minelayer USS *Oglala* and three destroyers. Two more newsreels, also censored but showing more accurate accounts of the losses, would be released by December 1942, a year after the attack and a year before John Ford's *December 7th*.

Military censorship of newsreel footage was accepted by the American public with very little protest, and its impact can be considered almost insignificant in light of the total control the War Department and the Department of the Navy imposed over all mass media in the United States. The military not only placed controls over photography and the press for overseas military operations, they also attempted to suppress all information they believed might be potentially useful to the enemy. These included photographs of factories, certain geographical landmarks, ports and harbors. Many people felt the government, particularly the Navy, went too far in trying to control the images available to the public because they attempted to censor events that were seen by the public. An example of this is given by historian Lee Kennett, in his study of the first six

months of World War II, *For the Duration... The United States Goes To War - Pearl Harbor – 1942*. In it, he describes the Navy's response to the destruction of the ship *Normandie* in February of 1942. The luxury liner had been converted to a troop carrier, but caught fire while in port in New York City. Though the incident was witnessed by tens of thousands of people, an overzealous Navy officer attempted to keep press photographers from taking pictures, in order to conceal the liner's loss (140).

Attempts like this to conceal information would plague the military's relationships with the media for most of the war. Reporters learned the extent of damage at Pearl Harbor from foreign newspapers and enemy communiqués, but were unable to report the information without government approval. A reinvigorated Office of Censorship ensured that domestic news sources conformed to government requirements, sending "missionaries" to newspapers and radio stations to quash stories they did not want publicized (Kennett 144). In attempting to keep all possible information from the enemy, the government also fostered the seeds of distrust amongst the press and the American people.

Given only tightly censored information, the media tended to try to second-guess the military, and sometimes magnified American victories from the scant information they had (Kennett 147-148). Drawing on racial prejudice and patriotism, Japanese losses were wildly inflated under the assumption that for every American ship or plane lost, the Japanese must have suffered tenfold. American heroes were discovered and extolled. Army General Douglas McArthur, Commander of U.S. Army Forces in the Western Pacific was particularly lionized by the press, including a syndicated column "MacArthur the Magnificent" (152-154). Looking back at the first months of the war, William

Lydgate wrote in his 1944 *What America Thinks*: “For the first two years of the war unpleasant facts about the conflict, the grim and bloody side of the war, were all too frequently kept from them ... The people were treated a good deal like children” (66). Even in the later part of the war, the bloody side of warfare was never truly part of American understanding.

Military censorship fell into two main categories – anything that would give aid and comfort to the enemy and anything that might hurt morale or cause civilians to doubt military effectiveness. Both categories potentially eliminated all reports that identified any weaknesses in military operations and security, or that showed less than total support for the war by a unified civilian population. Cut out were any references that might portray less than outstanding morale, conduct or living conditions in the military, as well as detailed information about military locations, activities and intentions.

The military not only controlled access to their activities but also transportation of people, film and mail to and from the States. This allowed them to control the press and the images that were released to the public to a degree unimaginable today. Taking advantage of their ability to control both access to the war and the flow of information out of the war zone, the military set up an accreditation system, forced reporters and photographers quasi-military status, and controlled their logistical support, including housing, food, transportation and communications systems.

Once “embedded” into the military structure, the press’s access to the war was controlled by the local Army Public Relations Officer, who provided transportation for reporters to the action, and collected all exposed film and caption sheets afterward. Susan Moeller, in *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat*,

describes this censorship process, where all photographs were developed and inspected at theater headquarters, General MacArthur's staff reviewing them in Australia, General Eisenhower's in North Africa and Admiral Nimitz's in Hawai'i (188). Further review was done in Washington D.C. before acceptable images were released for use. The military quickly developed an appreciation of the power of photographs and with the help of representatives from the press, learned the skill of choosing images that conveyed messages they considered appropriate to the public.

The embedding of the press with American forces may have made the censorship easier to justify, as reporters shared the soldier's experience of the war. By making the press part of the military team, and surrounding them with a military world, impartiality could be compromised. John Steinbeck, in *Once There was a War*, writes of the partnership between censorship and the press to suppress information, saying "Yes, we wrote only a part of the war, but at the time we believed, fervently believed, it was the best thing to do" (xi). Self-censorship became a way to support the war effort, to ensure public support and contribute to the morale and well-being of the troops the reporter was embedded with.

Excesses and omissions of the press in describing the war were even more pronounced in films and newsreels than in print media. Images of American dead, wounded or injured were banned, as were images of drinking and sexual activity. Also eliminated were suggestions of mutilation, the effect of mass bombing on civilian populations and until 1943, with the release of footage from Guadalcanal, the depiction of "torn and dirty uniforms and their generally disheveled appearance" (Roeder *Censored War* 19). Missing from that period, and from most of the visual images of the war are

“the depictions of death and injuries of American soldiers caused by self-inflicted wounds, racial conflict, government blunders, misdirected ‘friendly fire’ or the contrivance of fellow soldiers” (Roeder 89). Instead, they show the superiority of American culture, the inevitability of American victory, the unmitigated evil of its opponents, and the unity of its population, despite racial and class differences. Removed first by distance, and then by censorship, civilians were shown a war that owed more to sports analogies than to the actual experiences of combat soldiers.

Newsreels and the War

Raymond Fielding, in *American Newsreel*, describes the difficulties newsreel photographers faced in covering the war. They competed for access with military cameraman, and all newsreel footage, both civilian and military, was collected by the Public Relations Officer and shipped to the United States to be developed, in what was known as the “Roto -coverage” system. After review and censoring, reels of acceptable footage were issued by the military back to civilian companies for use in their newsreels. This practice ensured that all wartime newsreel coverage looked the same, effectively ending competition between commercial newsreel companies for the duration of the war (274). The military also had a practice of retaining some of the best footage for its own productions and training films, a habit understandably unpopular with commercial film crews.

An OWI analyst described the newsreels of 1942 and 1943 as “travelogues” in part because of the Roto-coverage system (Roeder 18). In addition, the shortage of raw film stock reduced the length of the newsreel from 900 feet to 700 feet, which as Fielding points out, does not leave time for in-depth analysis, even if it had been wanted (295). He

quotes Thomas Sugrue, a newsreel supervisor, as declaring, “Of all the things which a newsreel editor hates, war is first. It is expensive, it is dangerous for the cameraman, and it seldom, if ever produces pictures worth looking at” (109).

The Roto system did have some advantages for the commercial newsreel agencies; it allowed them access to large amounts of footage they did not have the wherewithal to gather themselves. Most of the footage was of high quality, since immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, many Hollywood technicians enlisted. A large percentage of personnel assigned to military photography units were professional Hollywood technicians who understood what was acceptable for public viewing, as well as what the government wanted the public to feel and see. By the end of the war, Hollywood’s government liaison War Activities Committee estimated that 7,000 film personnel, or about one-third of studio employees, had joined military services (Doherty, *Projections* 60).

John Ford, who held a pre-war commission in the Navy reserves, had organized a group of Hollywood professionals into an *ad hoc* film production unit a few years before the war. This unofficial unit was accepted onto active duty as the Navy Field Unit Photographic Branch and immediately began documenting the war, including Gregg Toland’s coverage of relief and salvage efforts at Pearl Harbor one week after the attack. Darryl Zanuck and Frank Capra joined the Army Signal Corps and were assigned to produce movies, most notably Zanuck’s Technicolor *At the Front in North Africa* (1943) and Capra’s *Why We Fight* series.

With many of their technicians and stars in uniform, and eager to be part of the war, Hollywood studios’ War Advisory Committee of the Motion Picture Industry

reached agreement with the War Department to produce government and military films. These covered a wide range of topics such as rationing, War Bond sales and recycling promotions featuring Hollywood personalities. Theater owners also agreed alternate Hollywood's war promotions with military produced films that reported on the progress of the war (Doherty *Projections* 229). As a result, the public saw films like *Safeguarding Military Secrets* (1942) after they had been suitably edited for civilian consumption. These 20-minute war shorts played in theaters along with newsreels, other short subjects and cartoons, ensuring that the American public saw a steady, censored, stream of visuals about the war.

The military restraints that severely limited what newsreel images were made available to the public faced even more editing and censorship by local censors before they reached the screen. Southern theaters routinely cut out images of African-American soldiers. The War Writers Board calculated that only three newsreel clips showing African-American troops were shown in U.S. theaters during 1943, and two of those were unflatteringly stereotypical. (Doherty, *Projections* 220) Most presentations of African-Americans were shown only in segregated theaters in major cities. These offered newsreels from the All American News Company, which catered to African-American audiences. However, White audiences rarely saw African-American forces in anything but the most menial roles (Fielding 187). The Detroit race riots of 1943 were photographed by All-American, but government pressure kept the images from being seen (Roeder 58).

Although press reporters sometimes point to World War II as a model for an open press/military relationship, it must be remembered that every frame of war footage seen

by the public had been approved by the military, and conformed to what they felt the public should be allowed to see. These films need to be approached with an understanding that certain images and messages are absent not because of they were not prevalent or of concern to the society, but because they were forbidden. With rare exception, the World War II of newsreels was an extension of an intensely moral view that saw no need to engage in discourse, but rather to offer a single vision of correct thought and behavior. In 1942 the Office of Censorship's New York Board of Review put out wartime directives for newsreels: "Don't show pictures of unsavory aspects of American life – gangsters, slums, hopeless poverty, Okies, etc., and in particular violations of American wartime restrictions such as rationing, gasoline and rubber rules, etc." (Koppes & Black 125).

Even though newsreels were released twice weekly, they were not the sole or even primary means of receiving news and ideas, but part of a system for disseminating information through mass media. Tom Doherty credits news magnate William Randolph Hearst with integrating a pyramid method for news: first, announcement over the radio, the fastest means, second, an expansion of the news in newspapers, with drawings and photos, and third, the validation of the news through the film newsreel (*Pre-Code* 199). War shorts and newsreels then repeated already censored radio and newspaper stories. They lent emotional reinforcement to those news accounts and established a visual reference for events that was validated by their association with the earlier, more detailed and slightly less censored, print and radio reporting. Magazines, with their photos and extended stories added background to the newspapers and newsreels, but their photos were also censored by the military.

This created a controlled information cascade that linked emotionally evocative but strongly edited images of film to news sources not as reliant on emotional response and symbolism to convey their messages. Film images echoed and expanded the less emotional and more factual news accounts while remaining within allowable images. They provided a means of establishing a sense of participation in an event that might not have a basis in reality, but which becomes remembered experience. Because these were also reproducible, they were able to be experienced repeatedly. As with news accounts, the images were distributed nation-wide, so that the exact same images were seen in every corner of the country that boasted a local movie theater. Newsreels were so popular that a number of profitable theaters, particularly near transportation centers, played only newsreels and short subjects (Fielding 201).

Paired with military censorship that allowed no real view of the harshness of war, the censoring of newsreels provided only a narrow means of seeing American wartime life. It resulted in a careful visual construct of the war and American life that is as notable for what it omits as for what it allows. An appreciation of its limitations does not preclude its use in authoritative narratives, but like all artifacts, contextualization and interpretation are critical to understanding.

Despite limitations of censorship, newsreels and war shorts provide much of the footage found in the National Archives and are easily the most accessible images of the war. They are found alongside military training and orientation films, which, even if they were not censored for civilian audiences, still generally followed the same guidelines as to taboo subjects (Doherty, *Projections* 67). These artifacts and images are the result of culling the thousands of miles of film shot during the war, and are attractive for reuse

because they are already captioned with soundtracks and explanatory narrations. However, the Archive bequeaths an official status to the films that not only tends to obscure the degree of censorship inherent in its structure, but the consistency of the absence of the pervasiveness of blood, madness and chaos makes the extent of its censorship harder to detect. The footage in the National Archives is “official” footage, with all the connotations and caveats that should suggest to those who use it to build narrations of the war.

As with the newsreel, the feature films fell in line with military demands. The military and Hollywood had established a long and profitable history together, with the services providing advice and access to military installations and equipment, and Hollywood providing publicity and cachet. Hollywood depended on access to military equipment and expertise to produce movies dealing with military subjects, and virtually every movie made in the 1930s and 1940s that dealt with the military, with the exception of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, was made with the cooperation of the U.S. military (Koppes and Black 114).

In World War I, the Department of the Army had established its own film facilities, but also cooperated extensively in the making of films like *The Big Parade* (1925) and *Wings* (1927). Lawrence Suid, in *Guts & Glory; The Great American War Movie* tells how for World War II's *Air Force*, an Army Air Corps commander supplied a B-17 to play the “Mary-Ann” and the film's Army technical advisor convinced friends to paint American fighters with the Japanese Rising Sun emblem (45). The Army also provided support for *Sahara* (1943), a Humphrey Bogart vehicle about US Army Tank

Corps. They not only provided the tank, they allowed 500 soldiers to dress as Germans for the battle scene (50).

Although Hollywood had routinely submitted scripts about the Armed Services to the appropriate military branch, during the war the military had the right to not only read the scripts but to approve the completed projects (Kennett 163). Combat veteran and social critic Paul Fussell points out that “Because no film company could be expected to own its own tanks, bombers or warships, the services’ had to be used, and the services refused to cooperate without approving the screenplay in advance, insisting that little remain but the bromides of wholesome behavior and successful courageous action” (*Wartime* 192).

Hollywood and Pre-War Censorship

Censorship of film came not only from government efforts to enlist support, or military censorship of footage showing American death, but from their suppression by the movie industry’s stringent Production Code Administration (PCA). The Code was enforced beginning in 1934 and restricted film images to non-controversial messages supporting the status quo. Like the military restriction for the real war, screen death, particularly bloody or gruesome death, took place off-screen. Good and Evil were clearly defined, and not only did Good always triumph, any sins committed had to be atoned for by “moral compensation,” either through punishment, or at least by overt expressions of regret and repentance. Government institutions and churches were to be treated respectfully, their authority deferred to, and though individual representatives of authority such as judges were allowed to be corrupt, institutions as a whole were above reproach.

Blasphemy and off-color language were banned from the screen, along with unsuitable suggestions of sex.

Film censorship is a small part of the tradition of censorship in the United States. The acceptance of censorship, even agreement on its necessity, has been common in the United States, despite the First Amendment. In particular, amusements and entertainments that appeal to the masses have a long history of suppression and restraint. Before film, social reformers and religious figures were censoring what could be read and seen by the average person. Abe LaFollette, in *The Wicked Stage* describes laws regulating theaters that were in place almost before the first Thanksgiving. Puritans followed British Law that considered plays a form of pagan worship, and banned all performances, making their first arrests shortly after arrival in the New World (1). The Pennsylvania and New York Dutch agreed, beginning a long history of prominence for the two states in censorship issues. The history of theater in America includes many a battle between the censor and the stage, with banned plays including Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms* (banned in Boston) and Mae West for her play *Sex* in 1926 (54).

Wartime censorship and censorship by the American government began with the Alien and Sedition Act of 1798, which banned criticism of the government and the President. Nat Hentoff in *The First Freedom* writes that one aspect of the Act allowed the government to arrest and deport any alien judged "dangerous" or suspected of "secret machinations"(80-81). The Act died in 1800, and the government pardoned all those jailed under its provisions. Censorship was left mostly to the States and religious groups and reformers more concerned with sin and social disorder than sedition.

Censorship and suppression of sedition arose again in World War I, when George Creel's Committee on Public Information regulated what Americans were allowed to say and see. James Mock, in *Censorship 1917*, writes that during this time, the government attempted to suppress all dissent, pacifism and nihilism. Mail was strictly censored, and hundreds of people arrested for even mild criticism of the war. These excesses left a strong distaste for government censorship and propaganda, which in turn helped Hollywood argue the case for self-regulation, rather than imposed censorship.

Film was introduced as mass entertainment to an America attempting to absorb the great immigrant waves of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The nickelodeon and kinescope films were the entertainment of these masses - an inexpensive, easily available means for them to experience a new world. For the immigrant population, film connected them to an American life outside their ethnic enclaves. Silent films required no English, and the glimpses of the American Dream provided hope of realizing dreams. For women, who were beginning to move into the marketplace and establish themselves outside of subordinate Victorian roles, films validated life choices and offered alternatives to marriage and dependency.

For reformers and religious groups, the nickelodeon screen was filled with action - crime, sex and violence - that undermined everything they were working towards and all they felt the masses should be protected from (Walsh *Censorship* 6-7). Progressive Social reformers such as Jane Addams and others saw films as a force that pulled families apart and exposed them to immoral and unwholesome ideas. Although more temperate in her disapproval than some religious leaders, Addams was convinced that what children viewed on the screen translated directly and immediately into what they believed (Black,

Censored 9). She attempted to show morally uplifting films at Hull House, but they were less attractive to audiences than the excitement of less intellectual films. Studios produced films of Shakespeare's works, cultural topics and travel shows, but then as now, sex, action and violence attracted the largest crowds.

However, Addams idea of a direct translation from viewing a behavior to adopting a behavior would be a fundamental rationale for censorship. Films like *The Great Train Robbery* (1907) brought worries that the criminally minded, the simple and the juvenile were being enticed into a glamorous life of crime. Protection of the innocent from corruption would be the justification most often used to suppress film content.

This belief in the ability of films to immediately and directly affect thinking and behavior did not translate into First Amendment protection for films. Advocates for censorship argued that films were merely a commercial entertainment endeavor, without the ability to transmit ideas. This was accepted even though censorship was intended to suppress the ideas that film was said not to transmit. The view of films as mere entertainment without intellectual merit was confirmed by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Mutual Film Corp vs. Industrial Commission of Ohio* (1915) and in subsequent cases. With this ruling, the right of censors to regulate what could be shown on the screen was firmly established, and would not be broken until the *Miracle* case in 1952 (*Burstyn v. Wilson*), when the Supreme Court struck down censorship's prior restraint and affirmed that film content was protected by the First Amendment.

Following the *Mutual* decision, censors were established at several levels to ensure that community standards were not violated. The City of Chicago established the first film censorship board in 1907, and other cities and states swiftly followed suit

(Walsh 6). In response to pressure from reform groups, six states set up what would become the major censorship boards – Kansas, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Maryland, and Ohio. Hundreds of smaller city boards were established across the country to deal with local sensibilities, particularly in the mid-West and the South. Because of the regional nature and assorted demographics of America both then and now, what was considered suitable in one state was rejected in another. Each state board had its idiosyncrasies. Leff and Simmons, in *The Dame in the Kimono*, list the various state limitations. New York would accept a woman smoking, whereas Kansas would not. In the South, the depiction of African-Americans were strictly monitored, and scenes were removed that Chicago's board left untouched (4). Conversely, Chicago demanded that criminal activity be suppressed and Pennsylvania insisted that any allusion to pregnancy be deleted, arguing that children who thought the stork brought babies would be prompted to ask questions. Because many of the supporters of censorship had strong religious affiliations, blasphemy was firmly suppressed by all censor boards, a carryover from theater performance restrictions.

Some complaints about what Hollywood showed were legitimate. Theaters admitted all ages to all performances, without parental supervision. Exactly how unregulated early films were is difficult to appreciate, since after the Motion Picture Production Code in 1934, old films were cut to fit new rules, or hidden away in vaults where they disintegrated. In the preface to *Pre-Code Hollywood*, Tom Doherty describes a modern audience's discomfort at viewing a 1934 Johnny Weissmuller Tarzan movie, *Tarzan and his Mate*, where scenes of Tarzan and a fully naked Jane swimming together were restored. The sophisticated audience of Doherty's friends was used to nakedness,

but not in black and white, and not in a 1934 film. Nudity in film was common then, as were themes that would not be seen again until the 1970's (Figure 1.1). "Fallen Woman" films depicted mistresses, prostitution, abortions and the rewards of being a "kept woman." *Babyface* (1933) and *The Story of Temple Drake* (1933) were explicit in their depictions of "women gone wrong," but also showed that the wrong road could be profitable and rewarding. Moral failures also included the Marx Brothers films with their celebrations of anarchy and contempt for authority in all its forms.

Gangster films such as *Little Caesar* (1930) *Public Enemy* (1931) and *Scarface* (1932) showed immigrants and ethnic minorities defying the law and their place on the social ladder to achieve wealth and power. Tom Doherty points out that Pre-Code gangster films feature social pathology and sexual aberration – homosexuality in *Little Caesar*, misogyny in *Public Enemy* and incest in *Scarface* (146). These challenges to the social norm mobilized various churches, woman's groups and reformers, who called for government oversight of Hollywood, and who encouraged state and local censor boards to closely monitor Hollywood's offerings. The variety and number of censorship agencies that came from this movement meant that motion picture producers were never sure what might or might not be acceptable.

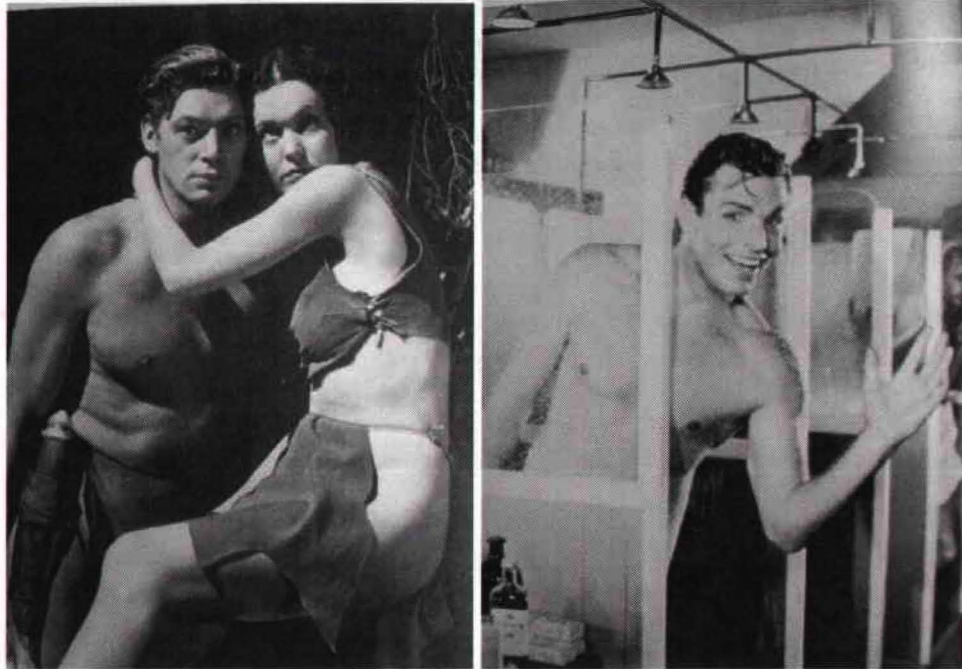


Figure 1.1 Pre - Code Images: Ambiguous Role Models

Sex and crime sold, but only if they could be shown to audiences. The largest markets, with the highest potential for profit, were able to force studios to change or re-shoot films by threatening to prevent offending scenes from being shown. Along with this domestic censorship, foreign ambassadors and consulates acted as censors by withholding permission to export films to the lucrative foreign markets. Studios bowed to the inevitability of censorship, but strove for “self-censoring” rather than having it imposed from outside.

The first formal attempt at industry self-regulation came following a series of Hollywood scandals in the early 1920s, of which the Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle murder trials are the most famous. Arbuckle, a popular comedian, was charged in the death of a woman who died during a weekend of wild partying he hosted. Although found innocent three times, his career was finished and Gregory Black notes that he wrote and directed

until his death only under a pseudonym - "Will B. Good" (30-31). Along with the Arbuckle scandal, the divorce and rapid re-marriage of "America's Sweetheart" Mary Pickford, along with a number of drug and sex related deaths made Hollywood seem disconnected from average American values. The fact that the studios were owned or controlled by Jews added weight to warnings that Hollywood morals and American morals were very different things. Around the country, people demanded that Hollywood clean up the lives of its actors, as well as what was being offered on screen. Responding to public pressure, Congress and State Legislatures began to consider bills establishing legal controls over film industry.

The expense of re-fitting studios and theaters for sound, combined with the Depression of 1929, disposed the studio heads and the bankers that financed them towards any avenues of stabilizing costs and minimizing risks, including listening to the demands of censors. With the introduction of sound film, the cost of re-editing a film for each local censor became prohibitive, and the profits from showings in a large city such as Chicago could quickly disappear in the cost of re-cutting and re-recording to meet local sensitivities. As the goal of the censor was to limit what the masses would see, the goal of Hollywood studios was always profit, and self-regulation rather than external censorship. Censorship was not regarded as a bad thing, but more as a cost of doing business and a means of cutting expenses (Couvares 145). Although it limited some messages, censorship provided guidelines that would theoretically ensure the films would be acceptable to wide audiences. To try to limit the number of censors and regulations, studios announced voluntary censorship of their films, and formed the Motion Picture

Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA). However, before 1934, the studios agreed to almost all restrictions proposed by censors, but gave little more than lip service.

To deal with the censorship issue without cutting into profits, the MPPDA hired Presbyterian Church leader, ex-Postmaster and Republican Party figure Will Hays to head their censorship self-regulation, and he established an office that would soon be known by his name – the Hays Office. As a politically connected and socially irreproachable persona, Hays seemed perfect for the job. He was adept at fending off the laws that threatened the profits of the Hollywood studio system, was instrumental in defeating several anti-trust bills, and successful in gaining favorable tariff and foreign distribution deals for the studios. He was personable, worked well with both politicians and the press, and had influence with church and women’s groups.

Establishing the Hays Office also diverted legal attention from the vertical monopoly on motion pictures held by a few large studios. Although the Depression had forced studios to sell some assets, they retained a hold over the entire film industry – producing the film, distributing it to theaters across the world, and operating those theaters. By controlling the production and distribution of motion pictures, they were able to force the theaters they did not own to purchase films in “block” or “blind” bookings – terms that meant the theater must accept all films from a studio, sight unseen, and without exception. Any theater wishing to show popular films had to agree to show whatever the studios chose to send them, regardless of the theater’s regional, racial and age demographics. Block booking allowed studios to have guaranteed outlets for their products, both the desirable high quality films called “A” films, and the more numerous, but much lower quality “B” films. This guarantee of purchase provided a steady cash

flow to the studios, and reassured the bankers who financed the expensive and risky big budget “A” films. Prior censorship gave the independent theater management reassurance that local censors would not cut the film, and that local pressure groups would not stage economically devastating boycotts.

Hollywood and the Hays Office were able to fend off some censorship efforts by arguing that there was no proven link between what people saw and how they acted, but in 1933 a book called *Our Movie Made Children* became a best seller. A synopsis of a series of studies funded by the Payne Study and Experiment fund, dealing with how children appeared to respond to film, the book claimed to prove the link between film, crime and sexual behavior. Though even the researchers themselves protested that their work had been misinterpreted, the book fueled calls for restrictions on film. Hay’s efforts to regulate Hollywood film, including the “13 points” and the “Don’t and Be Careful” lists, had failed, and a new Production code was instituted, if not immediately enforced.

The Production Code that would filter movie images of World War II was written mainly by a Jesuit priest, and enforced by an agency headed by a devout Roman Catholic. Gregory Black, in *Censored Hollywood* suggests that the intent of Code was not just to “clean up” the movies as called for by reformers, but to ban any discussion of changing social and moral values (63). Tom Doherty calls the Code philosophy “the deeper lessons of the *Baltimore Catechism* – deference to civil and religious authorities, insistence on personal responsibility, belief in the salvific worth of suffering, and resistance to the pleasures of the flesh in thought, word and deed” (*Pre-Code* 6). He points out that these are conveniently also the virtues asked of the American people during the war.

Like two preceding attempts at censorship - “the Formula” and the “Don’ts and Be Carefuls”, the Production Code was a laundry list of things that would not be allowed on screen. It outlined twelve areas of concern for the filmmaker, dealing mainly with sex, violence, and respect for authority. Code author Father Daniel Lord, S.J., head of the Dramatic Department of St. Louis College, provided a foreword and commentary to the Code that laid out the philosophical and theological underpinnings for the codes strictures, a document censorship scholar Gregory Black calls “a fascinating mix of Catholic theology, conservative politics and pop psychology” (*Censored* 39). Briefly, Lord felt that the majority of Americans did not have the sophistication or discrimination to resist taking screen depictions as models for their own lives. He believed it was the responsibility of films to provide only examples of lifestyles and situations acceptable to his personal Catholic beliefs. He felt that real life problems were common enough without presenting them on the screen, and “wholesomeness” should be the hallmark of every film.

The dominance of the Catholic Church’s philosophy in building the Code and enforcing it was a product of the late 1930s. First efforts to control American films were led by mainstream Protestant organizations, but the philosophically individualistic nature of Protestant churches made agreement on standards of what constituted an unacceptable message difficult. Francis Couvares, in his *Censorship in American Culture*, discusses not only the difficulties of establishing what should be censored, but also by whom. He writes:

In the end, the history of efforts to censor and regulate the movies is best read not as a simple tale of artistic freedom struggling against repressive moralism. Neither, on the other hand, is it a simple tale of hegemonic capitalism legitimizing consumerism and co-opting dissent. An industry largely financed by Protestant bankers, operated by Jewish studio executives, policed by Catholic bureaucrats, all

the while claiming to represent grass roots America, resists either heroic or demystifying narrative treatment. (131)

The Catholic Church, hierarchal in organization and philosophy, was able to articulate a specific set of standards that could be enforced over the entire American Catholic population (at the time about one-fifth of the U.S. population) by fiat. The ability to speak with a single voice, and to enforce their desires through threats of economic sanctions allowed the Catholic Church to dictate movie policy to Hollywood from 1934 through the mid 1970s (*Black Catholic*). Through their extensive Catholic press network and organizations, including the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Alumnae, the Catholic Church was able to threaten and carry out boycotts of movies in some of the most lucrative metropolitan areas of the United States. A Catholic-led boycott of all movies in Philadelphia in 1934 cut box office revenues by 40 percent, and forced the capitulation of studio heads to the Code's and the Church's demands.

To end the boycott, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPDDA) hired Joseph Ignatius Breen to run the Production Administration Code office in Hollywood, and he administered the Code with an iron hand, drawing upon his own Catholic faith and the advice of the Catholic clergy to decide what was acceptable to be seen on the screen. He considered average moviegoers "youngsters between 16 and 26" and most of them "nitwits, dolts and imbeciles." In addition, he was also extremely anti-Semitic, and believed that the Jewish monopoly on film was an adequate justification for censorship in and of itself, an attitude not unusual for the time (Koppes and Black 22). The Code, which applied equally to feature films, newsreels and short subjects, would narrow the American film narrative to a morally unambiguous monologue that was "suitable for children of all ages" but left no room for war's grim and bloody side.

Breen's influence on the Hollywood film, and by corollary the war short and newsreel can be seen in the personal interest he took in every film. He frequently used threats of lost box office revenue and boycotts to force changes or suppressions in films he personally disapproved of. He invented what he called "industry policy" to quash films that tried to deal with labor unrest, racial tensions and other topics he felt movies should not address. As Breen predicted, the film was banned in Germany and other Axis countries, and had mixed reviews in America, mostly because, as Bernard Dick comments in *Star Spangled Screen*, "as a spy thriller... [it] ... lacks the chief ingredient of the genre – suspense" (58). It does have the distinction of being the first American commercial film to mention Hitler by name.

Before the war, Breen had personally negotiated with Italian dictator Mussolini's representatives to ensure that playwright Robert Sherwood's anti-war play *Idiot's Delight* would meet with their approval, despite the fact that at the time, Fascist Italy had already attacked Ethiopia, and adopted anti-Semitic laws similar to Nazi Germany. The resulting film, which retained almost nothing of the play but its title, was released in 1939. Even with these changes and Breen's efforts to appease Mussolini's government it was banned in Italy (Koppes and Black 27). Later that same year, Warner Brothers studio released *Confessions of a Nazi Spy*, defying Breen's attempts to frighten them into abandoning the project. He cited the Code clause which demanded that "the history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of other nations shall be presented fairly" and predicted the film would also be banned overseas, which would deny it the lucrative market that generated a good percentage of a film's revenues.

Within the bounds of the Code and under Breen's watchful eye, Hollywood had tried to help prepare America for involvement in World War II and global affairs. Bernard Dick suggests, in *Star-Spangled Screen*, that Hollywood films show an early pre-war pattern of anti-fascist and anti-Nazi positions, and attempted to express that point of view through films like *Blockade*, which starred Henry Fonda. This film tried to deal with the Spanish Civil War without mentioning Spain, Russia, or Fascism (Koppes & Black 18-20). Though unable to discuss specific political parties, this film and others hinted to America that what was occurring in Europe could affect them. Even with Breen's best efforts, in March 1941 Lowell Mellett, President Roosevelt's liaison to the media, reported that, "Practically everything being shown on the screen from newsreel to fiction that touches on our national purpose is of the right sort" (Koppes & Black 36).

These "right sort" of films were explaining the coming war to Americans in terms they understood. The film villains of earlier times transformed easily from Hollywood genres – slick spies with German accents replaced urbane gangsters, and later the Japanese would easily become the equally sneaky "Injuns" of the classic Western. G-men chased spies instead of gangsters; cowboys battled enemy agents instead of rustlers and Indians. Stock characters of cowboys began to evolve into G.I. Joe, as in the 1938 *Pals of the Saddle*, where John Wayne as a Mesquiteer defends the American border against enemy agents (Dick 47). Using these familiar characters and icons, Americans learned of the danger posed by the secret agent and the spy next door as well as the looming peril to the American Way of Life from alien forces infiltrating from abroad.

Wartime Code

After Pearl Harbor, Breen's office rebuffed efforts to relax the Code to meet wartime sensibilities, and in May of 1942, he wrote that, "The function of the Code is not to be patriotic; it is to be moral" (Leff and Simmons 114). Doherty writes that when Breen demanded the Code prescribed punishment for the killer of a Nazi agent in *Watch on the Rhine* (1943), playwright Lillian Hellman sent him a note asking: "if the Hays Office was aware that killing Nazis was now a matter of national policy" (*Pre-Code* 56).

Kathryn Kane, in *Visions of War: The World War II Combat Film*, describes the moral tone of Hollywood's depictions of the war: "Here Humanity (America and the Allies) is once again being faced by being devoured by Chaos (Japanese and Germans). The combat film portrays this twentieth century version of the mythic contest" (15). For Breen's Code, even the smallest hint of the triumph of evil was unacceptable and good must win even in the face of the facts. Paired with the military censorship on all war and military related images, the result was that the American public saw no real American military failures, no uncompensated, un-heroic American deaths, and no indications that military actions may have been taken in error. Bernard Dick notes that in fact-based films such as *Bataan* (1943) and *Corregidor* (1943) the undeniable American military defeats are turned into moral triumphs, with heroic sacrifices and a suitable number of the enemy accompanying them into the afterlife (133).

Not until post-war films like Ford's *They Were Expendable* (1946) would there be any on-screen questioning of the way the war was portrayed, or attempts to present more than one-dimensional heroics. *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), which suggested that the returning serviceman's life was not perfect, could not have been made during the war,

and it, too, is Code constrained and wrestles to construct a happy ending. Happy endings were a requirement in films because as Breen believed, “movies must not present real life situations in vividly realistic terms” (*Black Censored* 246). If a script called for American death, Michael Adams in *The Best War Ever* explains, “When an American did die, it was quick and painless (except for Blacks and Hispanics, who might die in a ghastly way). Wounds were clean and healed well. Grisly endings or lingering deaths were usually saved for the enemy” (11).

The cinema war death, though acknowledged as tragic, and “in defiance of Codely propriety” (Doherty, *Projections* 174) was also often mitigated by the continued spiritual presence of the deceased. In the films *Happy Land* (1943) Don Ameche learns how to accept the death of his son from a heavenly visitor. The last scene of *The Sullivan’s* (1944) which told the real life story of five brothers killed when their Navy ship was sunk, shows them smiling and waving as they walk into the sun. In *A Guy Named Joe* (1943) Spencer Tracy spectrally supervises his wife’s remarriage. These and other films all suggested that the deceased were still accessible and approving of the living. *December 7th* uses this technique extensively, both in a “roll-call” of the dead, and in a closing dialogue between dead soldiers at Arlington National Cemetery. This communing with the dead mitigated the finality of death and reassured the living of the rightness of their survival (Doherty, *Projections* 174). It also suggests the subtext of type of resurrection for those killed in the cause of the war in support of a Triumphalist philosophy of redemption following sacrifice.

The exception to on-screen death was the killing of Japanese, which was shown as heroic and part of a Divine plan for the future good of America. Because the Japanese

had been consistently depicted in print and radio as sub-human and bestial, their deaths were shown on camera to the limits the Code allowed (Fox Madison *Avenue Goes to War* 63). George Roeder notes that “In part because of the cultural assumption that life was held more cheaply than in the West, wartime visual imagery usually associated mass death with the non-Western world” (144). John Dower’s *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* is the most detailed of works analyzing how American depictions of Japanese shaped a view of them as animals without the claim to being treated as equals. As the war progressed in the Pacific theater, depictions of the death of Asians in feature films and in newsreels became more frequent and increasingly violent. Available footage of mass deaths of Americans never was shown.

Along with mitigation of death, the Code also prevented depictions of sex outside of a narrow, Catholic viewpoint. It declared that, “The sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld. No film shall infer that casual or promiscuous sex relationships are the accepted or common thing.” Banned were depictions of seduction and rape, abortion, prostitution, sex perversion (homosexuality) and any film discussion of sex hygiene and venereal disease. Although this followed an acceptable point of view for a celibate Catholic clergy, these prohibitions forced movies to ignore some of the most fundamental social changes that occurred during the war.

The lack of discussion of sex or acknowledgement of its prevalence in American life appears to have little connection to the actualities of the wartime experience. One ignored activity was a sharp rise in sexual activity by adolescent girls, prevalent enough to engender nicknames - “Victory Girls” or “Patriooties.” John Costello, in *Virtue Under Fire*, describes these young women, who, needing a role in the war effort, had sex

with military men they picked up in bus stations and on the street (206). Along with the amateur efforts of the Victory Girls, brothels and prostitution were common outside military camps, although they were technically illegal. In *The First Strange Place: Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii*, Beth Bailey and David Farber discuss how prostitution in Hawai'i was regulated by the Chief of Police and the military for the duration of the war.

Sexual relations between Americans and foreigners were also ignored by the media, and their images suppressed, particularly images showing African-American soldiers with White European women (Roeder 112-113) even though Michael Adams, in *The Best War Ever*, reports that in some instances, the VD rate for American soldiers overseas exceeded the casualty rate in battle (111).

As part of an avoidance of discussion on sex and gender roles, movies shaded their portrayals of working woman. The factory workers needed so desperately during the war threatened to create severe social disruptions if they were allowed to maintain their status after the return of American military men (Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter* 136-137). They also conflicted with the Catholic, and therefore Code, view of the proper place and role of women, and could not be shown on screen. Despite the roles that women were performing in society and industry, movies showed their participation as temporary and driven by patriotism, rather than ideas of independence and yearning to be homemakers.

Katherine Kane argues that World War II film representations of women, even those in uniform, tied them to the notion of a static home front world. She suggests that women were symbols of home and a promise of future peace as much as characters, and

that their presence was less sexual than symbolic of the war's goals (16-19).

Representatives and emblems of the civilizing force is the same role that Richard Slotkin argues they play in the Western film, which he sees as the progenitor of the war film, particularly the World War II film (*Gunfighter Nation* 226-227). In this symbolic role, women are often threatened by outside forces, usually passive. They are reason men fight, what they fight for, and something in need of protection from the realities of war. Bernard Dick extends that into the concept of "woman as symbol" - America the Motherland, whose virtue must be protected. Defending women and defending the country was portrayed as symbolically the same, with the corollary that every enemy's goal is to degrade, imprison or rape every woman (179). However, this construct tended to require a film representation of the American soldier as essentially sexually chaste, which led to unrealistic expectations of wartime behavior.

The absence of sexual activity on the film screen leaves a visual record that assumes a more innocent and less sexually active population than was the case. Examination of expressions of sexuality in World War II can be found in books like *The First Strange Place* and are beginning to appear on cable channel shows such as *Sex in World War II*, and the *XY Factor*, but because of censorship their images are restricted to what is available in the archival holdings of various repositories, meaning that it conforms to Code and government censorship of sexuality.

This sexual reticence is in contrast to World War I, when anti-venereal disease films such as *Fit to Fight* and *End of the Road* were civilian audience favorites. Syphilis in particular was the topic of several films before 1919, along with tales of drug abuse. Under the 1934 Code, discussion of sexually transmitted diseases was forbidden, and

military films like John Ford's *Sex Hygiene* stressed the worst consequences of sexual activity and were seen only by military inductees. However, this lack of film images of sex responded to society's view of itself, rather than setting the tone for culture. Despite the earlier open depictions of sex in film before 1934, the public of 1942 preferred to suppress discourse on sex. Radio station managers in small towns received angry calls from listeners if the words "pregnancy" or "syphilis" went out over the airwaves during the war (Kennett 162).

In agreement with the sexual restraint in the movies, OWI and industry posters and ads stressed continued femininity and the need to return to the home after the war (Adams 133-134). Madison Avenue, and to a lesser extent the Office of War Information suggested that the war was being fought to preserve a domestic scenario of the husband/protector and the protected housewife (Figure 1.2). This construct, what Frank Fox in *Madison Avenue Goes to War*, calls the "American Pastoral," would be the focus of domestically targeted commercial and government advertising campaigns (78) that contained the promise of a post-war world socially unchanged from the one combat soldier had left.

The absence of sex in film was complemented by the absence of swearing, with the exception of the documentary *We Are the Marines* (1943), which, after long negotiations, was allowed to violate the Code and use the word "damn". Even in that movie, "We went through 'hell' to save 'damn' the MPPDA lawyer joked, "and only as it applies to this one picture." "Bastard" did not make the cut at all (Doherty, *Projections* 55). This is in contrast to World War I, where the film "To Hell with the Kaiser" (1918) raised no eyebrows, either in print ads, marquees or in songs. Paul Fussell, in *Wartime*,

discusses the prevalence of swearing, and the variety of terms used by the military as protests against the experience of combat and of military life. “Chickenshit”, which covered everything from martinet officers to Army regulations, was a favorite, as was “fuck” which could be used as noun, verb, pronoun, adjective and adverb (95). Even though it was used extensively in real life, that verbal pungency is missing from the visual record.



Figure 1.2 Domestic Messages

On-screen American servicemen didn't swear, have sex or drink to excess, but they were spiritual. Chaplains abound in war films, usually Catholic priests, a preeminence Tom Doherty suggests came from their importance in formulating and enforcing the Code. He writes:

“The sole personal prejudice not only tolerated, but sanctioned, was against the unbeliever. There were no atheists in Hollywood’s foxholes. Divine co-pilots, repentant sinners and clumsy but heartfelt prayers spread the word that a quiet devotion to generic religiosity infused Americans all.

Being in tighter with the ecclesiastical Production Code, Roman Catholics were granted special indulgence, but denominational differences and theological disputations melted away in the heat of battle” (140).

William Bendix prays in *Guadalcanal Diary* under the chaplain’s eye, and Cary Grant leads the Lord’s Prayer in *Destination Tokyo* (Dick 128-129). *God is my Co-Pilot* (1945) was a post war affirmation of the religious overtones of combat films, and hymns are used to score a number of scenes in various films, including “Onward, Christian Soldiers” in John Ford’s *Battle of Midway* (1942). *December 7th* is typical, rather than exceptional, in that it opens and closes the attack sequence with religious services and hymns.

The imposition of the Code on commercial feature films is not objectionable, in and of itself. Hollywood, though eager to help the war effort, was not the arbiter of government policy. However, when the Code was imposed on newsreels and short subjects, it eliminated many of the important messages of the war and replaced them with comforting messages of American moral and cultural superiority that did not necessarily reflect reality. The Code-cleansed view of the war was that in the battle of good and evil, America was good, and therefore victory was inevitable. Soldiers, even in combat, behaved with control and decency, and never cried (Roeder 124-125). The American military and her allies had uniformly high cohesion, training and esprit de corps, and consistently destroyed enemy targets without collateral damage to civilian populations. It is this Movie-made view of war as noble, clean-handed and moral that is uniformly depicted in newsreels, war shorts and films. Even cartoons laid aside their subversive subtexts to present a seamlessly censored view of America at war.

The Office of War Information – Censorship and Propaganda

The Code presentation of America at war was reinforced and complemented by the themes of the Domestic Branch of the Office of War Information. Where the Code suppressed alternative role models, the OWI offered a romantic vision of what Americans could be. Their themes described an idealized world with many of the same attributes as the PCA Code – an unquestioned moral code, sacrifice to something larger than the individual and a belief in the rightness of the American war effort.

A product of President Roosevelt's strategy of creating bureaucracies to resolve internal staff conflicts, the OWI succeeded several earlier agencies, including the Office of Government Reports (OGR) and the Office of Facts and Figures (OFF). Its Domestic Branch, active until Congress cut its funding in 1943, produced films, pamphlets and posters for domestic use and provided guidance and advice for American commercial companies, civic groups, other government agencies and the motion picture industry (Bird & Rubenstein 12).

OWI Chief Elmer Davis stressed that a "strategy of truth" would govern the OWI's messages and that open, accurate information about the war was the most judicious long-term policy. The early OWI attempted to follow that philosophy, but censorship by the military made open accurate information impossible to obtain and disseminate. (Lerner "The Psychological Warfare Campaign Against Germany" *Paper Bullets*). Also, as Koppes and Black point out, "truth" and "accuracy" are fluid concepts, open to a wide range of interpretation, and the OWI "was as interested in establishing a context of interpretation as it was in disseminating information" (59-60).

Poet Archibald MacLeish, former head of OFF, ran the OWI's Policy Development Branch and saw its role as one of actively guiding America into a new post-war relationship with the world. Gardner Cowles, a newspaper publisher who headed the Domestic Branch and Milton Eisenhower, assistant to Elmer Davis, disagreed with that perspective, and saw the OWI as a general information source, not as a vehicle for advocating a single, monolithic post-war policy (Winkler, *Politics of Propaganda* 38-41).

In 1942, MacLeish's views guided the OWI's homefront campaigns, but the complexity of the war effort, and the need to subjugate idealism to military necessity required easily conveyed and understood concepts. As the war progressed, complexity and idealism were de-emphasized, and OWI messages to America became couched in what sociologist Robert Merton, in *Mass Persuasion*, calls "symbols grounded in the sacred and sentimental, appealing to the emotions, rather than reason" (168) (Figure 1.3).

Another appeal to the sacred and sentimental can be found in a 1942 OWI poster that uses a style similar to World War I heroic imagery. Against a deep red background, male and female laborer's bare arms are raised, holding aloft wrenches and flanking a uniformed arm holding a military rifle. The caption reads, "Strong in the strength of the Lord, we who fight in the people's cause will never stop until that cause is won" (Bird and Rubenstein 30). The messages of unity, democracy, sacrifice, religious sentiment and Triumphalism are displayed not only as appropriate for patriotic Americans, but also as ennobling. (Figure 1.4)

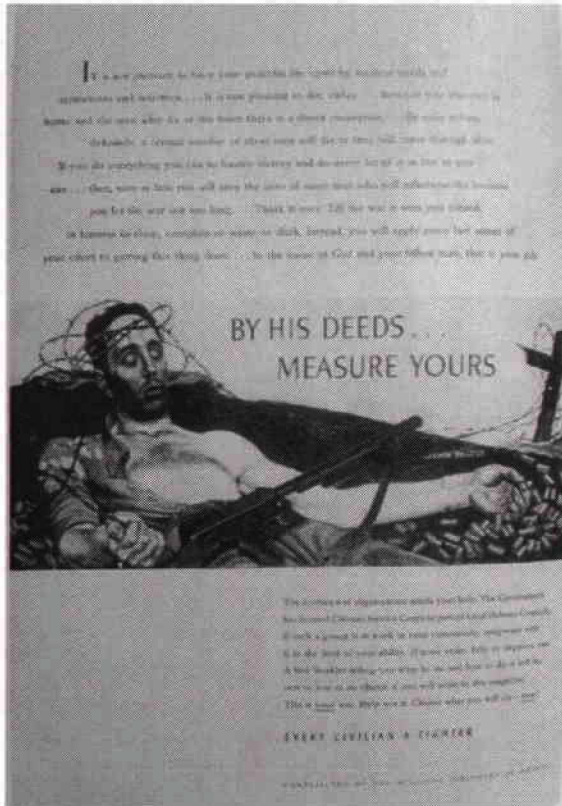


Figure 1.3 “Sacred and Sentimental”

The simple, clear poster messages describing American character and focusing public response to the war reached beyond the traditional American divisions of regionalism, race and class. They were placed through an elaborate nationwide system of poster supply, distribution and display that could put the same themes in cities across the country simultaneously. Bird & Rubenstein, in their *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front*, illustrate the breadth of dissemination of posters using the example of a 1942 War Bond campaign. The poster shows the American flag and the quote “We can... We must... We will.” An outline drawing of the War Bond Minuteman is next to the quote.

This poster was displayed at 30,000 locations in 18,000 cities, and an additional four million small reproductions were printed for individual use. It was only one out of

thousands produced by government and private agencies during the war and issued in great numbers (9). Posters and their messages were inescapable. Billboards, banner posters and flyers covered the streets. Buses and trolley cars displayed them. Notices and posters inundated the workplace. An OWI brochure on poster placement in manufacturing plants suggested that “exhibits of two, three or a dozen different posters” be built, and that a ration of less than one of each poster per 100 shift workers was too thin to be effective” (12). These posters have become icons of the war, still instantly recognizable as representatives of a specific philosophical icon of calls for unity and sacrifice.

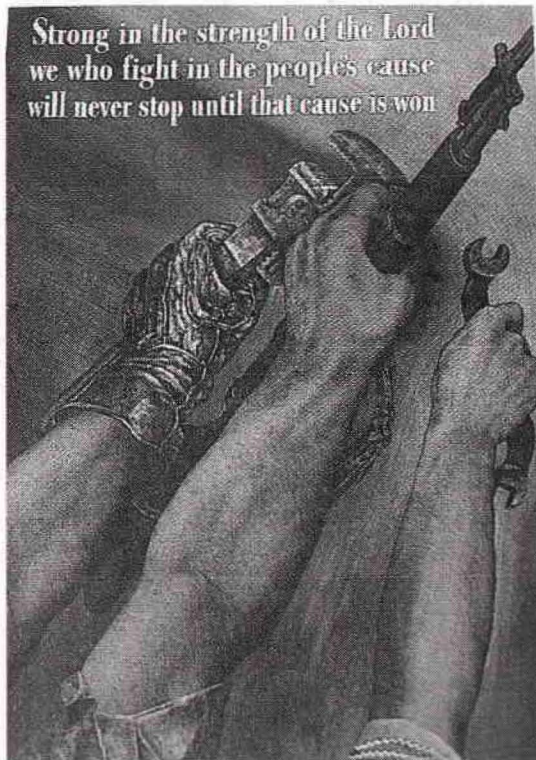


Figure 1.4 Triumphalism and Religion

The War Production Board, the U.S. Treasury, the military services and relief organizations all relied on the OWI's poster guidelines for content and messages as well as for design and printing support (Bird and Rubenstein 12). Industry and manufacturers

looked to the OWI for assistance in developing effective poster campaigns, which contributed to a consistency in message and image.

Francis Brennan, first head of the OWI's Graphics Division, encouraged a uniform look and message on the wide range of posters issued by the government, commenting that "until each [poster] is geared to a master procedure the total national impact will never be commensurate with the task before us – the people will never get a clear idea of what they are being asked to do, or who is asking them to do it" (Bird and Rubenstein, quoting *Art World* 31). To help establish that procedure, the OWI issued six themes for commercial and government poster development. Though intended for posters, they were also used in radio, print and film products (Figure 1.5).

1) The Nature of the Enemy – general or detailed descriptions of this enemy, such as: he hates religion, persecutes labor, kills Jews and other minorities, smashes home life, debases women, etc.

2) The Nature of our Allies – the United Nations theme: our close ties with Britain, Russia and China, Mexicans and Americans fighting side by side on Bataan and on the battlefield.

3) The Need to Work – the countless ways in which Americans must work if we are to win this war, in factories, on ships, in mines, in fields, etc.

4) The Need to Fight – the need for fearless waging of war on land, sea, and skies, with bullets, bombs, bare hands, if we are to win.

5) The Need to Sacrifice – Americans are willing to give up all luxuries, devote spare time to the war effort, etc., to help win the war.

6) The Americans – we are fighting for the four freedoms, the principles of the Atlantic charter, Democracy, and no discrimination against races and religions, etc.

(Bird and Rubenstein 32-36)

Figure 1.5 Six Themes of the OWI

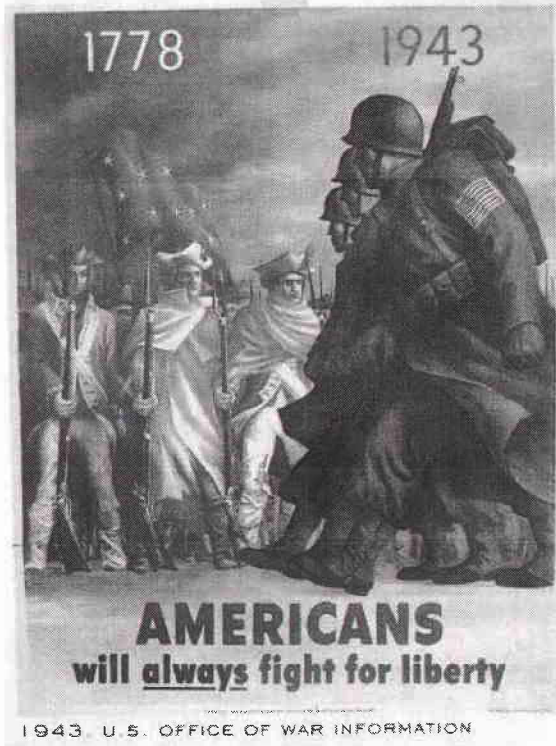


Figure 1.6 Historical Links

These six themes of the OWI can be placed in two categories: defining American character and directing America's response to the war. Identification with historic American figures was made in posters that tied WWII to the Revolutionary War. They included the use of the Minutemen statue as a logo for the War Bond drive, linking the buyer of a bond with the citizen soldier of the Revolution. A 1943 OWI poster showed WWII infantrymen passing in review before Revolutionary soldiers with the caption "Americans will always fight for liberty." The snowy background of the poster suggests Valley Forge, a location that is perceived as turning the tide of that war towards American victory. (Figure 1.6) Another linkage was made by a War Production Coordinating Committee poster showing a colonial woman loading a musket, juxtaposed

with a WWII woman riveting metal. It was captioned “It’s a tradition with us, Mister!” (Bird and Rubenstein 80) (Figure 1.7).

Along with comparisons to historic heroes, posters made connections between group goals and individual contributions. They directed – “Food is a weapon – Don’t waste it!” (OWI 1942) and “Use it up – Wear it out – Make it do!” (OWI 1943) They prodded – “Buy that invasion bond!” (US Treasury 1944) “Produce for your Navy – Victory begins at home!” (U.S. Navy 1943) and they warned, “Is your trip necessary? Needless travel interferes with the war effort!” (OWI 1943) and “He’s Watching *You*” (OEM 1942). A poster showing a Nazi arm thrusting a dagger through a Bible was captioned “This is the enemy” (OWI 1943).



Figure 1.7 Identification with History

Americans were told to sacrifice. “Remember Pearl Harbor – purl harder,” urged a 1942 NY War Production Services poster encouraging people to produce knit goods. Posters also offered the message that the war was to be fought through the weapons of

material goods. Obeying rationing laws was a blow to Hitler; saving grease would “wipe the grin off the Jap’s face.” Surrender of possessions was also urged – scrap drives, book drives and rubber drives all offered ways to contribute personally to the war.

OWI themes made a deliberate and immediate connection between the domestic civilian American and combat, and this linkage of civilian actions with military victory is one of the most striking elements of WWII cultural context. Participation in scrap drives, buying war bonds and compliance with rationing was portrayed not only as patriotic actions to help the war effort, but also as a direct physical blow to the enemy. Americans were told on radio, in the movies and on thousands of posters that they were personally responsible for achieving victory.

OWI products reached into almost every aspect of American life. Using films produced in their own studios and in Hollywood, pamphlets that provided guidelines for civilian organizations and industries and explained subjects such as the new income tax, and coordination of messages and poster designs with other government agencies, the Domestic Branch was able to inundate the average American’s life with their select view of the war and the world (Winkler *Politics of Propaganda* 56). At one point, they were offering weekly cartoons to over 800 newspapers (Roeder 82) and were extremely successful in having OWI themed messages inserted into national radio broadcasts like *Fibber Magee and Molly* and *The Jack Benny Show* (Winkler, *Politics of Propaganda* 60-62).

Where movies and newsreels offered a way to participate as a community, posters offered guidance on the individual’s role within that group. They lectured on personal responsibility, extolled the virtues of sacrifice and demanded respect for authority. Their

clear, emotionally resonant messages appealed to patriotism, pointed out the path to assuage the humiliation of Pearl Harbor and promised ultimate triumph. They showed average people ways to fit into this new wartime world through a stream of images that urged participation in War Bond drives, Victory gardens, volunteer work and joining “car clubs” – the predecessor of car-pooling.

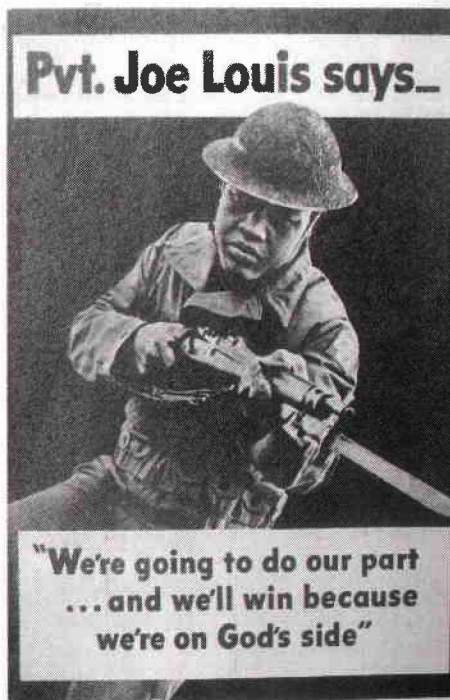


Figure 1.8 Appeals to Minorities

Another poster that typifies the OWI’s tying of the sacred to the idea of a united nation shows a photo of heavyweight boxing champion and U.S. Army Private Joe Louis in his uniform, pointing a bayoneted gun. Roeder suggests it may be the first favorable image of an armed African-American in an aggressive posture released in the United States (78). The caption reads, “We’re going to do our part...and we’ll win because we’re on God’s side!” Within this one image and caption, this poster illustrated democracy and equality, and gave an example of race and class subordinated to the idea

of national unity. It suggests adherence to deep religious convictions and identifies the enemy as godless, or at least against God. Fighting this enemy is not only a defense of democracy; it is part of the larger battle between Good and Evil.

The religious propriety of the war is reinforced by the OWI's use of what author Tom Engelhardt calls an American Victory culture. In *The End of Victory Culture* he suggests American history is often presented as a series of inevitable triumphs, where "defeat was only a springboard to victory" (3). The defeat not only becomes the path to triumph, but is also redemptive, with violence the means to save the beleaguered, innocent nation from further attack and destruction. In depicting the enemy as atheistic or heathen, the sacrifice becomes not only a moral but also a religious imperative. Richard Slotkin, in *Gunfighter Nation*, suggests that the Pearl Harbor attack is the logical successor to the triumphalist narrative of Custer's Last Stand, and holds a comparative place in American mythology. In both narratives, American outrage leads ultimately to the country's involvement in violent conflict and war, with the goal of total subjugation and destruction of the enemy.

This Triumphalist scenario of sneak attack and initial defeat leading to triumph repeats in many American narratives, with the attack on Pearl Harbor and the ensuing war often cited as the definitive example. This philosophical construct runs throughout narratives of American history and was expressed in American reaction to the sinking of the USS *Maine* at the beginning of the Spanish-American War and to the sinking of the *Lusitania* before American involvement in World War I.

Michael Adams's *Best War Ever* also stresses how this group reality of war was allowed to dominate public discourse. The emergence of big government and huge

industrial factories had engendered the concept of the organizational society, a view of life where “the roles of the individual intellect and conscience were diminished, and loyalty to the group, being a team player was emphasized. It seemed disloyal to criticize the government while the country was at war, so America’s intellectuals voluntarily censored their doubts about such issues as area bombing, calls for exterminating the Japanese and belligerent flag-waving” (75). The lack of intellectual criticism, joined with suppression of public discourse and the absence of images of ambiguity and dissent in films to help shape a group memory of relative harmony and solidarity.

The Production Soldier

Manufacturers and commercial industries took up the poster and the OWI themes. Their posters tied industrial production directly to the winning of the war and declared the laborer as equivalent to the combat soldier. A series of 1942 General Motors posters were tied together with the theme “Let’s Go, Everybody – keep ‘em firing.” The series declared, “It’s a battle of production,” “If you can’t go across, come across” and “Don’t let anything happen to them.” Factory workers were called “Production soldiers” and told that “Your tools are weapons” and “your job is your gun – give the enemy hell” (Figure 1.8). These posters assign personal responsibility for the conduct of the war as well as a subtle rebuke for those selfish enough to pursue their own goals outside the group.

Some posters were not subtle in their condemnations. Along with the posters equating the production worker to the combat soldier were the admonitory posters that linked unproductive behaviors to support for the enemy. Posters warned, “Killing time is killing men” (North American Aviation, 1943) and showed images of Hitler with the

caption “Work to win or you’ll work for him” (Joint Labor-Management War Production Committee 1942). Behaviors like absenteeism and long were portrayed as treasonous and giving comfort to the enemy (Bird and Rubenstein 70) (Figure 1.9).

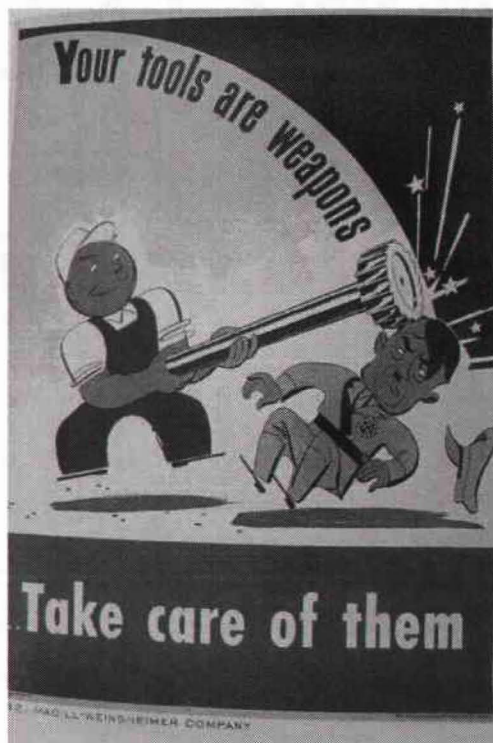


Figure 1.9 The “Production Soldier”

Posters that demanded sacrifice and contribution from the worker in the cause of the war and presented the worker as a combat soldier created the message that failure to work at top capacity was tantamount to treason, or at the very least, reflected a lack of desire to win the war. The need for such posters calls into question the assumption that everyone was unified in their unqualified support of the war.

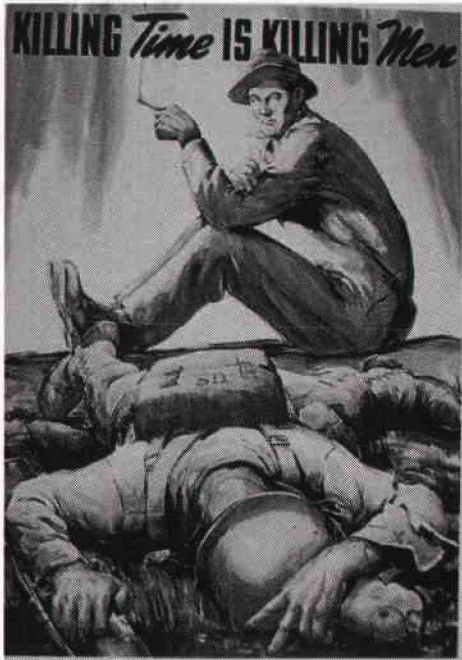


Figure 1.10 Coercion and the Group

They also suggest alternative narratives that have not found expression in visual narratives. The production soldier did perform amazing feats of manufacturing, but as Adams notes, in 1944 absenteeism became chronic and worker turnover hit 61 percent (131). Labor strikes, a common feature of the 1930s, doubled in frequency between 1942 and 1943, with nine million workdays lost to strikes in 1944 (Winkler Home Front 41). These figures reflect an unaddressed Production Soldiers antagonism between labor and industry even after a shift to war time production needs. In this context, the posters equating work with combat, and shirking with the death of servicemen, served as a means of pressuring workers to abandon union goals and worker's rights for the duration of the war.

Along with the linking of the personal act to combat was the proposal that it was possible to buy an end to the war. This message was reiterated in posters that urged "Attack, Attack, Attack – Buy War Bonds." Kroger Co. issued posters threatening

imminent invasion of America and proclaimed, “Before it’s too late” and “Keep him off your street” as encouragement to buy bonds and stamps. The famous Norman Rockwell poster series illustrating the Four Freedoms exhorted “Save Freedom of Speech” and “OURS ...to fight for: Freedom from Fear.” Saving these liberties was dependent on the reader’s pocketbook. The 1944 Treasury Department film *Justice* asked “Have you killed a Jap soldier today?” and Bond purchasers and productive workers believed they had the right to answer affirmatively (Roeder 65).



Figure 1.11 Equality of Sacrifice – The Production Soldier

The pairing of the concept of winning the war by production and purchasing Bonds fed into the American concept of triumphalism. If, as the posters proclaimed, the war was to be won through civilian action, then the ancillary and largely unseen combat deaths could be relegated to a by-product of the war effort. Posters assured civilians that buying Bonds would save the combat soldier’s life, as would higher production rates,

shorter smoke breaks, conserving gasoline and tightly sealed lips. The ability to save lives through money was a further removal from the chaotic randomness of death and war and a distancing of American perception from reality.

Michael Adams suggests that the linking of victory with economic and industrial power helped establish a mind-set of parity with combat on the battlefield (Figure 1.11). He sees a blurring of the sacrifices of combat and the civilian sphere as aggravated by the absence of bloodshed and death in the public images of war, and suggests that persistent comparisons of civilian action with combat intimated to Americans that they sacrificed and suffered more than they actually did in the war. As economist John Kenneth Galbraith told Studs Terkel “Never in the history of human conflict has there been so much talk of sacrifice and so little sacrifice” (Terkel 320).

At the same time, this sense of parity with the combat soldier prevented a proper appreciation of the combat experience. Adams believes that “Americans are sometimes guilty of waging war by inadvertence: of condoning military intervention without taking responsibility for knowing what their war machines will do to its targets,” and sees this as a result of the uniformity and pervasiveness of the messages of mass media, and their failure to present any of the unpalatable aspect of war (74). OWI messages that link production and buying power with victory helped to removed the civilian American from an appreciation of the death and destruction war entails.

Images of clean, almost cheerful death continued even after photos of American bodies were shown to the public. Life magazine’s first images of American dead on the beaches of New Guinea showed no blood or mutilation. Faces are hidden by the sand, and the uniforms are barely dirtied. The photo was accompanied by an editorial that

declared, “We are still aware of the relaxed self-confidence with which the leading boy ran into the sudden burst of fire – almost like a halfback carrying the ball down a football field.” (*Life* 20 Sept 43, p 34) (Figure 1.12) As Frank Fox says, “the implicit message is that war is terribly great sport.” In *Life*’s photographs and captioning, the true costs of war and reality of death is almost lost in the sports references and suggestion of clean, quick death in a noble cause. War is held at an arm’s length from the American public supposedly committing every moment to waging it.



Figure 1.12 *Life* Magazine’s American Death

Paul Fussell, in *Wartime*, suggests that the preeminence of the construct of victory through production and buying power might in part be because the OWI had been unable to present a clear, understandable reason for going to war. The slogan “Remember Pearl Harbor” incited hate and the impulse for revenge, but did not address why America was fighting the Germans. “Freedom” and “Democracy” were terms that could only be

loosely applied to America's allies, or even to America herself. Equal treatment of minorities, especially African- and Japanese-Americans in America was unthinkable for a large majority of the American population. He points out war correspondent Ernie Pyle's confusion over the meaning of the war, and suggests that Capra's *Why We Fight* series is also more directed to inciting hatred than offering a meaning for the war. In the end, Fussell finds that the reason most frequently offered for the war was a preservation of the home (139-140). This celebration of the home, and by extension American home life, became the focus of OWI posters and its appropriation by commercial advertising.

These textual messages of conformity, obedience to the established hierarchy and sacrifice muted the recognition of the individualistic actions they were meant to counter. As with movies and newsreels, there were no alternative visual images that counterbalance these messages. The complexities and ambiguities of the cultural reality find their expression only in written texts like *Design for Victory* and *Paper Bullets* that deconstruct the poster and examine its context.

The problems with using posters to make assumptions about American society can be seen in a recent magazine article. The Jan/Feb 2003 issue of *Sierra* magazine contains a two-page article entitled "When Uncle Sam Wanted Us" (33-34). Its subtitle proclaims that: "To Vice President Dick Cheney, conservation is just 'a sign of personal virtue.' In World War II it was every citizen's duty." The article uses government issued and manufacturer's posters to demonstrate an assumed ethos of conservation and national commitment to conservation, and proceeds from the perception of the posters as representing compliance rather than cajoling. The notion that these threatening messages were necessary to force an uncooperative population into compliance is not suggested.

A contextualized reading of the posters selected for the article instead shows a series of warnings and appeals to personal comfort, suggesting a need to coax or mostly threaten a recalcitrant population. Two are clearly marked as government products, though the text suggests that they were the product of “Artists for Victory.” The posters are representative examples, offering the classic theme of personal responsibility for Hitler’s victories (“When you ride alone, you ride with Hitler”), for death and injury to military personnel (“Should brave men die so you can drive?”) and the threat of starvation/freezing (“We’ll have lots to eat this winter, won’t we, Mother?” and “All fuel is scarce – Plan for Winter Now”).



Figure 1.13 Personal responsibility

By using posters to suggest a societal norm of conservation, the article follows a pattern of glorifying the past at the expense of the present, and failing to identify the source of the images, which stemmed from government policy and industrial need to promote a compliance with authority. The nostalgic look back to a simpler, nobler time

neglects its context as a means of coercion and propaganda. Failure to see beyond the overt messages of patriotism, dedication and sacrifice to the coercive, guilt inspiring messages can perhaps deflect or mute the inclusion of narratives that do not conform to the heroic images the posters offer, and that have no contrasting imagery to offer in rebuttal.

Although not carrying the same mantle of authenticity of experience as the photograph, the pervasiveness of the poster and uniformity of its messages appears to produce an authority of message that is flattering and potentially appealing as a memory. Within a cultural and social ethos of surrender of individuality to group goals, it may perhaps also be appealing to allow the heroic imagery and noble overt messages to be allowed to form the historic narrative and sacrifice individual experience to the group representation.

The OWI and the War Advertising Council

OWI and manufacturer's incentive posters tended to focus on what to do to win the war. They directed specific action to take, and warned against behaviors that were unacceptable. Although OWI struggled to articulate America's goals for the war, it was left to commercial interests and Madison Avenue ad executives to define and express the reasons for American involvement in the war.

The role of Madison Avenue in shaping the visual memory of the war is perhaps underappreciated, because its pervasive influence is not always acknowledged, even though the images crafted and presented by the advertising world are some of the most memorable and resonant. As Frank Fox points out in *Madison Avenue Goes to War*, "...

where the distortions of the entertainment or news media were implicit, incidental and secondary, those of advertising were deliberate, almost conspiratorial” (11). Madison Avenue sold Americans an image of themselves as defenders of the American Way of Life not only in the pages of magazines and on billboards, but also as a dominant factor in the OWI.

The unity of image and theme that OWI Graphics Bureau head Francis Brennan strove for was being achieved by 1943, but not in the ways he had planned. The idealistic, abstract notions of democracy and freedom and the need for sacrifice were sentimentalized and trivialized in efforts to engage the interest of the American population. Brennan resigned from the OWI in 1943 and on his way out scolded his superiors for the growing use of advertising techniques advocated by the Campaign Department, insisting that they “have done more towards dimming perception, suspending critical values and spreading the sticky syrup of complacency over the people than any other factor” (Fox 52). When Elmer Davis appointed Coca-Cola vice-president Price Gilbert to succeed Brennan, Norman Rockwell images replaced Nazi brutalities. This perceived sugarcoating and sentimentality enraged the Graphics Branch and they, and many of the writers, resigned en masse. The artists fired a Pyrrhic shot at the OWI with a poster showing the Statue of Liberty holding four bottles of Coca-Cola bearing the caption “the war that refreshes – the four delicious freedoms!” (Winkler *Politics* 64).

Madison Avenue’s War Advertising Council helped to fill the void left by their departure and they became the dominant force in determining OWI’s messages. These professionals saw the American public as reluctant consumers who needed to be coaxed to support war efforts, rather than the intelligent adults envisioned by the departed

writers. Idealism and nuances were ignored in favor of crisp, succinct phrases and slogans that emphasized romantic and sentimental images. Fox writes “So completely, in fact, did advertising take over OWI, and so increasingly did the latter’s operations come to resemble the work of the War Advertising Council, that the concept of government war information lost all coherence” (53).

The War Advertising Council proposed that the war was being fought to defend the American Way of Life, and translated this phrase from “a vague concept to specific and marketable terms” (69). While not abandoning the group ethos and personal sacrifice of the earlier OWI paradigm, “Freedom” was now defined as the absence of not only regimentation, but also the absence of “charity, dole, handouts,” “Opportunity” was the right to work hard for happiness and the goal of both was to achieve “the Good Life” (71). The Good Life was ownership of the things that a war economy had made unavailable, and which victory would bring in abundance. A Royal typewriter ad defined the new war goals by announcing: “WHAT THIS WAR IS ALL ABOUT ... hastening the day when you can walk into any store in the land and buy anything you want!”

Taking their cue from their colleagues on the War Advertising Council and in the OWI, Madison Avenue offered their clients new ad campaigns that extended the idea of victory through production from the factory floor to the general public. They also suggested that the ultimate goal of the war was to ensure American consumer access to the refrigerators, automobiles and washing machines that manufacturers would begin producing in the post-war economy. This served two purposes. Manufacturers would be able to link their products and goods to the war effort and maintain their brand name in the public eye even without having those goods to sell. As Mead Papers asserted “the

fighting man has a 'right to know' what kind of America he will come home to – and particularly: 'will brand names be covered with cobwebs or covered with glory?'" (Fox 34).

This evolution of the commercial advertisement led to a further removal of the American public from the reality of the war. Frank Fox describes the Madison Avenue war as being fought for the American Way, being won by the American Way and in the American Style. He describes the American way portrayed as being brave, clean, upright and honest, fighting against a regimented and enslaved foe that was barely human, and rarely shown in the ads, remaining a shadowy presence. Winning by the American Way meant victory through daring-do, Horatio Alger's "pluck and luck," ingenuity and a free enterprise system unencumbered by government regulation.

Overall, the general, comforting impression of these ads is that industrial might and technological know-how made American victory inevitable, and practically painless. "... most war advertising worked ... towards catharsis and expurgation of guilt. It gave readers to understand that the symbolic act of buying Bonds or donating blood was of such consequence in the war's social economy as to require anything else" (Fox 65). In newspaper, newsreel and magazine ads, the war was uniformly depicted as being glamorous, exciting and only mildly dangerous. Civilians were shown as dedicated, committed to work and government goals, and the country was seen as united and free of strife and social conflict.

The absence of ambiguity and the celebration of the everyman hero/soldier was personified in an ad written for New Haven railroad, designed to quell rider complaints of overcrowding. Its protagonist was a civilian on the cusp of becoming a soldier, and a boy

on the threshold of manhood. “The Kid in Upper 4” is considered a Madison Avenue classic, and cited and analyzed at length in Adams, Fox, Winkler and Fussell as the quintessential expression of the idealized and romanticized American warrior. Fussell describes him as “blond, pretty and contemplative” lying in the upper berth of a train carrying him off to war:

Tonight, he knows, he is leaving behind a lot of little things – and big ones.
The taste of hamburgers and pop...the feel of driving a roadster over a six-lane highway...a dog named Shucks, or Spot, or Barnacle Bill.
The pretty girl who writes so often...that gray-haired man, so proud and so awkward at the station... the mother who knit the socks he’ll wear soon.
Tonight he’s thinking them over.
There’s a lump in his throat. And maybe – a tear fills his eye.
It doesn’t matter, Kid. Nobody will see... it’s too dark.

A couple of thousand miles away, where he’s going, they don’t know him very well.

But people all over the world are waiting, praying for him to come.
And he will come, this kid in Upper 4.
With new hope, peace, and freedom for a tired, bleeding world.

When the Kid in Upper 4 reaches the front lines, the war in the magazine ad is as bloodless and unambiguous as the movies have shown it. Fox suggests that the entire tone of almost all advertisements was that war was exciting, and great fun. It is typified by a General Motors ad for Fischer Body that shows smiling, relaxed soldiers loading shells into a 5-inch gun, totally removed from the noise, confusion or smell of war, and without any indication of what they are firing at, or the impact of their shelling.

Text in other ads describes gallant servicemen armed with an unending supply of magnificent weapons overwhelming a technologically and morally inferior foe. Happy pilots take on incredible odds, and return unscathed to their home bases to share a Coke. These mini dramas usually end with a plug from the sponsor explaining how the

advertised product is either critical to victory, or is the reward for the battle. Caterpillar Diesel explained this carefree crushing of foes: “From Pioneer days, we have been an ingenious people. Starting in a vast, undeveloped country, we have had the inventive skill and the resolution to shorten distances and lighten toil with machines.” Death and killing have been reduced to all in “a day’s (lightened) work”

The ads also promised a reward for the sacrifices and deprivations of the war – the Good Life. As Americans united to produce war material, the new jobs created a sharp rise in American disposable income, particularly for the lower classes that had been economically devastated by the Depression. Indicative of this, Winkler notes that during the war, the average department store purchase rose from \$2.00 to \$10.00 (*Home Front* 34). At the same time Americans were being asked to sacrifice and do without, their buying power rose dramatically, as did the demand for consumer goods. This new prosperity can be viewed as a coda in the theme of Triumphalist Despair, with the triumph over domestic economic woes heralding the ultimate triumph over international enemies.

Triumphalism in ads is associated not only with victory over the Axis powers, but also in vanquishing the worries and hardship of the Depression and the deprivations war rationing, with battle trophies being shiny, new refrigerators in modern up-to-date kitchens. Fox quotes an ad that rhapsodizes “We have so many things here in America that belong only to a free people. Warm, comfortable homes, automobiles and radios by the million, electrical machines to keep and cook our food: to wash and clean for us.” The means of triumphing over the enemy now becomes the source of the victor’s reward, and freedom is defined not as liberty and justice, but rather possessions and comfort.

As the initial shock of Pearl Harbor faded, the consistent portrayals of American resolve and Triumphalism by the OWI, combined with a lack of information and images of American death, was perceived to be creating a self-congratulatory smugness and sense of entitlement in Americans, along with a complacency that the war would be quickly and easily won. This complacency is understandable, given the images that streamed, unchallenged, from mass media.

The OWI and Hollywood

Aware of the movie's ability to reach large populations and touch their emotions, the OWI also targeted Hollywood as a channel for its messages. Lacking the PCA's Catholic enforcers and the military's control of access to the war, the OWI could not make demands at first, but the studios, wary of looming anti-trust legislation and mindful of the OWI's control of foreign export licenses, as well as genuine desires to support the war effort, welcomed them (Koppes & Black 70). Following Elmer Davis' dictum that unobtrusive but omnipresent images of the war were the best means of building public support, OWI Bureau of Motion Pictures (BMP) Hollywood Branch Chief Nelson Poynter first aimed for what is today called "product placement."

He felt that "by making the war pervasive in the depictions of ordinary lives, the movies would show that the country was united with everyone participating equally" (Koppes and Black 63). This meant war posters as part of movie set decoration, scenes of people in uniform, blacks and other races mingling in group shots, and other indications that the war was part of everyone's life (Steele, *Propaganda in an Open Society* 157-158).

The BMP found sympathy and some support in Hollywood's writer's and studios (Ceplair and Englund *The Inquisition in Hollywood* 178). What they did not find was an appreciation of the finer points of their themes and objectives. Where OWI made distinctions between the Japanese and German leaders, and the Japanese and German populace, Hollywood did not, and painted them all villains (Suid 47). In Howard Hawks 1943 *Air Force* the pejoratives "Nip" and "fried Jap" were allowed, but the terms "hellhole" and "lousy" were cut out as offensive, much to the BMP's frustration. (Doherty, *Projection* 55) This movie and others like *Little Tokyo, USA* that showed the Japanese and Germans as caricatures were released over OWI protests.

Already accustomed to the concepts of a black and white world and conventional plot, Hollywood flattened the complexities of war even more. For them, the messages of democracy and unity required only a few scene changes, an additional speech or two, and a few plot shifts to conform to the genre patterns familiar from gangster movies and Westerns. Good still triumphed over evil, individuals sacrificed to join the group's middle-class value system, and no good guys died on screen (Koppes & Black 61). This connection between the Western and the war film made it easy for audiences to translate unfamiliar war into a familiar pattern of cowboy versus Indian.

Lawrence Suid, in *Guts & Glory*, his study of World War II films, suggests that "probably the only significant difference between Western and war films is that victory is more compelling in the latter, since the future of the nation is at stake rather than a mere wagon train, stagecoach or town" (7). This direct connection between the war and the Western made an easy path for Hollywood to connect the war to ideas and icons the public already knew. The war film was as unrealistic as its counterpart Western. The

OWI wanted Americans to be able to see depictions of death and suffering as a means of conveying the importance of the war and soliciting support to bring it to an end, but “to OWI’s frustration...between May and November of 1942, only five of sixty-one films showed Americans dying in combat” (Roeder 21). These all died off screen. The BMP struggled to have inspiring messages and propaganda inserted into Hollywood’s movies, and though producers and scriptwriters listened to “poynters” – an unflattering reference to Nelson Poynter, the OWI liaison to Hollywood – the “OWI ...demanded overt political positions, while PCA tried to minimize them” (Koppes & Black 69). Since Poynter and his staff had no experience making movies, their ideas were generally toned down or discarded, and though they found favor with the leftist and Communist writers, the conservative studio heads were less sympathetic (Ceplair & Englund 178-179).

The BMP was delighted with movies like MGM’s *Keeper of the Flame* (1942), the story of an attempt to establish Fascism in America, and *Pittsburgh* (1942) a forgettable John Wayne/Marlene Dietrich vehicle about the steel industry. Both were overt propaganda and neither were very successful movies (Koppes & Black 95-97). BMP was less thrilled with *Menace of the Rising Sun* (1942) with its blatant racism, and *Remember Pearl Harbor* (1942) which BMP analysts found “totally unrealistic and quite devoid of merit” (Koppes & Black 61) but which Hollywood found to be more profitable.

OWI concerns about movies that depicted Americans as gangsters or as less than idealistic and high-minded led to a strengthening of their relationship with the government’s Office of Censorship. Although the OWI could not censor films, the Office of Censorship was able to deny export licenses to films they felt gave foreigners a bad impression of Americans. This was an economic weapon that the studios would, and did,

respond to. Working together, in December 1942 the Bureau and OWI issued a new set of guidelines for Hollywood, aimed at suppressing images of American life they felt would either be of propaganda value to the Axis, or that showed Americans as less than noble. Export licenses would not be issued for films that showed scenes of labor strife after 1917, lawlessness, black markets and anti-social behavior (Koppes & Black, 132-133). Poynter soon realized he had made a mistake inviting in the Office of Censorship, and as a result the “the club of censorship” would override the “philosophy of free communications” for the rest of the war (133).

Within this new order, Hollywood began to “write out” references that would suggest dissent or social tension in American society. The problems of latchkey kids and the rising rates of juvenile delinquency (Adams 126 -130) were toned down in RKO’s *Look to your Children* and Monogram’s *Where Are Your Children?*. Treatment of Blacks in America was handled by eliminating references and characters that fell outside a very narrow stereotype. As a BMP reviewer said, “The fact that slavery existed in this country is certainly something that belongs in the past and which we wish to forget at this time when unity of all races and creeds is all important” (Koppes & Black 179). The early idealism of the OWI had given way to the need to prosecute the global war, and the need and rights of the individual were directed towards a group ethos and goal.

For both the PCA and the OWI, emphasis was now placed on the depiction of a unified, harmonious society united to defend a status quo. Within the Production Code, that status quo emphasized sexual and class orthodoxy, for the OWI, national unity for the good of government and industry. For both agencies, standards of a correct American

life included dedication to work and a willingness to sacrifice personal preference and individuality.

Like the Western, the war film was based on the establishment of genre types, easily identifiable from a few coded cues. Like their screen counterparts, Americans found that groups directed towards a huge complex goal tended to lead to seeing people in genre terms, what Paul Fussell, in *Wartime*, calls the rise of the “type.” In his analysis, the individual exists only as a replaceable unit, a nameless cog in the vast mechanized war machine of American might. Lost in masses, individuals became identifiable only from a few coded cues of uniform (or lack of one). The fighter pilot, the production soldier and the housewife became simple, easily identifiable genre elements in the great World War II movie.

1. Will this picture help win the war?
2. What war information problem does it seek to clarify, dramatize or interpret?
3. If it is an “escape” picture, will it harm the war effort by creating a false picture of America, her Allies or the world we live in. (escape meant light comedy or fantasy)
4. Does it merely use the war as the basis for a profitable picture, contributing nothing of real significance to the war effort and possibly lessening the effect of pictures of more importance?
5. Does it contribute something new to our understanding of the world conflict and the various forces involved, or has the subject already been adequately covered?
6. When the picture reaches its maximum circulation on the screen, will it reflect conditions as they are and fill a need current at that time, or will it be outdated?
7. Does the picture tell the truth or will young people of today have reason to say they were misled by propaganda?

Figure 1.11 Seven OWI Questions for Hollywood

This reflected the reality of wartime life in America, particularly the Armed Forces, where sheer size and complexity reduced individuals to replaceable parts. The sublimation of the personal to the masses extended to civilian life regimentation, ration

cards and factory ID badges encouraged identification with a larger cause, but at the same time, lost the individual in the industrial machine. He suggests that George Orwell's 1984 portrait of individuality savagely suppressed sprang from a sense of the loss of the individual during the war (72).

The change in emphasis in society was reflected by movies, which moved from stressing individual heroes of to a celebration of the group. Tom Doherty also identifies the rise of the group over the individual, noting that heroes like Sergeant York, though admired, were an anachronism in World War II (*Projections of War* 102-103). The 1940 film, based on the exploits of real life World War I hero Alvin York, depicts his conversion from a lawless young man to a deeply religious pacifist. In a stirring scene, he decides that to fight for his country is what God wants, and he goes on to single handedly kill 23 Germans, and capture 132. The film, starring Gary Cooper, was highly successful and seen as a sermon to the American people on subordinating their personal conviction and even religious beliefs to the group need to win the war (*Projections of War* 102). The 1942 *Casablanca* is another case for Doherty's argument that "abject self-sacrifice (a virtue Hollywood had once confined mainly to long-suffering mothers in women's melodramas) became a transgeneric sine qua non" (*Projections of War* 111). Rick in *Casablanca* is the loner, the man who cares for only himself. By the end of the film, he has sacrificed love, wealth and safety to the larger goal of the war, and set off to join the faceless group.

This trend towards the replaceable type is noted by both Jeanine Basinger in *The World War II Combat Film* and Kathryn Kane's *Visions of War*. They identify the Hollywood's de-emphasis of the lone fighter pilot and cowboy in *Bataan* (1943), *Flying*

Fortress (1942), and *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), and the celebration of the group ethos of the bomber crew and the platoon in films like *So Proudly We Hail!* (1943) *Sahara* (1943) and *An American Romance* (1943). In particular, Kane identifies the 1943 Howard Hawks film *Air Force* as an archetype for the cultural definition of World War II. She sees the underlying messages of the film as illustrating the assimilation of individuals into a group ethos that has no room or desire for interaction outside their enclosed environment (the B-17 bomber “Mary-Ann”) and their mission. The ethnically diverse crew (Winocki, Weinberg, Quincannon and Tex) has been identified by several critics as a primary characteristic of the World War II war film genre. Reflecting the new intermingling of ethnic and regional groups in the military and newly mobile workforce, audience exposure to a variety of “types” was considered an asset by the BMP, which encouraged such diversity.

Doherty suggests an exception to the supremacy of the group in heroic self-annihilation and suicide. In several films like *Flying Tigers*, *A Guy Named Joe* and *So Proudly We Hail* the individual sacrifices his/her life for the group’s survival. However, it can also be argued that these deaths are the ultimate expression of the glorification of the group since the sacrifice ensures the group’s ultimate victory. This is also Kane’s argument for the death of the Mary Ann’s pilot in *Air Force*. She suggests that Captain Quincannon must die, not only to open the way for the group to coalesce, but also because he was the crewmember whose ties to his wife were his strongest affiliation, detracting from his identification with the group (36).

The emphasis on sacrifice to support the group is the thematic constant within the OWI’s messages. The necessities of war, both in establishing its rationale and in

mustering the resources to wage it required a distancing from a celebration of the individual to the demand for conformity. The wartime need for unity sacrificed the problematic realities of the unequal treatment of African-Americans by “writing them out” of the images screened during the war, except in carefully selected images as symbols. Paradoxically, equality, liberty and freedom, touted as the reason for the war, would be sacrificed to the group need for compliance and obedience.

The sacrifice of the individual to the group also reflects the intense Christian subtext of the war. The frequent religious signs and messages of the World War II movie are overt, specific, in keeping with the general cultural construct of fighting a godless, evil enemy. Bernard Dick points out that Frank Capra’s *Prelude to War* seems permeated with Christian symbols, in “an attempt to convince audiences that the Third Reich is not only anti-Semitic but also anti-Christian.” In the film, synagogues and churches are shown burning, and Nazi officials proclaim the end of both Protestant and Catholic faith (5). *Guadalcanal Diary* features a Protestant service officiated by a priest and attended by a Jew, *Since You Went Away* ends with a Biblical quote and the Christian carol *Adestes Fidelis* sung in the Catholic Latin. Submarine captain Cary Grant leads his men in the Lord’s Prayer and prays to “Our Lord, Jesus Christ” in *Destination Tokyo* (1943). These film representations all invoke religion and “extol personal sacrifice as humanity’s way of imitating Christ” (Dick 5). By appropriating the religious to endorse the war, these messages reinforce posters and other visual messages in suggesting that personal sacrifice, including accepting death to save the group, is not just a civic responsibility but a religious obligation.

The messages and signs offered by motion pictures, both feature films and newsreels, continued the Code paradigm of suppressing images audiences might find disturbing or unpleasant. They presented an idealized world where the American traits of independence and individualism were sublimated to a patriotic and religiously homogeneous devotion to group values. By using the Office of Censorship to withhold access to foreign markets, the OWI was finally able to insert its ideas and messages into commercial films, but this had the unexpected consequence of eliminating depictions of African-Americans and any other social problems that could be perceived as showing Americans as less than noble.

With the end of the OWI's Domestic Branch in 1943, responsibility for film moved over to the Overseas Branch "without missing a reel" (Koppes & Black 139). Hollywood was more respectful of the Overseas Branch's ability to predict what foreign countries would find offensive. As the Allied advances across Europe, that market became very lucrative and cooperation between the Overseas Branch and Hollywood increased (Koppes & Black, 140-141). The censorship of the Code, and the OWI's imposition of what they felt foreign countries should see continued the construct that reduced depictions of Americans to fixed stereotypes moving with pre-determined set pieces.

The World War II film genre identified by Kathryn Kane describes a simple world of good versus evil, of religious sentiment and personal sacrifice in support of the greater good. The characters are drawn from a stock set of characters, with similar motivations and limited objectives. The OWI influence on Hollywood began with attempts to discuss the war and its meaning for Americans, and ended with the same

flattening of complexity and elimination of ambiguity as the PCA's Code. In preventing even the limited explorations of the war the Code would have allowed, such as labor problems and the difficulties created from the mass migration of people to find work, the OWI passed along to future viewers a vision of American life that denies the World War II generation their rightful diversity and the future generations a true appreciation of the scope of their predecessors' accomplishments.

The backlash by American combat forces to this glamorizing of battle is found mostly in the written texts. The Code was enforced until 1952, when the Supreme Court declared that it constituted prior restraint, so there was little room in post-war movies for moral ambiguity and straying from the genre of the sanitized war film. The Cold War and the Red scare that decimated Hollywood's ranks precluded large challenges to the official story of American glory and competence. The novel, on the other hand, did speak out against the Hollywood vision and Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* and James Jones' *From Here to Eternity* dealt with the harsh realities of war, but their transformation onto the screen removed most of their reality. That frankness did not translate to the screen. Made in the first flush of the Supreme Court decision that shut down the Code, *From Here to Eternity* (1953) still pulls its punches, sanitizing Jones' frank descriptions of Army life and refusing a happy ending for adulterers Holmes and Warden (Beidler, *Star Spangled Screen* 126-129). The film was a large step towards reality, but the narratives and images of the newsreel, war shorts and documentaries that reside in the National Archives and other official holdings were never seriously challenged.

The changes in society brought about by the entrance of millions of Americans into the unfamiliar worlds of the military and the workplace created avenues for new interactions that the movies attempted to ignore. When Americans filled over 16,000 theaters every week they saw a program of images including newsreels, patriotic and religious sing-alongs, exhortations from government officials (called briefies), official military films, OWI war shorts, cartoons and feature films, all of which conformed to a sanitized view of the war and of Americans society. In darkened theaters, domestic wartime America was shielded from the emotional and social havoc of war, and instead saw a reassuring and simplified version of events that reinforced the censored news information they had heard and read.

This context of American film experience of World War II is important to acknowledge. Both in World War I and World War II, the movie theater was not only entertainment, it was a communal space, a place to contribute to the war effort, share the thrill of victory and watch the Allies triumph. It was the collection point for scrap and other conservation drives, and a recruiting and War Bond center. The act of coming to the movies and viewing them can be seen as a public ritual and the movies as performing a ritual function of conveying appropriate and culturally significant messages that shaped everyday life, and the ways people saw the world, themselves and each other. The ritual function that Walter Benjamin was reluctant to assign to film appears to have manifested itself during the war as a communal ritual gathering. In that public, group experience, Americans shared emotions and built common memories based on incomplete data. Tom Doherty describes the group experience of the movie house:

“In the pre-Warren court era, a biblical interlude might also compliment a patriotic outpouring. For momentous and bracing news on the order of D-

Day, the death of FDR...the managers-turned deacons led the audiences-turned-congregations in recitations of the Twenty-third Psalm of the Lord's Prayer. In victory or crisis, the movie house provided a ritual space for remembrance and celebration, medleys of hymns and sacred songs even moments of prayer and silent contemplation" (*Projections of War* 84).

As Roeder noted, "World War II was the first movie every American could be in" (43). It was a movie made from a Code-cleansed script, with a cast of characters flattened into stereotypes by the size and complexity of the war effort. Cue cards with the actors' motivations could be found on every wall and billboard, replete with messages of the salvific value of suffering, the inevitability of triumph over evil through industrial might.

The Production Soldier versus the Combat Veteran

The movies, posters and advertisements seem to have built a construct that eliminated almost every unpleasant image of war. They separated the prosecution of the war from its consequences and diminished the experience and deprivations of the combat veteran to that of the civilian worker (Adams 9). They made the war appear almost predictable, projecting victory as inevitable, and offering Hollywood scripts with set patterns that left no room for alternative plot lines, ambiguous morals or failure. In his final analysis of Madison Avenue's impact on America's vision of war, Fox suggests that advertising's messages stem from a belief that the war was an inevitable outgrowth of American tradition. He concludes, "The same exuberance and moral certainty that had come to characterize the Western hero, for example, were used by war advertising to characterize the American soldier, and the latent Nietzscheanism winding through a Cooper, a Parkman or a Roosevelt fairly exploded in the war ads mythos of a national destiny" (95).

This representation of clean, happy war fought by clean, happy soldiers would darken as the Pacific campaign became a series of bloody encounters, and the government began to shift focus from garnering support for the war to dispelling civilian complacency. But the servicemen that returned from the horrors of combat found a nation that not only saw itself as bearing an equal burden and facing equal hardships, but one with a vision of war that replaced mud and mutilation with Madison avenue hype and a plug for consumer goods.

Civilians who fought the war in factories and movie theaters had little stomach for the realities of amputees, and Pasadena newspapers complained about a local veteran's hospital that, "Isn't it better for them to be kept off the streets? What awful things for us to have to look at" (Terkel, *The Good War* 130). The civilian populace appeared to turn away from the realities they had been shielded from, and instead embrace the images of moral certainty, national invincibility and American exceptionalism with which they had spent the war. Returning wounded were treated as though diseased, and people washed their hands after greeting them (Adams 7). The GI Bill, which would transform the lives of so many veterans, also served the purpose of keeping them out of the workforce while it retooled for peace.

Commentator Bill Moyers calls the most recent iteration of this the "Barbara Bush syndrome." He references an interview by Diane Sawyer with the former First Lady, where in response to a question about war casualties she said: "Why should we hear about body bags, and deaths? ... Why should I waste my beautiful mind on something like that?" (www.Buzznet.com 10.29.03) The refusal to face death as a part of war is seen in continuing Bush administration suppression of images of war dead returning from the

Middle East. In April of 2001, reporter Russ Kick received over 300 images of coffins in response to a Freedom of Information Act request, and a contractor was fired for releasing pictures of flag-draped coffins (www.memoryhole.org/war/coffins/ 4.24.04). The most brutal images of war are still censored by the reluctance of media to offer them to the public. Instead, the cleansed and encoded messages that were pervasive in World War II continue to be offered and reiterated as the visual narrative for the war.

Benjamin Schwarz, in a scathing review of Stephan Ambrose's *The Good Fight* ("The Real War", *The Atlantic Monthly* June 2001) decries Ambrose's failure to address the realities of the American combat experience. He quotes Paul Fussell's *Wartime*, which stressed the combat veteran's inability to communicate to the civilian population "It was ... the conviction that optimistic publicity and euphemism rendered their experience so falsely that it would never readily be communicable. They knew that in its representation to the laity what was happening to them was systematically sanitized and Norman Rockwellized, not to mention Disneyfied."

Denied a means of expression in the visual narrative, veterans turned to the written word, and found a voice in books such as *With the Old Guard on Peliliu*, *The Naked and the Dead*, *The Caine Mutiny* and *Slaughterhouse Five*. These text narratives described the reality of war, but they in turn were appropriated into the larger cultural paradigm when made into major motion pictures. Philip Beidler's *The Good War's Greatest Hits* discusses how books were reshaped to conform to the messages of the OWI poster and the "American Idyll" of the Madison Avenue advertisement. He argues that translation to the screen suborned the narrative of the war into their clean cut, virginal and PG-rated view and analyzes how combat narratives were bent and transformed to

reinforce wartime myths when “adapted for the screen.” One example cited is how James Michener’s gritty *Tales of the South Pacific* was cleaned up and transformed into the chirpy musical *South Pacific*. In its Broadway and film incarnation, blood, death, rape, sex outside marriage, marriage outside of racial boundaries and the ambiguities and divisiveness of war are submerged in a tale of romance and heroism, with a construct of the war as inconvenient, but still an adventure.

In these adaptations, the voice of the combat veteran is suppressed in favor of the larger cultural experience and its agreement with the larger scope of American historical legend and myth. Rather than accepting his narrative as authoritative, culture demanded that he abandon the reality for the mythic, and the personal for the generic. To achieve public understanding of his separateness, the veteran required a broader icon, a less resolved and integrated narrative that reflected the awkwardness of possessing knowledge that has no place in civilian discourse. In the case of the Pearl Harbor attack, and perhaps the larger World War II experience, he may have found it in the filmic signs and codings of fellow combat veteran John Ford, who in his films expresses not only the greater American myths of the West and American Exceptionalism, but also provides a model for a unique, solitary hero who stands between the enemy and the civilian.

Chapter 2 John Ford

Ford and [Howard] Hawk's vision of the frontier West have replaced in the minds of generations of filmgoers the historical West in much the same way John Milton's *Paradise Lost* replaced the stark story of Man's Fall in Genesis. (And these too tell of a *Paradise Lost*.)

Peter Stowell *John Ford*

Ford thus reconstitutes mythological thinking, but on a novel basis. We are to continue to believe in our myths despite our knowledge that they are untrue. For the sake of our political and social health, we will behave as if we did not know the history whose truth would demystify our beliefs.

Richard Slotkin *Gunfighter Nation*

Authority of Emotion

As a combat veteran and a builder of film narratives, John Ford became a mediator between the civilian and the veteran. His documentaries and pre-war films offered veterans codes and images that fell within the World War II cultural construct and provided a model for establishing their hierarchal superiority over the civilian, defining that relationship in historically resonant signs that associated combat status with the religious archetype of the sacrificial hero.

His pre-war films, with their mythic codings, offer a usable past of signs and icons needed by the veteran to establish his place in the American visual discourse. They enshrine sacrifice and separation as the wellspring of American greatness and an inherent part of its past. They propose an American national character and scripting that, at least in film, bridges the gap between the civilian and combat veteran by placing both as heirs to a long line of similar American events and pairings that run from the Revolutionary War through the Western frontier into the combat of World War II.

Ford's images and coding offered ties to a mythic, religiously resonant model for explaining the uniqueness of combat and placing clear distance between that sacrifice and those of civilians. They give combat veterans an emotional way of articulating their experience, and civilians a means of placing the veteran into a societal framework that had no realistic vision of war. In agreement with the World War II cultural standard of sacrifice as status, the veteran's sacrifice can then be depicted as real, ultimate and holy without recourse to images of blood, death or actual war.

American film restrictions did not allow representations of the reality of the veteran's experience, but by adopting the Fordian hero as representation, the veteran also expands his identity past World War II and into a larger American mythic pattern, tied directly into other heroic, allegorical representation. He becomes part of a line of American heroes stretching from Colonial Days through the Indian fighters of the West. He can be seen as a direct moral and psychic incarnation of the Revolutionary soldier, with civilians as grateful debtors for his sacrifice, a descendent of Indian fighters, and the successor to other soldiers fighting for a noble cause. He no longer needs to explain his role or experience and the inability of the veteran to translate his experience to the civilian then becomes part of a noble tradition of American myth, as he assumes the role of mediator between the unknown savagery of war and the uninitiated civilian population.

This model is attractive in that it acknowledges the appeal of the individual, but also makes the individual a recognizable "type" that can be represented in iconic form. The phenomenon of the American tendency to use cliché to express individuality is explored by Paul Fussell in *Uniforms: Why We Are What We Wear*. He suggests that the

yearning for individuality is an American cultural ideal often subordinated to the need to feel part of a uniform and uniformed group, and that individuality in opinion, origin or dress is more often a cultural target for hostility and rejection than a focus for admiration. The tension between the need to be part of the group and the desire to stand as an individual is resolved in the pre-war Fordian hero, who is part of both, but is not completely of either.

Ford's pre-war films offer a history composed of individuals who have made the same choice as the World War II combat veteran, and who makes the same sacrifice of self for their well-being. Charles Maland, in his 1975 dissertation on American filmmakers, *American Visions*, suggests that Ford's popularity in 1939 and 1940 was due in part because the American public "came around to his way of thinking." He writes that "the void of cultural values brought about in part by the iconoclasm of the intellectuals in the twenties was being filled in the late thirties by a patriotic belief in American folk wisdom" (113). As "keeper of the folk memory" Ford's unambiguous value system and portrayals offered the America of the Great Depression a history that promised redemption, and stressed simple themes that spoke of America's ability to survive hard times and triumph over adversity.

These are the images and conventions that Ford used to construct his wartime documentaries, and it can be argued that they merely echo and reinforce the views of America and its myths seen in his earlier works, and represent a continuation in film career, rather than making a radical departure. As such, they provide a means of translating pre-war heroes to the World War II ideal in ways that agree with the larger

cultural messages of the OWI's themes, censorship and the newsreels. The war can then be framed in images already familiar and part of the cultural self-image and construct.

Ford, already a Navy reserve officer, moved directly from civilian to military film work, and was given a free hand in running his Navy Photo Field Unit. He supervised, produced or directed dozens of films during his wartime service. Many of them were for internal military use, consisting of battle reports, aerial mapping of territory and briefings on military operations. Only four are cited consistently by film critics: *Sex Hygiene* (1942) notorious for Ford's use of close-ups of advanced syphilis patients; *Torpedo Squadron* (1942) never seen publicly, but given to the families of a squadron that had only one survivor after the battle of Midway, *Battle of Midway* (1942) and *December 7th* (1943). Both *Battle of Midway* and *December 7th* were created specifically for public release rather than internal military use, and crafted with an emphasis on emotional triggers, using signs and coding drawn from Ford's Hollywood films to elicit the responses he wanted.

The heroic, sacrificial and sacred nature of the pre-war Ford hero can be seen in both *December 7th* and its predecessor, *Battle of Midway* (1942). The documentaries are similar in style, and share dramatic elements and film conventions. Both describe important US military engagements by focusing on the defense of a remote outpost of civilization by a small group. They use a narrative structure that opens with scenes of natural beauty and serenity; then segue to an attack and heroic defense, ending with a grimly determined recovery from battle damage.

Both also make extensive use of dramatic license, with captioning by a partisan narrator. In the case of *December 7th*, the use of dramatic conventions can be argued as

being an inherent part of constructing the remembering, but *Battle of Midway* was shown to the public as a battle report and a hyper-factual and realistic (for the time) glimpse at combat. Although *Midway* contains a great deal of actual combat footage taken by Ford and others, it also makes extensive use of symbols and conventions found more often in commercial movies than combat documentaries.

The 18-minute film centers on the bombardment of Midway Island, showing glimpses of the three-day naval battle that marked the turning of the war towards American victory. For the first time, civilians saw Americans under fire, in distress and danger and ultimately triumphant, even in death. When it was shown at Radio City Music Hall in September of 1943, some people became hysterical and had to be helped from the theater (McBride 364), a reaction Ford may have found gratifying. Its impact was such that it was awarded one of four Oscars[®] given for combat documentaries in 1942, and *Battle of Midway* is still viewed by some as one of the most compelling battlefield documentaries ever made (McBride 366). Tag Gallagher writes:

“The Battle of Midway is a symphony in its succession of tones and light, of tones of emotion, of tones of movement. The wonderful score is inextricably woven together with the images involved at a given moment, the cutting, and the words spoken by the narrators. The two battle sequences are not long, but for me, real time slows, and each shot seems to last a hellish eternity. There are no dead bodies, and no blood: no more than Sophocles does Ford need to resort to such devices.” (206)

As he points out, the film is a combat record that shows no blood or death and which relies on music and emotional appeals to build a picture of combat. It is a synchronized ballet of light underscored by emotional narration (“Get those boys to a hospital, please do! Quickly! Get them to clean cots and cool sheets Give them doctors and medicine, a nurses soft hands...”) that uses music (“Onward Christian Soldiers”,

“Red River Valley”, “My Country ‘Tis of Thee”) to build a heroic version of war in line with the OWI and Hollywood PCA notions of what war should be.

Andrew Sinclair, in *John Ford*, describes the filming of *The Battle of Midway* in glowing terms:

“The flag in the documentary ... is hoisted as if the military personnel were extras under Tory fire in their wooden fort in *Drums Along the Mohawk* or the cavalymen holding their banner high in the charge in *Stagecoach*. The heroism of Ford’s American movies had already taught his country’s soldiers and sailors the form of brave acts. If they now did these and Ford recorded them in actual war, they had been inspired and he had learned his skill from Hollywood artifice. At the battle of Midway illusion and fact were one.”(112)

While *Battle of Midway* uses many of the same film conventions and references found in almost every Ford film of the period, *Battle of Midway* marks a turning point for Ford. Like the heroes of his films, Ford had become part of both civilization and the savage Other, and that experience appears to have changed his view of the military and the American war experience. Although he would focus on the American military in post-war films, the purity of intent in his earlier films would be missing. He is not the man who directed the pre-war *Wee Willie Winkie* or *Drums Along the Mohawk*, but he is becoming the man who will direct *They Were Expendable* (1945) and *Fort Apache* (1948). His combat experience placed him in a role as mediator between the censored civilian view of the war and the reality of the combat veteran. In that sense, Sinclair is correct: Ford’s screen illusion and fact seem to have become one.

Identifying Ford's Film Constructs

Sinclair's suggestion that Americans had learned war from Ford's films is perhaps exaggerated, but he has definitely shaped America's view of war. In the years before World War II, the American public had recognized Ford's mastery of film and its ability to express attractive ideas about American character and history. The signs and codings of *December 7th* and *Battle of Midway* are drawn directly from those earlier films, which can be used to analyze their meanings. In these films, Ford's actors are in the process of meeting the challenge of the new – the wilderness of Pioneer America in *Drums Along the Mohawk*, the Dust Bowl migration of the Okie in *The Grapes of Wrath* and the alien landscape of Monument Valley and Indian attacks in *Stagecoach*. As in the World War II group-based construct, people unite to succeed and survive and each member must play their part and stay within the limits prescribed by tradition and duty. The overriding duty of the individual is to the community, and its survival and security takes precedence.

Within this world, Ford's groups stand or fall by how well individuals assume their duties of their roles within the group. The consequences of the individual's failure to meet those responsibilities are shown in *The Grapes of Wrath*, where the abdication of leadership by men ends with the family dissolving. (Gallagher 179) *Tobacco Road* (1941) makes the same point, with the degenerate Jeeter abdicating responsibility for those around him, leading to ruin. The feuding *Stagecoach* passengers must suppress their social antipathies and support one another to survive the Indian attack. In *Drums Along the Mohawk*, everyone in the community must share in the defense of the fort, or perish.

In an earlier film, *The Informer* (1935), betrayal by one individual leads to despair and death, and taints the whole group. Even though the group may not be heroic or

admirable, their requirements transcend the individual's right to self-determination. Although *The Informer's* Gypo is redeemed at the end by the forgiveness of his victim's mother, he must still pay for his failure to stand with his community. In *The Fugitive* (1947) the priest's attempts to deny his religious family group also leads to death, and not until he assumes responsibility for his duties does he find peace. *How Green Was My Valley* (1941) is another Fordian study in how families fail when they shirk their duty to each other. For Ford, it is the individual's duty to the group and the family that sustains both. As a retrospective history, his films messages reinforce the World War II wartime themes of unity, abrogation of the self and unambiguous conformity.

Ford is not the only director to deal with the group as a cultural ideal of the war - it is a theme found in almost every World War II combat film. Kathryn Kane, in her study *Visions of War*, finds the group the most archetypal characteristic of the generic war film. She documents its appearance in a number of films, from its first multi-ethnic appearance in Howard Hawks' *Air Force* (1943) through iterations in *So Proudly We Hail* (1943), *Bataan* (1943), *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943), *Cry Havoc!* (1943) and *Back to Bataan* (1945).

These films, like most of the war film genre, celebrate the place of the soldier within his military group, and he is judged on his ability to become part of it and contribute to its goals. This is a civilian concept of combat, but its dynamic helps to keep depictions of war within the Hollywood/OWI/Madison Avenue context. The military group in American film exists in a separate, isolated world, cut off from domestic concerns. The place of the soldier in relation to the larger society is not addressed, and his relationship with it never defined. The OWI and Madison Avenue slogans of war goals

are mentioned, and notes from home displayed as signs of life beyond the group, but the focus is within the group, rather than the world outside. The individual's ability to assimilate, even at the cost of his own life, determines his status.

Where Ford differs from this genre element is in his focus. Instead of moving towards integration with the group, he dwells on his protagonists' existence outside the group, and their resistance to yielding to group identity and expectations while still supporting and defending them. Though they celebrate group goals, Ford's films stress the group's need for a hero that is separate and apart, a mediator who stands between the conformity of the civilized group and the savagery of the threat to its survival. He validates the veteran's differences in outlook and experience, while affirming the group's dependence on him, making him a heroic ideal and elevating his apartness to a sacred sacrifice of mythological import. In constructing this usable past and its icons, Ford imbues his heroes with mythic stature, and through their identification with them, imbues the combat veteran as well.

His protagonist is a "sacrificial celibate [who] intervenes to preserve social harmony" and then leaves the community he has saved. (Gallagher 34) Although he appreciates group goals and ideals, his experiences have also made him able to sympathize with and understand the savage and his uncivilized landscape. Like the veteran, his knowledge of the threatening "Other" and the individuality that knowledge confers on him makes him a stranger to them. John Baxter identifies this alienation, writing: "Like Ethan in *The Searchers*, Ringo in *Stagecoach*, Ole in *Long Voyage Home*, he [Tom Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath*] is a transitional figure, both prophet and sacrifice,

doomed to live shuffling between two necessities, his need for security balanced by the call of history streaming past his door” (92).

The characteristics of separation from the group, and the acquisition of untranslatable knowledge from communion with the “Other” are the hallmarks of the Fordian hero. Unlike the group-oriented models of Howard Hawks, or the essentially moral and sweetly simple heroes of Frank Capra, Ford’s protagonists encompass good and bad, and stand apart from those they are called upon to save. They hold secret knowledge, are initiated into the ways of the wilderness and able to appreciate the “blessings of civilization” though willing to turn away to retain individuality. This is the Ringo of *Stagecoach*, who foreshadows the more troubled Wyatt Earp of *My Darling Clementine* and the John Wayne heroes of the post-war cavalry trilogy.

What Baxter calls the “history streaming past his door” more recent critics, including Richard Slotkin, Scott Eyman, John Cawelti, Michael Coyne and Tag Gallagher see as the attraction of the savage wilderness and individuality. Although the savage Other is cast as the antithesis of desirable civilization, in *Sequel to the Six Gun Mystique*, Cawelti’s points out that “he commonly stands for certain positive values which are restricted or destroyed by advancing civilization: the freedom and spontaneity of wilderness life, the sense of personal honor and individual mastery, and the deep camaraderie of men untrammelled by domestic ties” (34). Lee Lourdeaux, in *Italian and Irish Filmmakers in America* remarks that “At times, Ford treated violence as if it were a social sacrament” (123), a sacrament for which the veteran is the high priest, the only one initiated into its mysteries and therefore the only one that can act as mediator.

In Ford's pre-war films such as *Wee Willie Winkie*, possession of that knowledge of the savage Other is generally benign, and the protagonist mediates between the two with minimal trauma to himself or the group. Sacrifice is still needed, as in *Young Mr. Lincoln*, but it is placed within the historical context of a sacrifice for purification and strengthening of the society that will build America. In *Battle of Midway* and *December 7th* it is the turn of the veteran to save the America built by their predecessors. This model of separation is a way for the veteran to distance himself from the civilians that cannot understand his experience, while also establishing his importance to them and his role in their survival.

These attractive qualities are those that dominate and in some ways define military experience, particularly service far from one's homeland. In America, military life is a world apart. It exists under its own arcane set of rules and disciplines, until recently without the symbolic domesticity of the presence of women. At its most benign, the military experience brings people of disparate histories together, and like in the war genre films, teaches them to cooperate and accept each other. Learning to function in a strange environment always demands changes in perception and understanding, but the military inductee, personified by Madison Avenue's *The Kid in Upper Four* had no cultural references to cope with the European Theater of Operations, much less the hostile landscapes of the Pacific islands. While he is creating a group with his fellow soldiers, he is also taking the steps that will separate him from the home he dreams of, and which will make it impossible for him to truly integrate with them again.

Soldiers venture into alien wilderness, a place of danger and possible sudden death, and to survive in combat they must become like the savage to survive – violent,

amoral dispensers of death. A combat soldier must not only know his enemy, he must perform actions that only he, his fellow soldiers and his enemy combatant can comprehend. They form a group that share knowledge forever denied civilians. This knowledge forms a bond that is equally as strong as those that society has formed. Success in combat demands that the fighter stands outside the norms of his society and takes on attributes that it rejects. In taking on the attributes of the enemy and adapting to the alien environment, the soldier saves himself and his community, but he sacrifices both his innocence and his unquestioning acceptance of the community's cultural paradigm.

Because Ford has established these characteristics in a series of similar heroic figures, the hero himself becomes a "type," with specific identifying behaviors, and even a persona, such as John Wayne or Henry Fonda. In this sense, he is a translatable, usable model that can be used as an icon of individuality without addressing the paradox such an icon presents. In performing that function, the Ford model of an icon of the veteran becomes as much of a type as his idealized OWI representation.

Codes and Icons

In Ford's films, the protagonist's savage, but attractive Other is often represented by cinematic landscapes. Richard Slotkin suggests that it was Ford who "invented the landscape as a cinematic icon" (305). Even in early films, landscapes are major elements in Ford's narratives, not just backdrops for the characters to play out their roles. Although celebrated for his use of landscape, for Ford, it is not a physical location, but a metaphor for the wilderness that civilization must confront to cleanse and better itself. He uses his physical settings as antagonist and challenge to his characters, setting the civilized group

against an untamed and alien wilderness, and inserting the protagonist as mediator between the two. It appears in various guises: the 1937 *Hurricane* (Tropical Island), *Lost Patrol* (Sahara desert), *The Grapes of Wrath* (Dust Bowl) and *Wee Willie Winkie* (India).

Slotkin illustrates this construct in the most famous example of Ford's use of landscape – Utah's Monument Valley. In *Gunfighter Nation*, he suggests Ford uses its unique oddity as a way of expressing the “the alien quality of the Frontier” (305), and imbues the location with mythic resonances. And it is not just a mythic place, but an unmistakably American place, a unique landscape for a unique people to act out their destiny. This nod to American exceptionalism runs through most of Ford's pre-war film heroes, including Shirley Temple in *Wee Willie Winkie*. Though the film is set in India, its subtext is of its heroine's American egalitarianism and spirit in the face of the corrupting influence of stasis. Even the Joads, moving towards an unknown future, show resilience, both in Tom Joad's departure soliloquy and in the closing defiant speech of Ma Joad. It is only in those films where there is no forward motion, and no contact with the wilderness and its savages, that the group falters and fails in its promise. This is the message in *Tobacco Road* and *How Green Was My Valley* – the first a condemnation of failure to grasp the American promise, the second a wistful look back at opportunities lost.

The characters that people this new and changing landscape are metaphors themselves, what John Baxter identifies as “more often types than individuals.” (11) The characters that make up Ford's groups are not idiosyncratic, but play out within their strict assigned roles – the schoolmarm, the drunk, the ethnic (usually Irish) military sergeant. This tendency to use a type continues agreement with the World War II

advancement of the group over the individual, the observation Paul Fussell makes of the American wartime society, with its faceless GIs, depersonalized rationing system and subordination of the individual. Though it is outside the scope of this dissertation, study of Ford's pre- and post-war films suggests that the mediator is the only true variable, and that he serves as a representation for Ford and other veterans as they progress in a gradual separation from the group that ends with the total alienation of *The Searchers* and *Seven Women*.

Using the same type characters and elements in a variety of plots, Ford is "able to adapt any subject as a vehicle for his philosophy" (Baxter 9) and it can be argued that his ability to do so, and have his signs and messages and their accompanying emotional freightings accepted as cultural icons argues against Walter Benjamin's suggestion that film would lead to the "liquidation of the traditional value of cultural heritage" (*Illuminations*, 221). Instead of Benjamin's loss of authenticity and aura, in his genetic myths Ford provides the ritual icons for unifying a disparate and individualistic society into a community. Ford's works replace the static and concealed authority of art with a pageant where the icon and its emotional codings become a tradition of remembering shared cultural histories, and myths replay using figures both heroic and homey. United by shared their participation in a ritual of heroic sacrifice and communal reaffirmation, they provide the ritual expression of the relationship between the veteran and America.

The ritualistic nature of this sacrifice and mediation has strong religious overtones, which add to its appeal as a representation of the war. With that association, the sacrifice of the veteran can be construed as a sacred act with his actions taking on even larger import. That sacrifice - of his unalloyed community membership, of

innocence and of life is a second great theme of Ford's films. Janey Place notes that in his films "people must die for anything of value to be achieved" (7). Death is the ultimate expression of sacrifice, demanding a proportional respect from the group. The importance of the sacrifice and its role in the salvation of the community stems from Ford's Irish-Catholic background, which he expressed in the use of overt religious themes (*The Fugitive*, *3 Godfathers* and *The Informer*) and the use of embedded religious signs as signifiers.

Ford sees the mediator of the wilderness as paralleling the Catholic belief in the need for a mediator between God and man. Lourdeaux writes: "...from the Catholics' sacramental viewpoint, objects, places and people are all paths to God... when John Ford directs a confessional narrative and lingers in Western landscapes in long worshipful shots, he adds his Irish-American vision to America's cult of the West" (19).

Although the use of religious references in Code-era films is common, Ford, more than other filmmakers inserted both overt and covert religious signs in his films (Lourdeaux 120). The overt use of these signs is seen in the number crucifixes and priests in Ford's films. *Drums Along the Mohawk* gives us the warrior-priest, a trope that Place finds in the character of Ethan in *The Searchers* (1956) and which is explicit in *December 7th*. The minister is a man of God, but takes up the gun to fight for the community. *The Hurricane* (1937) also offers a priest as a main character, though not a traditionally heroic one, as does *The Fugitive* (1947). Lourdeaux sees the *Stagecoach* character of Peacock, the whiskey drummer, in a priest like role, urging "Christian charity" and observing the sins of others while wearing a priestly stole. (120) Janey Place calls the entire film "a morality play" (32).

Ford's films also have frequent reiteration of characters that echo the Christian passion narrative of innocence/betrayal/sacrifice/redemption that is played out by stock characters representing the Judas, the Savior, the Magdalene and the Mater Dolorosa (Lourdeaux 102-105). Seen most strongly in *The Informer*, *The Fugitive*, *The Bamboo Cross* (1955) *Seven Women* (1965) and *Three Bad Men* (1926) (remade by Ford as *The Three Godfathers* in 1949), these figures appear in many of Ford's films, part of his merging the American myth and his Catholic understanding of American strengths. Gallagher remarks on this "sad, haunted contradictory quality" of the Fordian heroes of his 1935 through 1947 films, "all whom feel chosen by destiny, secure in transcendental justification and motivated by a sense of divinely appointed duty" (173).

When these religious associations reinforce World War II's commercial and governmental messages of sacrifice and unity they add weight to the sacrificial aspects of combat. Priests and surrogate figures in war genre films such as *Guadalcanal Diary* and *Destination: Tokyo* continue the pairing of religion and warriors, and Ford's use of the same religious characters and coding in his documentaries extends and ratifies that correlation.

In film presentations of the veteran as sacrificial hero, death takes on a meaning and significance that may be missing from the actual event. Death in combat, arbitrary and sudden, is often meaningless. In World War II, where official incompetence and failure were censored from public view, it can be argued that only the participants understood its true futility. In the face of what Paul Fussell calls "The Great SNAFU" (Situation Normal - All Fucked Up) that every soldier experienced, the search for meaning in death was further complicated by the public failure to acknowledge ambiguity

and randomness. The knowledge that command decisions were often flawed, military life was not the smooth efficient machine of the movies and that the broad gulf between the civilian perception and the reality makes the need for a rationale for death and a distinct, recognizable persona more urgent.

The religious freighting in Ford's documentaries offers a rationale for sacrifice, one that is heroic, comforting, and is understood and valued in civilian perception. In his documentaries, death is ennobling, heroic and demonstrates a Christ-like affiliation that amplifies the civilian perceptions of war. Civilians are allowed to be connected to, but not share in the sacrifice, and *Battle of Midway* and *December 7th* use introduction of family members and "talk to the dead" sequences to offer a sense of resurrection and life-after-death.

Less overt appearances of religious codes are seen in the use of music and hymns. The use of religious theme music is a thread in several films, and several critics have commented on this propensity to use religious and specifically Catholic signs in his films. Lee Lourdeaux pulls these together in an exploration of how Ford interjected a Catholic worldview into a Protestant America. Ford inserts crosses in the film's settings, either as actual objects, or as shadows and lighting effects, such as the back lit cruciform of the priest in *The Fugitive*. *Mary, Queen of Scots* plays up the differences between the passionate, Catholic Mary and the cold, Protestant Elizabeth. Outside of the Crucifix which Mary wears, she rides to her coronation past halberds in the shape of crosses, and to her execution of crosses shaped from palings (Sinclair 184). *The Grapes of Wrath* opens with Tom Joad walking in the harsh shadows of a series of crosses.

Richard Slotkin, in *Gunfighter Nation*, suggests how myth and history tangle, particularly in Ford's films. He writes, "film and event speak to each other – event lending political resolution to the fiction, the fiction providing mythological justification for particular scenarios of real world action" (365). Stowell agrees that "...Ford [used] films to mediate between recorded history and mythological history, so that while the tensions and play between them remain, history has become myth and myth history through film" (xiv). He says that Ford's films are "cultural artifacts that express America's deepest concerns, problems and ideals" and that they have "entered a kind of cultural mainstream where they are vaguely recollected as aspects of America's real and mythical history" (*John Ford* xi).

Janey Place, in *Western Films of John Ford* reflects this when she writes, "Myths are patterns of human experience. In his Westerns, John Ford recreates those myths which are most meaningful to him and uses ritual (much as religion uses it) to restate the personal and cultural values contained within those myths" (7). His films present a coherent structure for expressing American values in a way that captures the emotional as well as the historical import. In a ritualistic repetition of the basic premise of the mediating protagonist, the alien Other and the need for sacrifice and separation to achieve a better society, Ford provides a paradigm that meets the need for veterans to stand apart from the society they protect.

Evaluating and Qualifying Coding

There is little disagreement that Ford's icons are American icons, though the extent of his influence is still being defined. Each new biography or criticism extends the number of films that appear to contain genetic influences, with films that were once considered irrelevant being reassessed and appreciated more. *Steamboat 'Round the Bend* (1935) and *Wee Willie Winkie* (1937) now have their champions, and arguments are made to place them alongside *Drums Along the Mohawk* and *The Searchers*, both films that were also once discounted, but now held as classics of Ford's expression.

The idea of the influence of the author, or the *auteur* on a film provides part of a structural basis for assuming that Ford's films can be seen as a reflection of his personal beliefs. The basis of that although the *auteur* theory proposes that a film director is capable of imposing his beliefs and ideas on a film and these can be identified and analyzed as his contribution through careful deconstruction of his work. Andrew Sarris used the idea to propose that there were great American film directors, even within the Hollywood studio system, particularly John Ford. He suggested in "Notes on the *Auteur* Theory", an essay written in 1962, that the designation of a filmmaker as an *auteur* could be made by recognition of the "interior meaning" of the film, the reflection of the director's soul (Mast ed, *Film Theory and Criticism* 587). Though there have been vast disagreements in precisely defining the limits and applications of *auteur* as a structural tool for examining a director's films, Peter Wollen, in *Signs and Meaning in the Cinema* writes that "It has survived because it is indispensable" (591).

The *auteur* theory can be used to propose that the genetic myths and ritualized icons were constructed from Ford's life experience and belief system, and their personal

nature leads to the logical assumption that understanding Ford's life will yield better understanding of his coding and ability to affect the American psyche. The repetition of these icons are part of what make Ford's films his, and also what established his signs and messages as recognizable icons. Ford's biographers and critics have therefore focused primarily on finding Ford in his films, and articulating how the two relate.

Because interpretation of Ford's work is dependent on an understanding of the man it assumes Ford has made his life available for interpretation. However, biographers acknowledge this was not the case. Ford was notoriously hard to interview, evasive about his life and his work, leaving his chroniclers to usually qualify their studies of him by quoting from his 1962 *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* "...when the facts and the legend conflict, print the legend." Tag Gallagher opens his *John Ford: The Man and His Films* by declaring that "There will probably never be an adequate biography of John Ford, nor even an adequate character sketch, for there were as many of him as there were people who knew him" (1). Critic Andrew Sarris titled his 1975 work *The John Ford Movie Mystery* in acknowledgment of how Ford couples self-revelation in films with a refusal to affirm or deny any of the conclusions others draw from his filmic statements. Scott Eyman titled his biography *Print the Legend*, and used as a cover a well-known shot of Ford in a concealing trench coat with a cameraman's shadow behind him, tacit acknowledgements of how much of Ford's life and thought remains shadowed. Peter Stowell uses that same portrait as a frontispiece for his work *John Ford*. Joseph McBride, author of the most recent and ambitious effort to understand Ford, titled his work *Searching for John Ford: A Life*, also an admission of Ford's personal opacity. This refusal to define himself has made Ford a vast prairie that others tend to people with their

own ideas, using those things that are known about Ford's intent to assume and extrapolate other connections and meanings.

When correlating Ford's filmatic signs and themes with his life, biographers have shown a propensity to detour from an academic celebration of what his films say to an unrestrained acceptance of what Ford says about himself. The first biographies, which established Ford as more than a "maker of Westerns" in the late 1970s, tend to a reverential acceptance of Ford's pronouncements, even while they chronicle how he deliberately misled those around him. Lindsey Anderson and Peter Bogdanovich both tend to quote as fact anecdotes Ford related, while writing about how he misled others. Bogdanovich's *John Ford* and Anderson's *About John Ford* offer direct quotes from Ford that are contradicted by later biographers and film histories, in particular his frequent claims that he never saw his films after they were completed (Gallagher 203).

Ford's military career is another area where the legend seems to be printed rather than the fact. Ford deeply appreciated the romance and drama of the military, and was not above embellishing his adventures during and before active service. Many of his most respected biographers appear to have accepted Ford's versions of events, however unlikely. These include Joseph McBride's defense of Ford's claim of spying for the Navy in Mexico before the war (273-274) and his addition of Ford to the ranks of those who were close enough to a passing Japanese fighter to see the pilot's "enigmatic smile" (335). Tag Gallagher writes that Ford single-handedly captured a downed German pilot then removed him from French resistance fighter custody when he didn't like their treatment of the prisoner (212). Ford's grandson Dan, refutes the former, and ignores the

latter claims in his book *Pappy*, a stance that seems more realistic, particularly given Ford's penchant for embellishment of his personal life.

Later biographers are more wary of using Ford's pronouncements as fact, but tend towards glossing over Ford's less admirable characteristics, such as his binge drinking and cruelty to those who displeased him. Only Garry Wills, in *John Wayne's America* offers a counterpoint to the tendency towards awe and hero worship, calling Ford a "mixture of cruelty and tenderness" (73) and challenging many of the Fordian myths in a chapter titled "Sadist." Ford is best approached warily, with a large grain of salt, but there are things upon which biographers can agree.

He was "Irish by parentage, Catholic by faith and education and a military aristocrat by inclination" John Baxter writes in *The Cinema of John Ford*. Each of these characteristics found their way into his films and into the icons and messages that made his work part of American myth. Ford's America was built around the Irish values of community and the group, both in the larger society and in the smaller family unit. Consistent with his Irish immigrant heritage, Ford rejected the individualistic Protestant doctrine in favor of the strength and nurturing of these coherent groups. Their movement towards the Western frontier marked the second displacement for the immigrant Irish, since they were a people who have already left their ancestral homes to come to America. Because they had successfully established themselves on the shore of a new and hostile land, Ford saw their values of communal interdependence as those needed to survive and prosper on all new frontiers. He offered them as a proven structure for triumph over the wilderness and savage landscape.

Ford's folk memories deal with the fundamental American self-imagery: the tension between the individual and the group, American exceptionalism and the uniqueness of American promise, the redemptive power of sacrifice, and the need to fight and subdue savagery to build a strong community. He had foreshadowed these messages in his films in the decade before the war, and they provide the source for the signs and messages that pervade *December 7th* and appear in subsequent film iterations of the attack on Pearl Harbor. However, since Ford did not explain his meanings or identify the extent of his deliberate coding, critics have struggled to define the extent to which his work contains a unified and coherent expression of philosophy and iconography.

In attempting to correlate Ford's icons with meanings, they can appear to be fundamentally apparent and pervasive – Slotkin's "genetic myths." Once identified, they seem to appear everywhere within his work, and extend their influence into other films that have only peripheral connection to Ford. This perceived infiltration into various areas of culture can seem overwhelming, and critics sometimes identify unifying elements and discrete coding that are possible, but that rest on arguable connections. In the search for the mythic elements in his films, Ford himself begins to take on mythic qualities and an ability to construct a unified message and continuity of design across the 50 plus year span of his career.

For example, Tag Gallagher suggested a direct, deliberate repetition of an expressionist function in the use of the same arm gesture by cowboy star Harry Carey in Ford's 1917 *Straight Shooting* and by John Wayne in the 1956 *The Searchers* (22). The characters are similar in motivation and worldview, and perform the gesture at approximately the same time in plot development. (An introspective interlude where the

character is contemplating social relationships.) Ford may have intended a direct connection between the two widely distanced films (almost 40 years), and an homage to his friend Harry Carey in John Wayne's gesture, but it is also possible that the gesture was a result of the limited number of human reactions and gestures available to similar characterizations that Ford would find acceptable. The gesture and its expressionistic use are not specific and unique to Ford messages and themes, as a similar gesture with corresponding motivation is also used by Judy Garland in *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1944).

In similar fashion, Jean Louis Leurat and Suzanne Liandrat-Guigues' article John Ford and Monument Valley (Buscombe, ed. *Back in the Saddle Again* 160-169) suggest that Ford deliberately used knowledge of the names of rock formations on the famed mesa as signifiers in the seven films that he shot there. An example given of this correlation is the shot of Captain Nathan Brittles (John Wayne) in *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, which has the rock formation called "Elephant Butte" in the background. They propose that audience members familiar with the formation's name will make a connection identifying Brittles as "a lonely old man" and those not familiar with the landscape will use the background formation to assume that the character is as "solid as a rock" (163). The article carries this duality of purpose through each of Ford's Monument Valley films, making connections between physical groupings in shot composition and deliberate puns and signifiers.

The linkages illustrated in these two examples suggest valid avenues for exploring Ford's work, but are more tenuous than those this dissertation addresses. Unquestionably, Ford deliberately repeated elements and small subplots in his films, and would use the same effects to convey meaning in different films. Those are some of the elements that

make a Ford film recognizably his. The extent of the coding is still being argued, and comprises a different area of research.

This dissertation does not attempt to discover new thematic linkages and expressions, but how those themes and signs, already part of the acknowledged Ford *oeuvre* are found in *December 7th* and how they help shape later Pearl Harbor film texts and the visual presentation of the attack narrative. Particularly since *December 7th* is a short work, and was made under the constraint of military direction, appearance of new coding and signs in its text is unlikely and would be hard to validate. Ford's genetic myths are at their most unequivocal in this small wartime piece, and in *Battle of Midway*. Here, Ford is a participant in the struggle against the savage. He is living his own mythology - testing himself and the belief systems he expresses in his films.

December 7th was produced in the middle of war, before Ford began to articulate those changes in his films. It is closely aligned with the community building of *Stagecoach*, the expression of the pioneering spirit of *Drums Along the Mohawk* and sacrificial and sacred impulses of *Young Mr. Lincoln*.

Ford portrays Hawai'i as the redeeming frontier landscape, showing not the civilized buildings and established bases, but the ramparts of fortresses and the wilderness of open spaces and isolated peoples. His framework is intensely religious, with the battle sequences opening and closing with religious ceremonies. Innocence is shown in the faces and actions of Americans, as they worship, work and play. As a product of Ford's genius, the film benefits from the established elements and coding it shares with larger, better-recognized films, expressing a resonant narrative of the event that conforms to public memory and the cultural perceptions of World War II as the

“good war.” It provides the usable memory that recalls and reinforces the themes stressed by the OWI and Madison Avenue, while remaining within the strictures of the Production Code and military censorship.

Chapter 2 Media Construct

December 7th

Ford's tendencies towards stylization match his inclination to treat people as archetypes and quotidian events as sacred ritual. In his art, style so encodes reality that cinema necessarily becomes myth.

Tag Gallagher, *John Ford*

History

December 7th's production history is more anecdotal than well documented, with large gaps and a small paper trail. Like many initially unsuccessful projects, the film was first an orphan, and was then claimed by many parents. Confusion about its pedigree also stems from the fact that it went through two, and I argue three iterations, along with minor variations of its opening and closing sequences. Though it is possible to extrapolate parts of its origins from the available conflicting materials, information about the film is limited, much of it coming from the memoirs of film editor Robert Parrish without corroborating evidence.

The idea of a film about the Pearl Harbor attack can be traced to Ford and William Donovan, head of the Office of Special Services (OSS), who proposed a project, titled *The Story of Pearl Harbor: an Epic in American History*, to Secretary of the Navy Knox (McBride 354). Upon approval of the idea, Ford detailed Gregg Toland, cinematographer for *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Citizen Kane*, to make the film (Parrish *Hollywood* 15), but there is disagreement on whether or not the script that Toland's took to Hawai'i to shoot was Ford's, Donovan's or his own. McBride, citing Parrish, suggests that Ford, the OSS and the Navy intended the piece to be a "newsreel-like operation" rather than the elaborate propaganda piece that is know as the "long version." In his

scenario, the script was written and shot by Toland without any supervision or approval from Ford. He also suggests that Toland had little regard for military protocol, offending military officers at Pearl Harbor with his failures to observe protocol.

Both the script and the offensive behavior are more likely to be Ford, rather than Toland. First, the working title proposed by Donovan and Ford suggests something more than a newsreel, as does the elaborate re-creations that Toland shot in Hollywood and at Pearl Harbor. Neither could have been accomplished without approval above Toland's rank of Lieutenant. Ford did fly to Honolulu to "check on Toland's progress," but rather than shutting down the filming for exceeding what was needed, Ford proceeded to stage and direct several reenactments for the film (Parrish, *Hollywood* 15). During the filming, Ford proceeded to insult at least one officer, a Navy Admiral, as well as breaching Navy protocol. This suggests that the script Toland was using did have approval at some level, and that Toland was following Ford's guidance, rather than operating on his own. What is probable is that after the Navy rejected the initial version of the film, Toland, as the junior officer was assigned, or assumed, responsibility for the film.

Because of the elaborate re-staging Toland produced from Twentieth Century Fox's backlots, the film was still in production months after the attack, and was being edited after Ford had completed *Battle of Midway* in the fall of 1942. Ford was kept informed of the film's progress, and Toland had shown him several scenes. This version, which is not the film placed in the National Archives as the "long version" of *December 7th*, probably no longer exists. This argument rests on the fact that the archived film does not contain scenes that Toland is known to have placed in his version. They include a burial at sea as well as other scenes that Toland told Parrish Ford had stolen for use in

Battle of Midway (McBride 383). The Navy rejected Toland's film because it blamed the Navy for unpreparedness. However, this does not appear, even indirectly, anywhere in long version. The absence of this footage from the long version suggests that there must have been an earlier, original film, and that it was the film produced by Toland. The long version found in the National Archives must be a second version, produced by Ford and edited by Robert Parrish from Toland's original work. Critics often assign this version to Toland rather than Ford, probably because Ford did make extensive use of Toland's footage. Ford and Parrish's revised version was also rejected by the Navy, and never released to the public during the war. Despite official rejection, Ford had a copy placed in the Navy's official military film records. Toland's raw footage, including the re-staging of the attack, is also found in the Archives. Toland shot in color, and this footage is sometimes seen in documentaries, though only black and white was released during the war.

A requirement arose for a Pearl Harbor film for the Navy Industrial Incentive Program for factory workers, and this led to the released, short version of the film. This third version, which runs about 30 minutes, was also edited by Ford from his longer film, and was released to the public in 1943. This is the film known as "John Ford's *December 7th*", which won an Oscar[®] for best documentary in 1943.

In this version, the opening segments were eliminated and short scenes of Japanese spying were added. Scenes of Americans dying (actors) were removed. A short closing sequence was added, showing workers streaming towards a factory, followed by close-ups under the caption "The End." That fades to "This is *Not* The End." A shot of a soldier, a black worker and a white laborer is shown, captioned "This is but the

beginning!” The film’s final shot is a White blue-collar laborer smoking a pipe, a jacket thrown over one shoulder and is captioned “*YOU* must write The End.” This ending sequence is usually eliminated, and superimposed credits are shown instead.

Even though both versions are now considered his work, Ford’s biographers have differed on how much credit Ford should be given. Early biographer John Baxter ignores the film altogether and Peter Bogdanovich only mentions it in his filmography reference list, giving Toland billing as director. Tag Gallagher also cites Toland as director, but he describes the unreleased opening sequence and the closing sequence in detail, attributing them to Ford. He leaves out any description of the battle sequence, using a footnote to assign that portion to Toland. Although both Toland and Ford contributed to the long version, Toland by shooting the footage and Ford by editing, both versions are Ford’s, rather than Toland’s. This suggestion stems from many similarities between *December 7th* and Ford’s other work, including use of music, cultural and religious themes peculiar to Ford. These commonalities can be clearly seen in comparing *December 7th* with Ford’s *Battle of Midway* and his pre-war films.

Ford’s influence on the film extends beyond the editing. Ford had shot footage for the film while in Hawai‘i, and there are pictures of him in the studio tank at Twentieth Century Fox staging one of the miniature ships (Rampell 12). Fordian characteristics can be seen in several of the scenes in the existing versions (McBride 355) but the dialogue between Uncle Sam and his conscience Mr. C., in the unreleased but archived long version is probably mainly Toland’s work. This can be surmised from the sequence’s different pacing, camerawork and coding from the rest of the film, creating what Scott Eyman calls “an odd humpbacked feel” (Eyman 265). This segment bears little

resemblance to Ford's other work, or his documentary *Battle of Midway*, so it may be the sole survivor of Toland's original work.

The 83-minute version of the film was released on video in 1991 by Kit Parker Productions. They added a prologue about the film's history, stressing the battle sequence's backlot origins, and giving full credit to John Ford. The prologue contains a number of inconsistencies, such as a claim that the film was "carefully restored from its original nitrate film." Nitrate film had been discontinued some years before, and the original film was shot on color safety film. Kit Parker's release added opening titles to the film, crediting Ford, Toland and the editors and additional cameramen, and deleting the factory worker ending sequence.

Despite the film's backlot origins, those who survived the attack seem to find Ford's film the most acceptable representation of their experience. In documentaries featuring interviews with survivors, *December 7th* is consistently used to illustrate the survivor's reminiscences. *Pearl Harbor* and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* were both heavily criticized by survivors, veterans and others for attempting to expand the scope of film messages about the attack, suggesting that the acceptance of Ford's film is not due to indifference. Indeed, there seems to be a sustained resistance to reinterpretation or refocusing any of December 7th's images and messages about the attack.

The emotional intensity that the attack still engenders seems supported in some ways by Ford's skill in connecting it to religious and American mythic elements, i.e., establishing a ritual function to its images. It allows a remembering that sanctifies the attack, elevating it to mythic status within an unambiguous worldview. In *Pearl Harbor Ghosts*, Thurston Clarke interviewed Pearl Harbor witnesses and survivors to explore the

attitudes and memories they have carried through the years. He found that for many of them, the emotions and attitudes stemming from the attack have never faded, and that they expend considerable energy ensuring that the narrative of the attack stays within their selected messages and codes.

Acceptance of the film becomes a means of acknowledging the attack's sacred qualities, aligning the event as part of a heroic continuum of American history and prevents the introduction of new themes and characters that might threaten its mythic underpinnings and the clarity of the lessons it teaches. Deviation from its messages becomes an attack on the significance of the event and an undermining of American self-image and national character. The ambiguities and social tensions suppressed by censorship context remain unseen, and Ford's religious and mythic themes reinforce the event as sacred and sacrificial, providing post-factual justification for unrestrained violence, not only in World War II, but also in all future events that can be linked to its pattern.

Structure

December 7th originates what seems to be a specific and unchanging structure for presenting the attack on film. This structure assumes that the attack was a betrayal of America, and that its circumstances permitted unrestrained violence as a response. It establishes the dead as martyrs, with those deaths having sacrificial import. Viewed as sacrifices, those deaths take on religious meaning that seems to demand a religious response. This emphasis on the betrayal and sacrifice, paired with the emotional rhetoric of film may be what seems to give the entire attack the aura of a sacred, rather than military event.

Remembering the attack then may become itself a sacred ritual that requires specific icons and structure to maintain its significance. Uniform structuring of films to stress the betrayal/sacrifice/redemption using consistent icons can dominate discourse and institutionalize the structure as historical fact. Evoking emotional rather than analytical responses may also deflect criticism and challenge to these icons.

The establishment of icons and their integration into the emotional cultural history may work best by following a repetitive structural pattern, which seems to be the case with the Pearl Harbor attack. The attack films' structure of betrayal, sacrifice and redemption through revenge is found not only in all three films, beginning with *December 7th*, but also seems to use the model found by Geoff White in his analysis of the orientation films of the USS *Arizona* Memorial, "Moving History: the Pearl Harbor Films". In the article, White identifies similarities in structure that are consistent with *December 7th* and the subsequent two films, suggesting that the structure has become an inherent part of the visual representation of the attack. He notes that it:

“...Can be analyzed as a sequence of five episodic chunks: (1) a historical prelude to the attack; (2) a scene establishing Hawai'i as the site of tropical pleasure and innocence; (3) the bombing itself, depicted by burning and exploding ships; (4) (most importantly) the recovery, in which the nation unifies to win the war, beginning with the rebuilding of ships; and (5) an overtly moral sequence that spells out the implications of the attack for the present.” (*Positions* 724)

This is the structure of *December 7th*, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor*.

Although the emphasis may shift in each film, the structure remains intact. *December 7th* established the icons for the attack, but the structure itself is resistant to change.

Synopsis – Unreleased Long Version

Historical Prelude

Both long and short versions of the film set the emotional tone, opening with scenes of destroyed buildings and aircraft at Pearl Harbor, footage familiar to audiences from earlier newsreel releases. “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” plays, segueing into “Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean,” the musical motifs for the film. The camera pans down to a bullet-pocked (and possibly bloodstained) concrete pad with an abandoned white “Dixie Cup” Navy cap worn by enlisted sailors, foreshadowing a brief shot of a sailor who will fall dead there. A shadow “V” for “Victory” is superimposed on the shot, a sign of the ultimate victory. The “V” continues to be superimposed over two letters attesting to the government’s need for the film, one from Henry Stimson, Secretary of War, and one from Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy.

(The released version cuts to the attack at this point.)

The scene opens to a costumed Uncle Sam (Walter Huston) dictating a letter to an exotic woman dressed in Western style clothes. He extols the beauties of Hawai‘i, calling it the “Territory of Heaven” until interrupted by his conscience, “Mr. C” (Harry Davenport). Mr. C scolds Uncle Sam for not understanding the danger Hawai‘i represents to America. Uncle Sam speaks about the American business ventures that have opened Hawai‘i to development praising a “pioneering spirit that compares favorably with the opening of the old West” and describes how America has “made the Hawaiian desert bloom.” Mr. C points out the danger from the Japanese, who came to Hawai‘i “not to spread the Gospel, or engage in commerce” but as contract workers. Uncle Sam

protests that they are good citizens and Mr. C counters by pointing out their “hyphenated Americanism” and how they have kept their own language, newspapers and schools.

Several scenes show Japanese speaking Japanese, praying at shrines and engaging in spying and gathering information. Sequences show intelligence gathering, and how “loose lips sink ships.” Japanese in Hawai‘i are shown receiving instructions from radio broadcasts, and passing the gleaned information back to the Japanese consulate. Uncle Sam again protests that Japanese Americans are loyal, that multiculturalism makes Hawai‘i a Paradise. Images of Hawai‘i as a pleasure garden are shown, including various ethnic women, scenes of hula, canoe riding, Waikiki beach and various shots of children. Scenes of multiethnic children in Scouting uniforms saluting. Mr. C rebukes Uncle Sam for his willful innocence and Uncle Sam falls asleep to dream of a montage of warlike images, including Emperor Hirohito, Mussolini and Hitler, with images of women’s faces superimposed over scenes of riots and battle.

(The released version begins here, with minor changes.)

On the soundtrack, a bell tolls. Hawai‘i landmarks and military bases are shown as a narrator describes the peaceful “Sabbath dawn.” Ships ride at anchor in Pearl Harbor. A Christmas carol plays – “O Come, All Ye Faithful” - as the scene shifts to a Catholic mass being held on the beach at Kaneohe Naval Station. The officiating priest talks to the assembled military about keeping in contact with their families at home, particularly at Christmas time. The film cuts to a radar operator with his equipment shielded by a special effects blackout with “censored” written over it. The operator detects the incoming Japanese planes and reports them, but is told to ignore them.

A montage of shots show aircraft mechanics working at Hickam and sailors at Pearl Harbor playing baseball catch. They look skyward as the engines of approaching planes are heard on the soundtrack. The scene shifts to Washington D.C. and footage of the State Department Building, while the narrator reminds viewers that diplomatic negotiations were still in progress when the attack occurred. Shots of (by special effect) planes flying over O'ahu's Pali lookout, through mountain passes identified as the Ko'olau Range and past Diamond Head and Waikiki.

The Attack

The battle sequence opens with another reminder of "the Sabbath" and compares the attacking Japanese planes to the biblical "swarms of tiny locusts." A montage of planes attacking airfields is seen, accompanied by the sound of aircraft engines and gunfire. Special effects of burning buildings are shown, along with studio-produced pictures of exploding planes at Hickam Army Air Base and Wheeler Army Air Force Station. An actor fires a rifle at a rear projection of planes flying over a flight line, and men are seen racing through smoke. A pilot climbs onto his plane, and is shot, falling out of the frame. The scene cuts to Kaneohe and the field mass. The priest blesses the assembly, and tells them to "man their battle stations." In three separate scenes, sailors are hit by gunfire and fall. Americans are shown gathering weapons and attempting to save aircraft, while Japanese continue to bomb and strafe the runway and hangers.

The scene shifts to Pearl Harbor (identified in a subtitle), and a model of the USS *Arizona* explodes, intercut with staged scenes of enlisted men below decks reacting to the explosions. Shots of men racing to guns are shown. A model of the USS *Oklahoma* explodes, intercut with quick scene of an officer thrown to one side by the explosion, and

men running through machinery on fire. A model of the USS *California* is shown on fire, followed by shots of sailors racing to man guns and firing them. Three more sailors are shot and drop to the deck. Doris Miller is shown lying on the deck, firing a machine gun. He falls dead, and the gun is taken over by a White sailor with a bandaged forehead wound.

Japanese torpedo bombers release their weapons, models of the USS *Cassian*, *Downes* and *Pennsylvania* explode, and actual footage of burning ships is inserted. A wounded navy Admiral is seen surrounded by flames, and he waves off his aide's assistance and falls to the deck, presumably dead. More scenes of exploding ships, sailors dropping wounded and men firing guns. USS *Oglala*, a minesweeper, is shown, followed by more actual footage of the ship and a model capsizing. This ends the first wave of the attack.

Montage of actual shots of Honolulu civilians and house on fire, cut with staged shots of aged Chinese-American couple anxiously watching the sky, and a crying baby of Asian heritage. A staged scene of confrontation between local Japanese consular and a reporter, with the Japanese Consular denying the attackers are Japanese, reporter accusing them of burning secret documents.

(Narrator announces second wave of attack.)

Various shots of men firing guns and running past burning airfields. Stock footage of battleship at sea firing its guns, possibly from footage gathered for *Battle of Midway*). More men firing guns intercut with Japanese airplanes falling from the sky and crashing. A plane dives into a model of an unidentified ship (most probably the USS *Curtiss*, damaged by a downed Japanese plane). A man grimaces as he is wounded. Men

come with a stretcher and carry him away. A model of the USS *Nevada*, a battleship that attempted to sortie for the open sea during the attack is shown, intercut with a Japanese torpedo bomber diving and releasing a torpedo, which streaks through the water. The ship model catches fire. Men fire guns, a Japanese plane is downed and crashes into a field, and the USS *Nevada* model, billowing smoke, is beached (with subtitle.) Wide-angle actual footage of battleships on fire is shown, as the narrator declares attack over.

The narrator states that the “last wave of invaders was beaten off – yes, beaten off by our men, who against overwhelming odds heroically and magnificently gave notice to the world that we had only begun to fight.” Actual footage of scenes taken after the attack is shown. Actual footage of downed Japanese planes, a miniature submarine beached and a dead Japanese pilot floating in the ocean. Authentic post-attack footage of wreckage at Pearl Harbor and Hickam Air Station. Staged scenes of wounded intercut with authentic post-attack footage of pier. Narrator reiterates the “sneak attack” nature of the attack and decries Japanese treachery. Staged funeral procession, with armed guards escorting a stretcher over a hilltop.

Scene of a fresh grave with a lei laid on top. Narrator calls on the dead to speak. A single actor speaks as the voice of representatives of various ethnic groups, including southern, Jewish (from Brooklyn), Black and Hispanic with footage showing their pictures in uniform cut together with footage of their families in their homes.

Funeral scene, probably taken at the 1 January 1942 memorial service attended by the members of the Roberts Commission, the first of many investigative panels appointed to investigate the attack. Rows of individual graves with flags and leis placed by civilians are shown, along with a wreath from Gold Star Mothers. A second funeral scene

on a beach at the location of the earlier mass. Military ministers pray as sailors lay wreaths on graves marked by small American flags. Shot of the beach with wood cross in corner of picture. Taps plays over traveling shots of palm trees.

Recovery

The film switches to an animated map of Japan, with radio tower broadcasting and a grotesque lion dog in background. An announcer with a thick Japanese accent declares “facts” about the attack, and American narrator calmly corrects him. Segue into sequence showing salvage operations at Pearl Harbor. A listing of American ships at Pearl Harbor is given with film footage showing ships being repaired. The narrator refutes rumors of a blockade, shows barbed wire being strung, and slit trenches being dug. Scenes of Hawaiian Civilian Defense Committee volunteers are shown as martial law is declared; a strong verbal defense of Japanese-Americans in Hawai‘i is given along with examples of their patriotism. Scenes are shown of civilians waiting in lines, giving blood, and soldiers show Native Hawaiians how to use gas masks. The narrator extols their adaptation to the war, and shows the example they set with rubber and scrap drives.

Moral Lessons

Scenes of sunsets and silhouettes of palm trees are shown while music plays. Narrator declares, “All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword.”

(The released version ends here.)

The scene segues to a sailor (Dana Andrews) standing in a military graveyard. He will deliver White’s “overtly moral” message, and establishes his right to do so by declaring, “It’s all true – I was there – I died there.” He meets a WWI casualty who points out the other dead – Indian Fighters, the Blue & Grey (rather than Confederate and

Union), his own unit from World War I. The WWI ghost is cynical, complaining that America is isolationist, and will return to that state after the war. The Pearl Harbor casualty disagrees, and extols the idea of a United Nations, warning that returning vets will stand for no less. Post-war global politics are addressed using baseball as a metaphor, naming American values such as religion and common sense as playing positions on the “team.” He describes a post-war multi-national group (The United Nations) as the way to stop war. He declares the objective is to win the “World Series Pennant of Peace.” A veiled threat from the “guys that will be coming back... and they’ll make sure” is made. A parade of flags of the Allied nations pass in review as a male chorus sings “United Nations” in the background.

Signs and Coding in the Opening Sequence

Although the full-length version is not part of the ritualized presentation of the battle sequence, it contains interesting signs and coding that expand on the battle sequence’s messages and suggest answers to discrepancies about the film. The long version of the film has always been available to filmmakers and researchers who used the National Archives copy to construct subsequent visions of the attack and its footage as illustrations for various related topics in documentaries. Though not as iconic as the battle sequence, it does follow the paradigm, and in its own right, offers insight into the cultural contexts of the time.

It establishes 1) the framework for the betrayal of the United States, 2) the character of the enemy as a savage alien without gratitude or mercy and 3) the rationale for mistreatment of Japanese Americans and the unrestrained use of violence to ensure victory and cleanse America through redemptive violence. It does this by showing Uncle

Sam as a trusting, idealistic and poetic soul, who sees only the good, and the rather unattractive Mr. C as a cynical and hardnosed realist. Mr. C has bad teeth, his suit is much too large, and his chin recedes. Uncle Sam must yield to the unglamorous but realistic Mr. C even though his representative American heart prefers to think the best of everyone.

Because this segment stages a debate over the loyalty of the Japanese Americans in Hawai'i, it is usually described as a xenophobic rant. However, it can also be seen as a reiteration of the dichotomy between the presumed American characteristics of nobility, tolerance and pure innocence, in contrast to the alien savagery of the Japanese enemy. As the audience knows, that trust has already been betrayed, so the sequence serves to emphasize Uncle Sam's, and by proxy, the audiences' pre-war faith in the ability of all nations to work together.

Paradise/Innocence

Along with serving as a reminder of the history of the attack, it begins to develop the second thematic sequence identified by White - that of Hawai'i as a site of tropical pleasure and innocence. Uncle Sam's descriptions of Hawai'i, and the images shown, suggest pre-war equality and multiculturalism, intimating that wartime injustices and racial discrimination are the result of Japanese betrayal rather than an American prejudice and racism. After the Fall, all men are sinners, and the venial sins of America are placed in perspective by Japanese mortal ones. In this sequence, the emphasis is on an actual and symbolic Paradise Lost. Uncle Sam rhapsodizes over Hawaii's progress in business and culture, listing the virtues and goodness that the audience knows are now in ruins. Interestingly, both Paradise, and the Snake, in this tropical Garden present a distinctly

female face. Hawai'i is shown in montages of ethnically diverse beautiful women who dance, smile at the camera, recite population statistics and murmur "aloha" as Uncle Sam defends his innocent view of the territories charms.

The seductive female is the first shot of the long version. The camera opens to the face of an exotic and sensuous young woman. She is of undetermined racial background, with full rouged lips, dark eyes and thick hair. (Figure 3.1) The camera pulls back to show her with a stenographer's pad and pen. She has a huge hibiscus flower behind her ear, but wears a modest long sleeved shirt - an unsettling mixture of sexuality with the trappings of Western civilization. She personifies the Hawai'i of the *First Strange Place* described in Bailey and Farber's work on sex and race in World War II (38-39). As they point out, Hawai'i was the first glimpse of another world for many military born and raised in an insular America, and its multicultural population offered the first glimpse of mores and morals they had never seen in life or on the silver screen. Hawai'i. A possession of America, but also a new Frontier, Hawai'i is seen as the exotic and erotic "America's backyard."



Figure 2.1 Miss Kim, The Exotic Female

Although Uncle Sam extols the businesses and churches, citing the “pioneer spirit” of the American businessmen who have tamed Hawai‘i, the frequent presentation of women, particularly exotic women, suggests that Hawaii’s civilization is only a veneer. The Miss Kim of *December 7th* personifies this notion. Her English is lisping, and barely legible, and although she wears long sleeves, she is not wearing stockings. When Uncle Sam dismisses her for the day, she retreats into the back of his bungalow, rather than out the door. She is unlike any other female in Ford’s body of work, including the overtly sexual Denver of the post-war *Wagonmaster* (1950) or Dorothy Lamour in the pre-war *Hurricane* (1937) whom Gallagher calls “full-blown, injudicious voluptuousness, repelling, compelling – but utterly unerotic” (138). Miss Kim and the other females who represent Hawai‘i are both more overt in their sexuality, and more ambiguous in their “types” than Ford seems to allow, which argues that they are Toland’s vision.

As Mr. C presses for a less trusting view of Hawaii, Japanese women are shown listening for information as they shave military men, dancing with lonely sailors and playing cards and shopping as they spread rumors to lull American suspicions. Vignettes show military wives giving away troop movements through “loose lips.” Gardeners and taxi drivers also listen for bits of information, which are funneled back through the Japanese Consulate in Honolulu, in what the narrator calls an abuse of diplomatic immunity. Ford’s retention of this sequence, despite its lack of congruence with his style and motivation, probably stems from the need for a sequence to establish innocence and betrayal, a desire not to eliminate Toland’s work, and a practical use of the film resources at hand.

Interpreting the segment as showing treachery and betrayal of innocence as the cause of a Paradise Lost also provides an explanation for the filmic virulence expressed against a people already quarantined from civic life and in many cases, interred in camps. The wartime caricature of the Japanese and Americans of Japanese descent was already well established with American audiences by the time *December 7th* was released in 1943. Warnings against disloyalty and sabotage are therefore unnecessary. Instead, the portrayal may be to propose a religious justification for their incarceration, suggesting them as a Satan responsible for the loss of another Garden.

As the sequence ends, Uncle Sam manages to quiet his Conscience, and falls into a dream, lulled by the tropical breezes. As he dreams, female faces hover behind images of war. There is also a suggestion of the Garden of Eden, with Eve tempting Adam with the hula, rather than an apple, since the women prevent Uncle Sam from seeing the coming war clearly.

This marks the end of the opening sequence, and the beginning of the released portion of the film. The tone and feel of the film changes radically and may mark the point where Ford and Parrish modified the film. Parrish reports that additional dialogue was written, and new scenes shot (*Hollywood* 16-17). Although scenes re-staging the attack were Toland's, Fordian themes and messages begin to dominate at this point. It is here also that the film also begins to resemble *Battle of Midway* in construction and coding. Ford helped to document the battle, and the resulting documentary was considered a landmark in battlefield documentation. Like *December 7th*, the film draws a good deal of its impact from Ford's use of cultural coding and icons. The similarities in

the two films are strong, even though *Battle of Midway* describes an American military victory and *December 7th* a spiritual one.

Signs and Coding in the Released Version

The released segment of the film incorporates specific captioning that reinforces association with religion, in particular, religious sacrifice. It parallels other American myths of the Western expansion using music and echoes images found in Western genre films. It builds a specific narrative that begins with innocence, and then shows the betrayal and loss of that innocence. A large portion of the film is given over to Last Stand images of men firing guns at airplanes, or at least responding to the attack by attempting to fight back. In accordance with the PCA, there is no American blood, mutilation or unseemly or grotesque death. After the attack and defense, despair and sorrow change to resolution and the gathering of people and machinery to annihilate an inhuman foe. In the shock of loss, differences are set aside, religious faith is reaffirmed and new nobility is achieved.

The segment opens with a single bell tolling while various views of landmarks of Hawai'i are shown... palm trees, Diamond Head, the Pali lookout on the Ko'olau Mountains. Although the announcer informs the viewer that it is the Sabbath, the bell is not a Sunday morning bell, but a funeral bell tolling. The narration is identical to the long version, as are most of the visuals, including a sleeping Uncle Sam, but a shot of a newspaper taken from the long version is inserted to show headlines of war talks. The narrator discusses the military's preparedness for sabotage, but not an attack from outside, an accurate description of events. Various scenes of military bases are shown, with armed guards on railcars and patrolling roads, suggesting that the military was not

derelict. Patrols are shown, advance scouts of the Western, rather than the main fighting unit. Images of both Pearl Harbor and Hickam are presented, with a shot of model planes at Hickam lined up wingtip-to-wingtip (Figure 3.2).



Figure 2.2 Toland's Flight Line

This formation, which allows a small force to defend against sabotage, was ordered by General Walter Short, the Army Commanding General, Hawaiian Department. Short also ordered the cockpits to be secured by steel wires, and all armament to be removed and stored under lock and key. The destruction of most of the planes on O'ahu is rightfully blamed on this formation, and securing the cockpits and munitions led to the failure of airplanes to launch in defense and faster response by anti-aircraft batteries (Prange, *Verdict of History* 362-363). This same anti-sabotage formation led to the loss of Douglas MacArthur's Pacific Army Air Forces in the Philippines (Weintraub 522-523).

Ford inserts shots of Japanese "spies" culled from the opening sequence of the long version. They watch the movement of Navy ships in Pearl Harbor while apparently going about their daily business (a rear-screen projection special effect). One man is

shown chopping with a huge, triangular sugar cane knife and one is fishing (Figure 3.3). Both shots were probably inserted to suggest diplomatically that the military preparations against sabotage were necessary, but not extensive enough to prevent the attack. They also reinforce the idea of espionage by Japanese-Americans, and the script's repeated emphasis on "sneak attack" and "treachery." They visually reinforce the idea of the Snake in the Garden, both by showing a trusting Navy allowing them close to their ships, and in stressing their alienness in fishing and working on the Sabbath. This scene is echoed in *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and the old version of the USS *Arizona* Memorial's orientation film, both of which show Japanese workers harvesting pineapples. The workers do not look up as Japanese planes roar overhead, suggesting inhuman indifference or foreknowledge of the attack.

The film shows airplane mechanics working (for duty, not personal gain) and then cuts to a scene on a dock of young sailors tossing a baseball, playing at the national sport (Figure 3.4). This image reinforces the impression of youth and innocence of the sailors who will soon be under attack and dying, and suggests to civilians a wholesome military lifestyle. The bell tolling under the scene stresses the transient nature of the peacefulness of the morning, and presages the deaths of the sailors and soldiers.

In the 2001 *Pearl Harbor*, the attack is prefaced again by baseball, this time played by young boys, rather than young men. The message is precisely the same, innocent youth engaged in wholesome activity that promotes cooperation and team building, whose lives are about to be shattered by treachery.

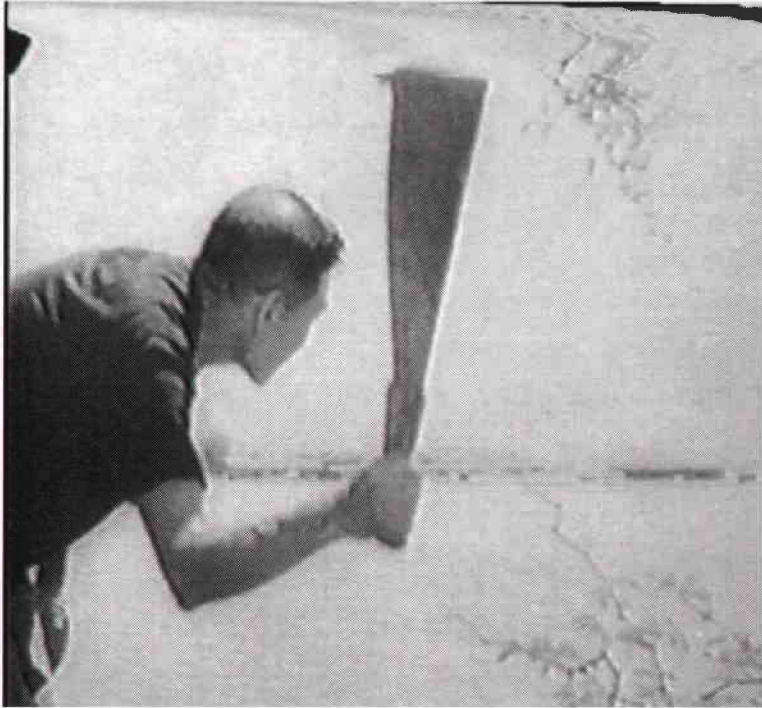


Figure 2.3 Implied Spies

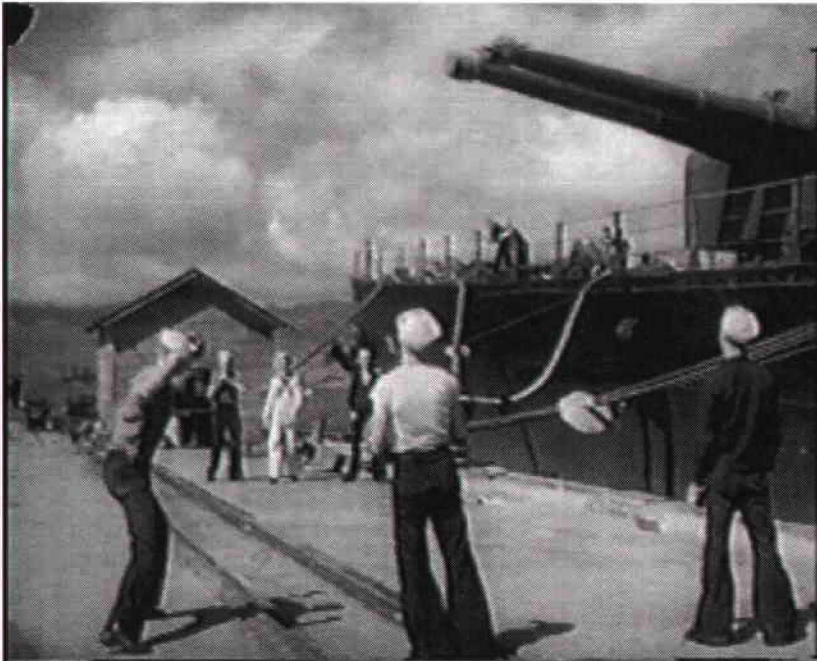


Figure 2.4 Baseball and Innocence

The bell's tolling fades and the Christmas carol "O Come, All Ye Faithful" is heard. The scene shifts to what the narrator tells us is "Kaneohe Naval Air Station, where a field mass is taking place." A Roman Catholic priest stands before an altar set up in a tent on the beach (Figure 3.5). An American flag flies next to the tent, a pennant carrying a Protestant cross flying above it. Positioning the priest in front of the altar, contrary to Roman Catholic ritual of the 1940s, offers specific messages. Lee Lourdeaux, in describing the 1949 film *One God – The Ways We Worship*, points out the elitist symbolism of the Catholic use of the communion rail, and how it psychologically and physically separates the priest from the laity (20). Here, the lack of even the altar as barrier suggests the generic ecumenicalism that Doherty sees in World War II movies (*Projections* 140). The use of a priest, rather than a minister is consistent with his observation that, "being in tighter with the ecclesiastical Production Code, Roman Catholics were granted special dispensation" (140) and how they appear more frequently in World War II films. It is also consistent with Ford's expressions of his Catholic faith and portrayal of Catholic values in his film

The priest is in early middle age, with white thinning hair, a father figure for the young sailors and Marines. The camera stares up at him from a low angle, as his embroidered vestments billow in the tropic breezes. Palm trees sway over his uniformed congregation, who are dressed mostly in white. This same priest figure and vestments will appear in Disney's *Pearl Harbor* twice, once at the end of the attack sequence, and again at the pre-funeral viewing. In *Apocalypse Now*, a very similar figure in similar green vestments performs a field mass during an attack on a village by the American Air Cavalry, an ironic commentary on the ties between war and religion in American culture.



Figure 2.5 Mass in the Wilderness

Ford has chosen an exterior setting deliberately. As in *Stagecoach*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Drums Along the Mohawk* and *Wee Willie Winkie*, Ford places his characters in an exotic locale, unprotected by walls or built environment. The palm trees that loom overhead are exotic and alien to American audiences as they loom over small human figures. In 1943, they also suggest images of Pacific Islands where Americans were fighting and dying. The tent adds to the sense of the frontier, and of civilization in an alien place. These are not settled residents, but travelers, the group thrust into the wilderness of countless Westerns. The use of a tent as a religious sanctuary heightens the sense of vulnerability of the assembled men, as they stand exposed on a lonely beach. This suggestion of alienness and vulnerability is heightened by the presence of a row of armed guards, weapons at the ready, who appear to be guarding the priest. They face inward and do not patrol the area for signs of approaching enemies, but their presence signals danger, without indicating where the danger might come from.

They also add weight and authority to the officiating priest. His white cassock, draped with an elaborately embroidered vestments, make him a religious figure, instead of a combat branch military officer or athletic coach. His posture and speech patterns add to this impression, as he lectures the 'boys' on their responsibilities to the folks back home, suggesting they send exotic Christmas gifts, "perhaps a pikake lei for Mom, and ...maybe a hula skirt for little sister." He then urges them to write a letter, no matter what else they do. "But most of all the folks would like a letter from little Johnny, way out here in Hawai'i."

The suggestion of letters home would have relevance for World War II audiences. After the attack, it sometimes took months for mail to arrive from Hawai'i and for many families, the last communication from relatives lost in the attack were letters mailed just before. During the war, it was not uncommon to receive letters from servicemen after their deaths had been reported. These missives from the dead were widely publicized, and Ford's audience would have easily made the connection between the request that they write home and those last letters.

The camera pans past a few young, earnest faces, almost too young to be in the Navy. The priest's fatherly message is obviously striking home to these youngsters in a foreign land, and their faces register concern and longing. The camera lingers on one young face. His ethnicity is not easily determined, since he has dark curly hair, and olive skin. He might even be Jewish. The ambiguity of his ethnic origins makes him the composite for all the various ethnic groups. His face will be seen again, as the only unequivocally dead American in the film (Figure 3.6).



Figure 2.6 Ford's American Boy

This sequence, though much more elaborate, is similar to the opening of *Battle of Midway*. Here too, an Idyllic Paradise is shown, with gooney birds we are told, “Tojo has sworn to liberate” and Technicolor sunsets. With its vast skies and desolate sandscape, *Midway* has the feel of Ford’s later cavalry trilogy and what Doherty calls “gorgeous Technicolor shots of vigilant sailors standing sentinel before a pacific sunset” as *Red River Valley* plays (253). As Sinclair noted, the scene and mood recalls *Drums Along the Mohawk*’s sentinels manning the ramparts of their colonial fort.

In *December 7th*, however, there are no sentinels to warn of impending attack. The brief opportunities to detect the approaching enemy are lost. It shows the unheeded last warning in a scene showing a radar operator detecting the incoming planes, but being ignored by an “inexperienced Lieutenant.” In this scene, the staged radar operator’s equipment is blacked out and overwritten with “censored” (Figure 3.7).



Figure 2.7 Unread Messages –A Censored Re-Staging

The film shows the attacking force heading towards the unsuspecting bases, flying over mountain passes and then over Waikiki beach. The use of mountains as a passage for the attacking planes is reminiscent of the Western film as well. The cliché of the attack from the hills is just that, and the threatening and alien hills of monument Valley are replaced by the stark green Wai‘anae and Ko‘olau mountains. In every representation of the attack, mountains figure prominently, suggesting the link between the savage Indian and the equally savage Japanese.

The Attack

The attack sequence itself has two distinct parts, the first and second waves of the attack. John Ford and Gregg Toland’s vision is one of fire and smoke, with the first wave characterized by bugle calls of “General Quarters” and running men. Toland shot many of the scenes by filming people acting in front of a rear screen projection. He then added smoke blown in front of the actors, creating a three-layer image of smoke, actor, backdrop (Figure 3.8). Flashes of fire from gun barrels were added in post-production, as

was sound. Special effects are also used to overlay shots of flights of planes swooping over Hawaiian landmarks, intercut with generic shots of airplanes that resemble Japanese fighters and torpedo bombers.



Figure 2.8 Layering Images – Rear screen, Models, Smoke

Even with images of destruction, emphasis is on Americans returning fire, emblematic of the Last Stand. This sense of active defense is not fictive, as guns from some of the smaller vessels, including the destroyer *Blue* and the repair ship *Vestal* began returning fire 10 minutes after the attack began. Sailors and Marines of varied ranks are seen firing machine guns and Army personnel are shown firing from sandbagged bunkers. Marines and sailors are seen falling to the ground, presumably dead. Many of these scenes reference specific incidents familiar to students of the attack, and of course to the original audience.

The most consistent and persistent of these references is to the iconic MessMate Doris Miller, who manned a machine gun alongside the Captain's Aide, which led to him becoming the first Black to receive the Navy Cross. In *December 7th*, he is represented by

an African-American man lying on the deck firing a machine gun (Figure 3.9). The gun appears to jam, and he falls to the deck, apparently wounded or dead. The inclusion of Miller is consistent with the Navy's use of him as a symbol of American racial unity during war. Legend suggests that he actually shot down Japanese planes, but this was not mentioned in the citation to accompany the award of the Navy Cross, and was probably attached to the story to enhance Miller's stature.

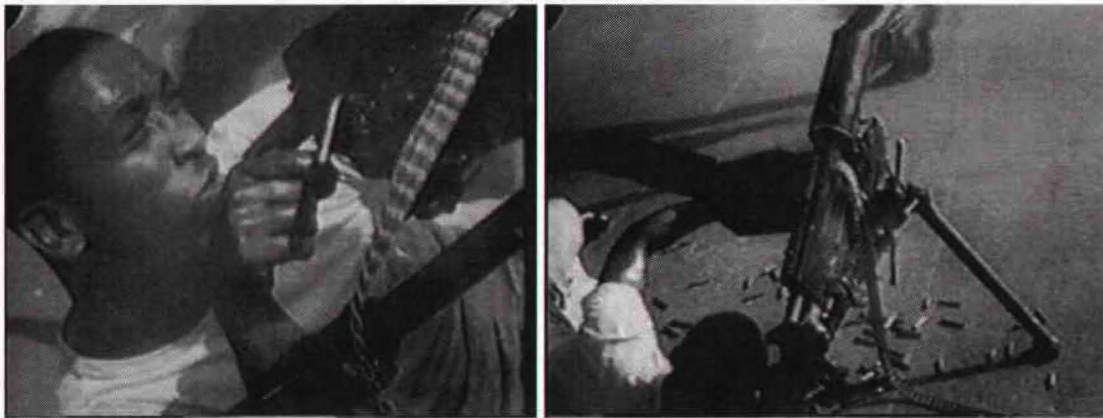


Figure 2.9 *December 7th's Doris Miller*

A series of vignettes reminds audiences of stories they already know, including the attempt of the USS Nevada to sortie for the open sea, destruction of the airfield on Ford Island, and the strafing of planes at Wheeler Field. With the ending of the first wave of the attack, the film breaks away to scenes of civilian damage. Fire burns a house, while people salvage possessions from damaged homes. These shots were probably taken after the attack ended, judging from an armed guard supervising salvage efforts. The script suggests that the damage was caused by attacking Japanese, but it was later found to have been the result of American anti-aircraft efforts (Goldstein & Dillon 172).

Ford retained a probable Toland segment of an encounter between the Japanese consulate and a reporter. The reporter is rebuffed by his "Oriental inscrutability" and his refusal to answer questions when accused of having prior knowledge of the attack. He

points out that the consul's chimney is billowing smoke from papers being burned, and suggests that documents relating to the attack are being burned. This incident was drawn from a real life event, but the reporter in question was *Honolulu Star-Bulletin's* Larry Nakatsuka (Clarke 269-270) who went to interview the consul. The scene, probably familiar to audiences from other sources, reinforces the idea of an enemy without honor by suggesting, truthfully, that the Japanese consul was engaged in spying before the attack.

The second part of the attack sequence emphasizes American response and efforts to fight back. It begins with a shot of a hilltop structure that resembles a fortress, captioned "Now all our guns were smashing back." Because it is in silhouette, it is difficult to determine what or where the structure is. Shown twice, it suggests a lonely fort or a castle under siege, although there were no permanent military installations on hills on O'ahu. The suggestion of "A city on a hill" is possible, but tenuous and it is more likely to be meant to be reminiscent of a pioneer fort like the one in *Drums Along the Mohawk*. The shot does show up in later documentaries, demonstrating its effectiveness as a coded message.

To emphasize the ferocity of the defense, Ford inserted several shots of a battleship's anti-aircraft guns being fired, reinforcing the idea that ships "went down fighting." The battleship is obviously underway on the open ocean, and is perhaps footage gleaned from *Battle of Midway* (Figure 3.10). The footage is intercut with staged scenes of individual weapons firing at diving airplanes and shrouded by smoke.

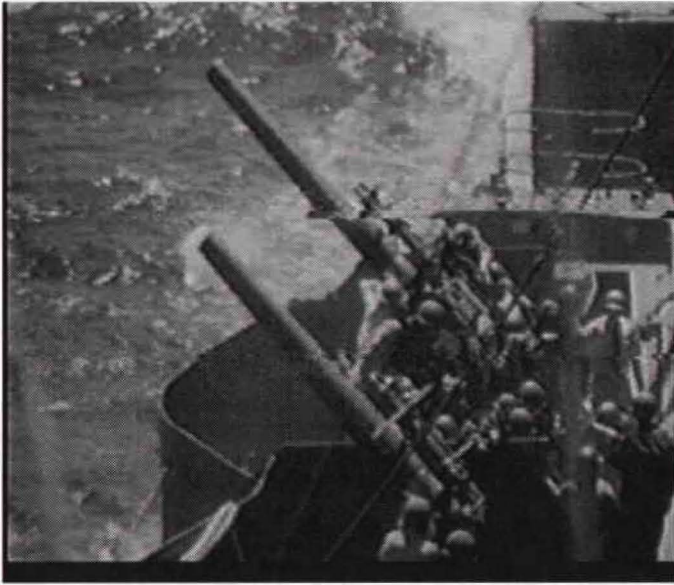


Figure 2.10 Last Stand –Stock Footage

What is missing from *December 7th*, but found in *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor*, is a sequence depicting air battles between American and Japanese fighters. Ford shows a pilot dying while attempting to climb into his plane, but does not show aerial combat. Toland's use of models produced stunning scenes for the attack on Wheeler Air Base, where Japanese planes fly over the camera, demonstrating that it was technically possible to produce a dogfight (Figure 3.11). The emphasis here, however, is on a battle against a faceless and inhuman enemy. Aerial combat, with its single combat and romantic associations to "knights of the air" built in World War I, strays too far from the message of the fight against a bestial alien horde. Facelessness of the enemy is subtly emphasized in *December 7th*, where only machines attack people, and the soundtrack limits itself to the insect-like roar of engines and rattle of machine guns.

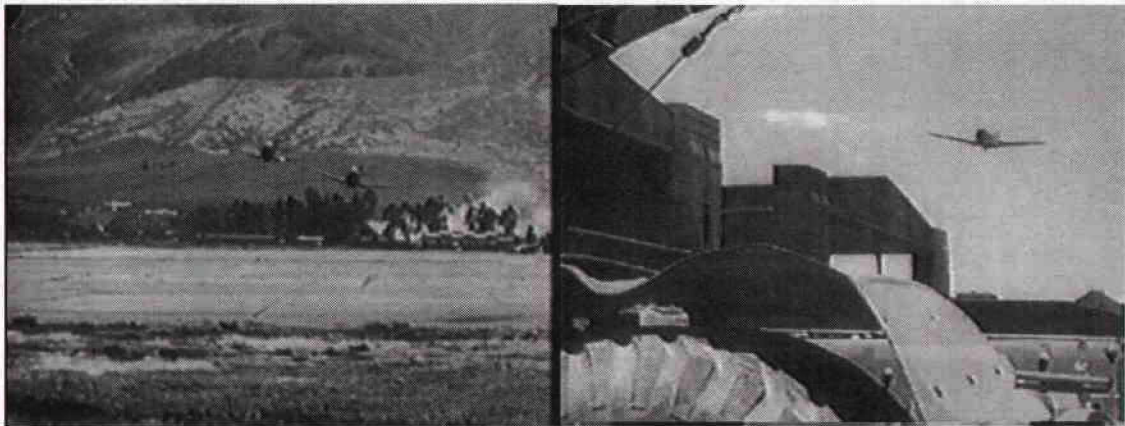


Figure 2.11 Toland's Iconic Zero Fighter

In the later films, the fighter pilot takes on a larger role, meriting a long dogfight sequence in *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and dominating the plot in *Pearl Harbor*. Emphasis on the fighter pilot, the only combatant who fights as an individual, is indicative of the cultural change of focus from 1943 to 2001. The preeminence of the individual warrior seen in *Pearl Harbor* reflects the late twentieth-century cultural bias towards an elitist romantic hero who stands outside the group norms and rules to fight, not as a team, but alone or with fellow elites. In contrast, in 1943's *Air Force*, the fighter pilot Tex Rader is scorned for his individuality, derisively called "Lone Eagle." Katherine Kane points out that even though we are told Tex performed heroically at Pearl Harbor, he is never shown as competent or skilled until he accepts group values and the idea of the supremacy of a team over an individual (36).

Instead of mediation and separation in support of group goals, heroic modeling appears to become a matter of unique temperament and skills rather than the result of voyages of discovery and communion with the wilderness and the savage. Instead of acting as a mediator between the Other and the group, the individualized fighter pilot places himself between the enemy and the group without attachment to either. His actions

reflect on himself, rather than affirming the group's goals or value. The hero's ability to master technology and exercise a set of personal skills allows him to ignore group mores and conformity in attitude, behavior and dress. The American pilots in *Tora! Tora! Tora!* are identifiable by their rolled up shirtsleeves, in contrast to the white formal uniforms of the other officers. Rafe in *Pearl Harbor* is a "natural pilot" whose inability to read (implied dyslexia, but also indicative of nature, not nurture) almost keeps him from finding his natural place as a fighter pilot. This is the archetype used to portray Luke Skywalker in *Star Wars*, another "natural pilot" whose homegrown skills save the galaxy from an insect-like enemy. This change in focus was one of the targets of protest for survivors of Pearl Harbor, who felt that emphasis on one character took the focus from the sacrifice of the casualties (Mike Gordon, "Reality, Fiction Clash in Script of Pearl Harbor" *Honolulu Advertiser* 11 April 2000. A2).

Recovery

The second wave sequence ends with Japanese planes being shot down and their departing over the mountains. The narrator declares that they were beaten off, rather than merely returning to their ship. With their departure, the music returns in an elegiac mood. Scenes of wrecked airplanes and a dead Japanese pilot are shown to emphasize the effectiveness of the American defense. It is stressed that only surprise allowed the success of the Japanese. Actual footage of damage control and fire suppression are shown while *Columbia, Gem of the Ocean* plays slowly. Staged footage of casualties being transported is cut with actual footage. The ethnically ambiguous young sailor of the Mass sequence is shown with a bloody cloth covering part of his face. An officer pulls a blanket marked "U.S. Navy" over his face, indicating his death (Figure 3.12).



Figure 2.12 American Dead

The body, on its stretcher, is carried over a mountain, escorted by an honor guard with bayoneted rifles (Figure 3.12). It is a measured, solemn procession against a Monument Valley sky, reassuring the audience of the dignified burial given to each dead American and ennobling their loss. A shot of a neatly groomed grave with lei tribute completes the funeral of the young sailor.

The betrayal and attack accomplished, the scene turns to the sacrificial victims. As the camera lingers on the grave, the narrator calls on the dead to speak for themselves. A number of casualties are identified, first by showing photographs of them in uniform, then with film footage of their families, striking homely or American Gothic poses (Figure 3.13). John Baxter notes that it is a plot device Ford used in a wide range of films, including the 1934 *Judge Priest*, which starred Will Rogers, 1939's *Young Mr. Lincoln*, where Abe dedicates himself to his destiny on the grave of Ann Rutledge, and the post-war *My Darling Clementine* and *She Wore A Yellow Ribbon*. It is also a device seen in *Battle of Midway*.



Figure 2.13 Ford's American Gothic

Although viewed as sentimental and contrived today, this sequence serves more than one function. First, it ties into OWI's policy of ethnic and regional inclusion. The men shown come from a variety of religious, regional and ethnic groups, inviting each of them to feel the betrayal of the attack personally and culturally. The careful introduction of each specific name and hometown was a common device used in newsreels to buoy interest and create a sense of personal involvement in the face of the vast impersonal machine of the war effort. The naming of a hometown was critical to journalist Ernie Pyle, who strove to make his subjects individuals to the readers thousands of miles away. In keeping with the greater goal of creating one out of many, the voice of the dead (Irving Pichel, who also narrated part of *Battle of Midway*) responds to the narrator's observation that, "you all sound the same" by proclaiming "Because we're *all* Americans!"

This identification of the individual soldier is also found in *Battle of Midway*, where Ford introduces his sailors and pilots as the "boys next door," but not as the innocent sacrifices of *December 7th*. He shows individual faces from specific hometowns, and connects them to their families and civilian lives. The voices of Jane Darwell and Henry Fonda (Ma and Tom Joad of *The Grapes of Wrath*) introduce pilots walking towards their B-17 bombers. Darwell exclaims, "That fellow's walk looks

familiar! My neighbor's boy used to amble along just like that! Say, is that one of them Flying Fortresses?" Fonda responds, "Yes, Ma'am. It sure is!" Darwell: "Why it's that young lieutenant! He's from my hometown, Springfield Ohio! He's not going to fly that big bomber?!" Fonda: "Yes Ma'am! That's his job! He's the skipper!" The film cuts to scenes of the lieutenant's family with comments from Fonda and Darwell. Later in *Battle of Midway* Darwell will agonize over the wounded, calling for "clean cots and cool sheets. Get them doctors and medicine and nurse's soft hands. Get them to the hospital! Hurry! Please!" Ford also inserted footage of President Roosevelt's son into *Battle of Midway*, ensuring a favorable reaction and wide release of the film.

The identification of individuals gave a face to the huge machine of war, but also helped to deglamorize and demystify the unfamiliar and arcane. The "boy next door" flying the bomber remains a recognizable part of the group, rather than a removed and separate foreign figure.

Along with building associations between the machinery of war and the civilian, the device also allows the introduction of female figures. For Ford, the inclusion of the grieving female has specific religious connotations that play a critical role in the Passion play structure of the attack. Here, he inserts her into the Passion narrative at the traditional point - after the betrayal and death, and before resurrection. The Mother symbolically comes to grieve at the site of her son's death.

She is the "Mater Dolorosa" the grieving mother whose intercession and mediation comforts, forgives and stands between the sinner and a wrathful god. As the soldier mediates between the civilian and the alien, the mother mediates between the sinner and redemption. Lee Lourdeaux, in his *Italian and Irish Filmmakers in America*,

sees Ford's most overt definition of the Marian figure in *The Informer* and in the post-war *The Fugitive* (1948), but this same figure, and her sister the repentant Mary Magdalene is seen in a wide range of Ford's films, including the 1928 *Mother Machree*, 1933 *Pilgrimage* and the 1937 *Wee Willie Winkie* (115). Jane Darwell's role in *Battle of Midway* is less maudlin when viewed as the mediating mother, innocent herself, but interceding to demand solace and comfort for the wounded.

The inclusion of women is also consistent with the coding identified by identified by Katherine Kane. Women represent not only the grieving mother, but also domesticity and the home front, what the martyrs have died to protect (18). Their presence at both of the subsequent funeral scenes marks a return to the domestic world, a world that has survived and that acknowledges the sacrifice. It displays the honor in sacrificial death, not only from one's fellow soldiers and sailors, but also from a grateful nation. The proper role of the civilian in the narrative is established – not as fellow soldier or martyr, but as a redeemed mourner.



Figure 2.14 Warrior Priests and Sorrowing Women

Two funeral services are shown, the first a ceremony with civilians in attendance. Some of them are members of the Roberts Commission, which visited the islands between 22 December and 9 January 1942 to investigate the attack and assign

responsibility (Wels *Pearl Harbor: December 7th* 171). A tenor sings “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” (second verse) in mournful tones. The funeral features a formal honor guard and civilians, particularly women, placing leis on and around the graves. The camera focuses on a wreath from “The Gold Star Mothers,” reinforcing the idea of the domestic rather than the sexual female.

The scene changes to another funeral, this one military and held on the beach of the opening mass sequence. Footage of the ceremony is intercut with reaction and spectator shots. Two ministers of unidentified faith are shown officiating. The priest of the earlier beach Mass is now in the dress whites of a Naval Captain. The man of God is a warrior priest, his role now to lead men against an ungodly foe, rather than to offer comfort (Figure 3.14). Officers in dress whites are seen, with a woman standing with them emblematic of the domestic world’s grief. Tag Gallagher remarks that she is “struck with such fragile sorrow that, though it looks actual, one suspects Ford posed her in his patented way” (216) (Figure 3.14). Gallagher may be correct, for careful viewing of the sequence indicates that the ministers, priest and mourners never appear in the background of the ceremony, strongly suggesting that they were shot by Ford and inserted later.

Sailors place leis on individual, marked graves in the sand, again reassuring the home front that their loved ones are recognized and treated with respect and decency. The camera moves to a panoramic shot of the beach, the graves on the lower left guarded by a fragile wood cross thrust precariously into the sand dune. The wilderness again dominates and the bones of the martyrs lie on foreign soil. Taps is played, as the camera

passes under a row of exotic palm trees, reemphasizing the foreignness of the land the dead lie in.

In the sequences showing the removal of the injured and both funeral scenes, there is no sense of urgency or despair. Unlike the actual bloody chaos and mass graves survivors were forced to deal with, here all is clean and orderly, with proper ritual respect being paid to the dead. The injured are cared for quickly and competently (the wounded sailor who replaces the dead Doris Miller already has a clean bandage over a forehead cut.) No one is mutilated or burned, and the impression given is of complete, identifiable bodies carefully tended to. In contrast to the smoking wreckage of the ships and airfields, all is orderly and pristine.

Triumphalism

With the dead mourned and buried, the film changes tone. The grief is replaced by determination, with the first glimmerings of Triumphalism, as American know-how recovers from treachery. This segment, as it is in the newest iteration of the Memorial's orientation film, is the most important (White, "Moving '724).

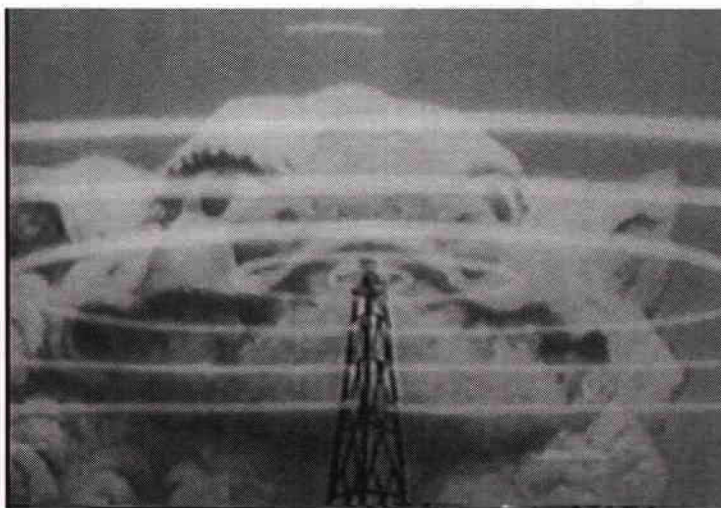


Figure 2.15 The Enemy as Beast

From the funeral solemnity and sorrowful humanity of loss, a cartoon Japan appears, with a giant radio tower beaming messages. Oddly, Morse code is heard on the soundtrack, even though it is voice radio. A strange, grinning lion-dog head looms in the background, representing Japan's animal nature. (The image was taken from location footage in Honolulu.) It is an odd caricature of a feminine face, with luxurious eyelashes and suggests a feminine Snake showing its fangs (Figure 3.15). A Japanese announcer proclaims Japan's triumph in Hollywood pidgin, listing the American ships lost and destroyed in the attack. The American narrator breaks in to refute the overwrought Mr. Tojo's "facts," calling them "by a rich Navy word - scuttlebutt." Scuttlebutt is a term for unsubstantiated rumors, but the "rich Navy word" that would have accurately expressed the narrator's meaning was one that would not be permitted by Code censors.

He then describes the damage to some of the major ships. The lost ships are dealt with first, the USS *Arizona* in particular. Extensive salvage work on repairable ships is shown, with anthropomorphic descriptions ("Who's that saucy gal? Can it be? Yes, it is! The *Oglala!*"). Unlike Japanese machines, which "resemble a horde of tiny locusts," American equipment is noble, with human characteristics. Instead of the insect whine of engines to caption their images, martial music plays.

Using this listing of damage, Ford provides a celebratory look at salvage operations at Pearl Harbor. The audience is told, and more importantly shown, the successes of post-attack recovery efforts at Pearl Harbor, including divers performing underwater welding and ships being re-floated. This sequence was important to the Navy, since it provided a way of documenting losses without dwelling on their extent, or on how they had earlier suppressed the information.

Immediately after the attack, the Navy had censored all reports from Hawai'i, and confiscated all film and still photos. Officially, Americans were only told of the loss of the battleship USS *Arizona*, three destroyers, the aged minelayer USS *Oglala* and the target ship USS *Utah*. The actual extent of the damage and losses were released slowly, over the next year. While accurate damage reports were kept out of American news, the Japanese and other foreign press accurately reported the loss of eight battleships, three cruisers, three destroyers and four auxiliary ships. American newspaper reporters were aware of these real numbers, but censorship prevented their publication. Reporters could only watch with mounting frustration while the Navy, still suppressing the actual number of ships damaged, issued press releases touting each damaged ship's return to service. This created enough resentment that a news article written months after the attack sarcastically began "Seven of the two ships sunk at Pearl Harbor have now rejoined the fleet" (Kennett 141).

Along with providing an account of the attack that stressed recovery over damage, the film stresses the recovery of the population, and their post-attack resolve and unity. The narrator scoffs at "Tojo's" suggestion of an effective blockade of Hawai'i, and scenes are shown, with barbed wire strung across Waikiki beaches, the Aloha Tower in camouflage paint, the *Lurline* passenger liner in prewar paint, then camouflage. "Censored" scenes of the Navy Shipyard and a road are shown, as well as bomb shelters and trenches being dug. Paradise has been corrupted and defiled by the attack, and the Garden of Eden aspects are suppressed for the duration. In keeping with the message of innocence corrupted, children are shown practicing hiding in the trenches and donning gas masks. Scenes of adults found in the long version were removed, accentuating the

sinless helplessness of the population. The narrator tells us “this is a people’s war...even little people.”

As part of the people’s war, and as evidence of the unity of the population, local Japanese are shown removing Japanese language signs and flags, replacing them with patriotic messages. Shinto shrines and Japanese schools are closed and boarded up. These images also appeared in the long version, with additional footage showing the Japanese in American uniforms and as loyal and patriotic, in contrast to the opening sequence, where they were shown as spies. This characterization is closer to reality than the stereotypes and polemic, but also veers sharply from the rest of the film.

However, it is logical if viewed as a demonstration of cultural and religious conversion. The desecration of Paradise by evil, and the intervention of the sacrifice of martyrs have had a transformative effect on the heathen alien, and he acknowledges American culture and Christianity as the appropriate model for life. The inferior religion of Shinto is banned, the alien language of Japanese is literally obliterated from public view, and a young man of military draft age replaces the “Banzai” Café with the American slang of “Keep ‘em Flying” Café. What we are shown is the mass conversion of an entire population. America has been purged of the evil of “hyphenated Americans” both in their conversion and in the declaration of hegemony by the dead (“We are *all* Americans”). The reaffirmation of American values and ideals has cost us another Paradise, but transformative effect of the blood sacrifice and the unity of the group promises a post-war Garden.

An additional affirmation of American values closes the film, as the bell tolls again. We are shown sunsets, shadowed houses and palm trees. The narrator decrees that:

“Our faith tells us that to all this treachery there can be but one answer - a time honored answer. ‘All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword.’” The use of a biblical quote reaffirms the American right to use unrestrained violence against the enemy and reinforces its religious mandate.

December 7th's authority lies in its ability to evoke America's emotional reaction to the attack on Pearl Harbor, rather than in its ability to show authentic film of the event. Emotionally, the images *are* authentic, particularly to those who lived through that time and place. The attack demands to be remembered not in the number of planes or even lives lost, but in terms of the relationship between the Nation and the Divine, between what we are and what we desire to be.

The genius of John Ford is in his ability to find the roots of those myths and narratives, and present them as part of the collective American spiritual past. He discards the rational and the logical in favor of his mystical and symbol drenched Irish Catholic world, and we find that “Irish communion, mediation and sacramentality turned out to be in the American grain after all” (Lourdeaux 121).

Tora! Tora! Tora! – Ritualization and Iconification

The 1970 film *Tora! Tora! Tora!* continues the structure and pattern of *December 7th*, though it gives different weight to the various episodic chunks identified by White. The emphasis is on examining the historical prelude to the attack, as a means of stressing how complacency and failure to unite betrayed the forces at Pearl Harbor. The recovery is not shown, though it is implied, particularly in the last scene of Admiral Yamamoto

contemplating the consequences of having “awakened a sleeping giant.” The entire film spells out the implications of complacency and self-absorption.

These underlying messages and signs are obscured by *Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s rigorous attention to historic fact and attempt to be an *ex post facto* eyewitness. Adhering closely to documented fact in published texts it strives to make its narrative authoritative by suppressing the emotional resonance of what it shows and says. However, it does not reject the betrayal/innocence/redemption model, but instead seems to seek to codify it through suppressing its emotional associations and mythic roots. By seemingly rejecting the heroic model for World War II American military, the film suggests objectivity and a lack of bias that it may not have. The stress in this film is on presenting a cautionary moral tale with implications for its Cold War era.

Because *Tora! Tora! Tora!* cannot claim *December 7th*'s historical roots, it replicates or synthesizes a variety of authoritative sources, including *December 7th*, to achieve its own authenticity. Its script, based on written texts, concentrates on recreating the details of the attack within a correct cultural context. It restages the imagery of the attack with slightly less accuracy, mixing the historical facts with the structure of Ford's film as well as referencing still photographs. By illustrating authoritative texts with images, it moves the page to the screen, the static image to the moving image, while at the same time attempting to move the moving image from the emotional to the analytical.

Janine Basinger, in *The World War II Combat Film*, suggests that in such detailed epic re-creations of historical events, including *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, *Midway* (1976) and *The Longest Day* (1962), “the true war has been removed, and in its place is its filmed replica” (188). Though *Tora! Tora! Tora!* appears to strive for the status of replica, it

retains White's structural underpinnings and the *December 7th* assumption of the betrayal/innocence/redemption narrative.

Walter Benjamin states that replicas do not have the aura of authenticity of the original, and should not be able to assume their ritual and cultic function. However, the growing acceptance of images as information, addressed by Postman and Shlain, and the common experience of icons stemming from film and television seems to permit filmed re-creations a certain authority as a means of relating history, particularly when the images repeat authoritative "eyewitnesses" such as *December 7th*.

Rather than losing aura as Benjamin suggests, this reproduction perhaps becomes a means of authenticating its icons and with them, their captioning. Particularly in replicas such as *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, the perception of adherence to historical fact may be seen as further authenticating the authority of the images it uses. If that is the case, Ford's codings may gain increased prestige and authority through their reuse in the film and their association with the authority of both the written texts and still photos. At the same time, in replicating or referencing authentic images, the film can assume a portion of their authority.

History and Structure

Darryl Zanuck took out full-page advertisements in the *New York Times* and *The Washington Post* to defend the movie from its critics. In those ads, he wrote that the script was "...officially approved by the American Department of Defense as well as the Japanese Department of Defense. It is an authentic film." He concludes the ads by writing "This is not merely a movie but an accurate and dramatic slice of history..." (NYT 16 June 1969 10)

In making that statement, Zanuck defines his expectations for the film: that it will act as an authoritative surrogate eyewitness for later generations; that it will be an officially approved narrative of the event from both the American and Japanese perspectives; that it establishes the attack's place in American psyche and that the images it offers will provide icons for recalling the attack.

Tora! Tora! Tora! establishes its claim to authority through adherence to documented fact and historical context. Unlike its sister films, *December 7th* and *Pearl Harbor*, which are crafted to evoke an emotional and mythically connected response to the attack, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* rejects emotion and moves to the opposite end of the spectrum. It seems to attempt to assume Trachtenberg's authority of the image not through mythic and emotional connections, but through "a meticulous re-creation of the attack" which is presumed authentic because of its attention to historic accuracy. Historian and technical advisor Dr. Gordon Prange's groundbreaking 1981 *At Dawn We Slept*, considered a basic reference for studying the attack, can be followed like a script for both the American and Japanese pre-attack sequences. With new technology, it might be possible to annotate the film before the attack sequence with page references from the book.

But at the time the film was made, the extensive body of scholarly work on the subject had not been written. In 1968 – 1969, when the film was being produced, Prange's *Tora! Tora! Tora!* had been newly published in Japan, and scriptwriters for the film drew on it and Ladislav Farago's *The Broken Seal* (1967) for *Tora! Tora! Tora!*. The voluminous Joint Congressional Committee (39 volumes) and the 1942 Robert's Commission's report *Asleep!* were available and used as a main reference for study of the

attack, but distillation and analysis of this information into the intensely researched and documented works of Prange, Weintraub and others would wait until the 1980s.

Other available works included Blake Clark's colorful account, *Remember Pearl Harbor*, which had been published almost before the newsreel footage appeared in February 1942, Stanley Porteus's *Blow Not the Trumpet*, which was published in 1947 and Gwenfread Allen's 1949 *Hawaii's War Years 1941-1945*. Another important work was Walter Lord's 1957 *Day of Infamy*, which gathered personal recollections into a best-selling narrative that captured the emotional impact of the attack on ordinary people. Numerous other personal accounts and stories appeared in radio programs, magazines and newspapers. Various conspiracy theories were formed and published shortly after the attack, with blame being placed on President Roosevelt or the Communist Party.

These theories rest on variations of a supposition that the United States government or President Roosevelt had warning of the attack, and kept the knowledge from Hawai'i commanders Admiral Kimmel and General Short. The resulting attack was then to be an excuse for President Roosevelt to enter the war over the objections of the isolationists. In the 1950s, the theories expanded to include the Communists as co-conspirators. During the war, Dan Gilbert of the World's Christian Fundamentals Association revealed a Japanese plot to incapacitate O'ahu's defenders with alcohol, and called for a wartime reinstatement of prohibition in the 1942 pamphlet *What Really Happened at Pearl Harbor*.

The film stresses that President Roosevelt did not have prior knowledge of the attack, in keeping with Gordon Prange's beliefs, which he expressed in a December 1961 *U.S. News and World Report* interview (58-59). Prange believed that bureaucratic

complacency and self-interest, along with Japanese planning and strategy were the root causes of the attack. The film narrative of betrayal and sacrifice are not part of Prange's texts.

As the film segues to the attack sequence, Prange's source material seems to be replaced by the stories of Walter Lord's *Day of Infamy*. This shift from a more scholarly work to an emotional one is also marked by a de-emphasis on timeline, identification of location and an abandonment of strict adherence to documented fact, moving towards the dramatic scenarios of *December 7th*. Footnoting of incidents becomes less absolute, and the intent appears to become to remind viewers of known incident or story, rather than plot a series of actions. Because Lord's book relies on personal narrative and the human side of the attack, this changes the underlying focus and captioning of the film, resulting in a more mythic, emotional narrative tone. However, the shift from the historical to the personal is generally not noted in analysis of the film.

Tom Doherty points out in *Projections of War* that World War II audiences understood the cultural signals of newsreels and the signals that they shifted from fact to Hollywood (255-256). When shifting from Prange to Lord, and adding the codings of *December 7th*, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* fails to separate the mythic from the historic, and instead moves unannounced from the academic to the iconic. In doing so, it tends to confirm their emotional and mythic associations as facts by de-linking them from Hollywood origins and placing them in an "authentic" representation. Their appearance in the authentic artifact *December 7th* and in a work of academic credence helps establish their iconic status and confirms the earlier film as authoritative narrative.

Along with relying on available written sources, the film's producers seem to have attempted to enhance the authority of the film by using actors familiar to World War II audiences. The American cast starred James Whitmore as Admiral Halsey, Martin Balsam as Admiral Kimmel, Jason Robards as General Short and E.G. Marshall as Lt. Col. Bratton, the man in charge of decoding Japanese messages. Familiar to audiences, particularly older audiences, they bring an air of authenticity to the images that unknown actors could not offer.

Jeanine Basinger, in her *Combat Films of World War II*, suggests that because actors appeared in several films of the same genre, their appearance may give the sense that they have been progressing through a parallel reality – from the young combat forces of the war to the elder, high-ranking brass. This continued use of the same characters gives historic figures familiarity as well as resonance and weight, as the knowledge of the actors and the roles they have played gives the audience a means to invest subsequent characters the characteristics of that star's persona (191).

To enhance its realism, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* also responds to the cultural construct of World War II, remaining within images and omissions familiar to World War II audiences. Even in its attempts to add culturally relevant ideas of 1970, it remains subject to the gate keeping of the validating eyewitness and their memories. Most importantly, the film assumes the Ford and World War II perspective that a betrayal occurred, resulting in the success of the attack. This fundamental assumption is the foundation for conspiracy theories that fall into a "revisionist" category and stand outside accepted narratives and analysis. The insistence on betrayal speaks more to the emotional and

mythical and religious constructs of *December 7th* than the “meticulous recreation” the promotional blurbs for the film proclaimed.

In agreement with World War II films, American death, mutilation and sex remain unseen, though American military and its officers lose the infallibility they had in newsreels. The absence of blood and senseless death, a hallmark of World War II genre movies almost until *Saving Private Ryan* in 2000, appears to be peculiar to the World War II re-creation, and does not extend to films in other genres. *Bonnie and Clyde*, with its graphic bloodshed, appeared in 1967. The presence of graphic death in its sister genre the Western (*The Wild Bunch* (1969)) and in the fantasy World War II film (*The Dirty Dozen* (1967)) also suggests that the this continued influence of the Production Code and military censorship on World War II movies is a function of a reach for authenticity, rather than conforming to societal norms.

In trying to respond to the cultural and political context of 1970 while remaining recognizable to the World War II context, the film downplays the Triumphalist expressions of *December 7th* and *Pearl Harbor*. The Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis and the power of mutually assured destruction wielded by uniformed and faceless technocrats had not ended the need for ground forces promised by the atomic bomb and the United Nations. Instead, the prosecution of two wars, Korea and Vietnam, without the stimulus of Triumphalism, and the increased visibility and acceptance of social ambiguities could be seen as weaknesses that hostile foreign interests would exploit to create another Pearl Harbor debacle. *Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s referencing of the censored images of World war II opened the film to criticism of being both nostalgic and anachronistic, charges Zanuck argues against in his full-page advertisement. It reflects

the influence of the 1950s “red scares,” the McCarthy witch-hunts and the blacklisting of suspected Communists. The change in social perspectives created by the Civil Rights movement and the counter-culture also devalued the World War II ideal of a united populace.

Instead, it seems to seek to accommodate post-war perspectives and the late 1960s sense of suspicion of government by moving the role of betrayer from the savage, alien Other to the self-centered complacent individual. The pre-attack absence of group ethos and the failure to sacrifice for the common good are held up to the next generation as tragic flaws. This allows the film to acknowledge and reference the World War II sentiments expressed in countless posters and films – that the individualistic impulse of the black marketer and the ration cheater endangered the survival of the group.

It places the responsibility for the attack on a pre-war failure of sacrifice by Americans that allowed the attack to happen, a result of American complacency and self-indulgence. Zanuck’s ad warns “...after the blow at Pearl Harbor, overnight we became a nation ready and willing to retaliate; but because of the lack of mental and physical preparation, it was more than two years before we avenged Pearl Harbor.” The blame is shifted on the American side rather than the Japanese. The alien Other exists, but it has become more ambiguous, its malevolence tempered and opportunistic rather than irrevocably alien. While still deadly, it requires a betrayal from within the group to succeed.

The American sequence is burdened with an awareness of the attack’s moral and social lessons. The film endorses the World War II context of primacy of the group and sacrifice, and to illustrate the failings of individualism and complacency, Americans are

portrayed in distinctly unheroic ways. Self-absorbed, but not introspective and unwilling to sacrifice for a greater goal, these are not the admirable “boys next door” of *Battle of Midway*, war shorts and newsreels. Instead, their self-interest and a lack of community will be the characteristics that betray their country to a more cohesive enemy.

Narrative and Coding

This change in focus to internal betrayal was reflected in Hollywood films, perhaps most apparently in the Western. As Michael Coyne notes in *The Crowded Prairie*, after World War II, the Western film genre had moved from themes of the winning of the West by settlers new to the land to the holding of territory already claimed and civilized. He points out that in films like *My Darling Clementine* and *From Here to Eternity*, the focus of betrayal comes from inside the group, rather than an alien opposition.

Coyne’s observation suggests that with this change in focus from winning against an alien outsider to securing society from an internal enemy, the importance of the savage Other as enemy would be subdued. Instead of the group against the savage, civilization becomes the enemy, as it creates stagnation and decadence and the community loses its personal connection to the land and to each other. Conflict becomes centered on how Law is applied within society, and by whom. The Civilized East replaces Europe as the font of corruption, and the source of oppression and power – an effete, urban environment where the people were separated from the land, but also where the Laws were made. The Eastern banker, the slick card sharp and the carpetbagger were all products of the Eastern cities, as were the bureaucratic betrayers of *Tora! Tora! Tora!*. They are placed in the sophistication of Washington D.C., half a world from the Western

fortress outpost of Hawai'i. This continues the Fordian themes of the need for sacrifice to the group and the importance of communion with the land.

The construct of internal betrayal may also be attractive in retelling the events of the Pearl Harbor attack because it transfers credit for its success from the Japanese and bestows it on Americans. This can maintain notions of racial and cultural superiority by suggesting that the attack was not successful due to tactical brilliance and training, but because of betrayal by fellow Americans, whose over-civilization and education cut them off from Nature and God. It places the role of actor strictly on Americans, leaving the faceless "enemy" as a responder to, or tool of, American activity. This is the relationship is the core of the revisionist/conspiracy narratives, which presume an American involvement is needed to explain the attack's success.

In assuming that the attack was the result of a betrayal, and to establish a reason for American blame, Elmo Williams, in an interview for History Channel's 2000 documentary, *Tora! Tora! Tora!: A Giant Awakes*, stated that he had "wanted the Americans to seem sloppy and complacent." His intent was to render an accurate accounting, without favoring either side. However, when this presumed scholarly detachment was paired with an emphasis on accuracy in costuming and set, the attempt at portraying sloppiness appears to be seen as self-absorption. In its depiction of prelude to the attack, American officers are portrayed as unpleasant and uninvolved in the events their actions bring about.

They are always seen by the audience as part of set pieces, locked into rooms painted in government drab or pastels. The color palette of the American sequence tends to the monochromatic, brightened only by the white uniforms of the Navy. There are few

other colors or ornamentation. Nature and the outdoors are seen through windows – office windows, plane windows, the bridges of ships - but the prominent players are cut off from the world around them. In almost claustrophobic enclosure, they pace and speak historically accurate lines, ignoring the events beyond their walls. Even during the attack sequence, they remain locked in their rooms, separated from the destruction and death outside.

Instead, they calmly go about their business, intent on their paperwork, rather than the chaos outside their door. Only the misfit officers are seen as worthy, the rolled sleeves and loosened ties of the fighter pilots that take to the air during the attack, and an overweight, desk-bound officer (Neville Brand), the antithesis of the bandbox tailoring and trim physiques of more successful and powerful officers. His is the only officer's voice that is allowed to be raised, and then only as the American fleet burns behind him. In his association with the betrayers, he, too, is confined behind walls, and does not become part of the sacrifice (Figure 3.16). Only Lt. Col. Bratton, (E.G. Marshall) comes close to the model of the Hollywood World War II officer, and is one of the more sympathetic characters as he fights the complacency of his associates to warn of the impending attack.



Figure 2.16 Separation from the Sacrifice

These complacent and self-absorbed officers reject the communal, sacrificial model of the war, setting themselves apart from the accepted model and the sacrificial dead. The divide between them is both physical and moral, and the identification with community and connectivity to each other that may have prevented the disaster is missing. The quality of self-sacrifice to the group of World War II is not evident, lowering their prestige and status. Although the war is just beginning, they are the types that will be the targets of the scolding posters of the OWI and manufacturers. Even though their redemption may be possible in the coming war, their flaws deny them membership in the sacrificial band of brothers that achieve martyrdom during the attack. Their place in the story is as the collective Judas whose betrayal allows martyrdom.

Authority of Emotion

Even during the attack sequence, where emotion is an arguably appropriate response, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* equates its muting to historical accuracy and detachment. This emphasis on a balanced and dispassionate re-creation of the attack obscures the film's efforts to establish emotional authority through depictions of internal betrayal and

visual references to the personal accounts of Lord's *Day of Infamy*. The lack of emotional connection and group cohesiveness is the basis for much of the criticism of the film, which was most successful in Japan. Larry Suid, in *Guts & Glory: Great American War Movies* calls it an "impotent drama" and complains that "...people and their actions are secondary to the event... "toys" that the director moves around for the camera." (284) *New York Times* film critic Vincent Canby, in his *New York Times* review Tora-ble, Tora-ble, Tora-ble also complains of the lack of emotional engagement with the characters, and suggests that any historic film that "...purports to tell nothing but the truth, winds up as castrated fiction" (*NYT* Oct 4, 1970, Sec II p 1).

The demand for emotion in connection with the attack suggests that emotional authority is as important to the attack's historic re-creation as technical and factual accuracy. In rejecting overt emotion in favor of evenhanded observation, the film aligns itself with written texts, but loses its appeal to popular culture. The heroic and inspirational events drawn from Lord's book and in Blake Clark's *Triumphalist Remember Pearl Harbor!* are shown in brief flashes, read only by the most knowledgeable of viewers. Unlike *December 7th*, whose viewers were able to recognize and decode the referential icons of the attack, and feel the appropriate emotional response, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* assumes an insider's knowledge that is easier to appreciate now, when a large number of books detailing the attack are available.

The lack of emotional connection with the film may reflect a desire on the part of the filmmakers to align the viewer with the detached American bureaucrat, in accordance with Zanuck's vision of the film as a warning against American complacency and self-absorption. The great flaw that leads to betrayal of America is a lack of connection with

others, and a failure to become part of a larger group. In denying the viewer that connection, except with the enemy Japanese, the film assigns the audience a complicity in the betrayal.

The only emotional engagement in the film is in the attack sequence, where it is subdued and derivative. In addition to references to Lord's accounts, the film gains its emotional authority by echoing icons of Ford's *December 7th*, and showing a Last Stand defense juxtaposed with the insular bureaucrats who have caused the disaster. The film does not stress the righteous anger of *December 7th*, but the messages and memory of its images and emotional coding are present, including the Irish Catholic communal ethos and the need to be connected to Nature. The enemy still attacks from the looming wilderness of mountains, flying past a lonely Christian cross to reach the unsuspecting American forces. Stoic Japanese plantation workers still watch them, indifferent to, and possibly complicit in, their threat.

In the placement of the bureaucracy as the agents of betrayal to the Japanese, the film reinforces Ford's vision of the Irish Catholic communal group ethos by showing the lack of those qualities as the fatal flaws that allow the attack. Here it has been replaced with a Protestant individualism, and the loneliness and lack of belonging that can entail. Even within the sub-group of the military, there is no sense of brotherhood or interest in serving a larger goal. Secretary of the Navy Knox resists picking up a telephone to call Admiral Kimmel. He dismisses his staff so that he can use the telephone in private to talk to the President. The communications officer balks at hurrying to send General Marshall's warning to Admiral Kimmel, claiming an inability to read the Chief of Staff's handwriting, and failing to mark the message "Urgent." When informed of the

attack, Secretary of War Stimson only then specifies “the direct line” to speak to the President, suggesting a commonplace distancing even at the highest levels.

Mutual distrust and alienation is a common theme for the American bureaucracy. In a scene defining relations between the War Department and the White House, Lt. Col. Bratton and co-worker Navy Lt. Commander Kramer discuss the military’s distrust of the President. In a subtle bit of byplay, Lt. Commander Kramer asks if Bratton trusts his own wife. Bratton replies in the affirmative, and asks the Kramer if *he* does. Kramer replies “yes” but as a female staff member brings in a paper, his eyes follow her out of the room in obvious speculation. The wife is trustworthy, but the Lt. Commander may not be. She is seen later in the film, acting as a chauffeur to Kramer as he attempts to pass along vital information to his superiors. Her attempts to connect to her husband as a human being are repeatedly cut off abruptly. In a maternal role, she brings him food and drink and tries to comfort him. He accepts the food, but rejects the Marian healing she offers. He continually cuts her off, finally telling her to “shut up and drive.” Even though he is one of the less culpable of the Washington bureaucrats, the corrupting influence of the East and lack of connection with Nature makes him a flawed character.

In all three films, including the 2001 *Pearl Harbor*, women are relegated to the domestic role described by Kathryn Kane. In *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, outside of Lt. Commander Kramer’s wife, and a female translator, American women are not part of the Washington D.C. narrative. Only in a short scene set at an Officer’s Club on O’ahu, we are shown the American officers’ women. Even here, the women are more mother than sexual, older and matronly, and all wearing modest dresses with low-heeled shoes. There is little about them to suggest sex or even that they are in a tropical location. The exotic

Miss Kim of *December 7th*'s long version is never even suggested. Although it is a Saturday night dance for older adults, there is little joy and human interaction.

A young officer, Lt. Tyler, sits at the bar with the only nubile woman in the room. She seems interested in him, but another officer arrives to tell him he must report to work at 4 am, effectively cutting him off from her sexually. She finds this amusing, as does a fighter pilot seated on her other side. Because Lt. Tyler is later responsible for ignoring the radar operator's detection of the Japanese attack force and losing the last chance to alert defenders, this loss of a sexual partner can be seen as a beforehand punishment for his later inattention. It is also indicative of a devaluing of the military and a lack of reward for work.

By contrast, Japanese women are seen as striving for the attention of the pilots as they practice their bombing runs (with far better success than a counterpoint American scene.) Women in colorful kimono lean from the second floor of a wood building, wave scarves, giggle and call out greetings as the men demonstrate their prowess with powerful machines. Unlike Americans, the Japanese women are sexually available, as well as supportive and nurturing.

In its staging of the American sequence within enclosures and small rooms, the film also emphasizes the loss of contact with Nature and community that compounds the self-absorption and neglect of the community that leads to Japanese success. This loss of contact is one of the most striking visual elements of the film, as seen in the constrained environment in which Americans operate. They are cut off from each other, from the mediation and cleansing properties of the Marian intercession of Nature, and at the same time, fearful of attempting to master technology. The Americans are not comfortable

either with the Garden or with the Machine. In one of the few scenes where American officers are seen outdoors, Commander of Army Forces General Walter Short rails against the “Wildlife Preservation Society” and the Department of the Interior, who refuse to allow him to place his radar, which he refers to as a “thing,” in the “Hawaiian National Forest.” He briskly orders his Aide to “make a note of that.”

When the radar is finally in place, its operators know “the theory” of its working, but have no idea what their mission is. They are abandoned on their remote mountaintop without contact and told to travel to a possible phone at a civilian gas station. A field phone to their isolated radar position is only belatedly installed, and the office they reach with it is indifferent to their discovery of the approaching Japanese attack force. During the attack, the arrival of a flight of B-17s centers on an aircraft whose landing gear is damaged by Japanese guns. Efforts to lower the gear manually fail, and the plane is forced to land on one main wheel. This failure to embrace technology is a flaw that is exploited by the Japanese. Only the borderline character of Lt. Col. Bratton is comfortable with technology. The “Magic” decoder he is in charge of gives warning of the impending attack is under his care. He is one of the few that understand its workings, and believes in its messages. Even so, he has difficulty getting his peers and superiors to listen to the warnings it gives. They do not have the same faith he does. The insularity and lack of community of the American bureaucracy keeps the viewer from emotional attachment to them of their point of view. They have become more of the alien Other than the enemy, their indifference to each other engendering an indifference to their fate.

The collective complacency and self-absorption that allows betrayal is not limited to the officer corps. Zanuck’s intends the film as a warning, accusing the audience of the

same flaws as the betraying bureaucrats. This collective guilt is made explicit in one scene during the attack sequence. The USS *Arizona* has been sunk; the fleet is burning and the USS *Nevada's* run for open sea as been halted. Until this point, the audience has been a spectator, as removed from the destruction as the officers and bureaucrats. Now, in the only shot of its kind in the film, the camera's point of view changes so the viewer sits in the rear seat in a three-man Japanese "Kate" bomber, with charismatic attack force commander Lt. Cdr Fuchida in the middle seat. Fuchida turns back to look over his shoulder, and stares directly at the camera, smiling. His smile congratulates the viewer on their mutual accomplishment, radiating pride and satisfaction. That direct acknowledgment suggests the viewer is culpable for the attack and complicit in the betrayal. Their separateness and isolation is part cause for the deaths of the innocent (Figure 3.17).

The Japanese

Following the pattern of the earlier success of Twentieth Century Fox President and CEO Darryl Zanuck's *The Longest Day*, the studio elected to shoot the narrative as two separate films – one American and the other Japanese. Both were shot as much as possible on the actual locations but made extensive use of replicas of ships and elaborate studio sets. The Japanese segment, written by Hideo Oguni and Ryuzo Kikushima, followed Gordon Prange's book by the same name, and was originally slated to be shot by film great Akira Kurosawa, producer of *Rashoman* and *Throne of Blood*. When Kurosawa was unable to meet his contractual agreements, and failed to produce any usable footage, Zanuck replaced him with Toshio Masuda and Kinji Fukasuka.



Figure 2.17 The Complicit Glance - Shared Responsibility

Although both Japanese and American narrative strands follow strictly documented fact, they are radically different in cultural context and coding. The Japanese in *Tora! Tora! Tora!* were intended to be presented as “robotic and militaristic” (Elmo Williams, *History Channel* “Tora! Tora! Tora!: A Giant Awakens”). However, in the hands of director Masuda, they are seen as communal and sacrificial, possessing the characteristics and values of Ford’s Irish-Catholic community. In the Japanese sequence, the journey to Pearl Harbor follows a heroic epic narrative form, telling the story of a passionate group, with specific goal in mind, who rise above the difficulties placed in their way and set forth on a quest to a strange land. They sacrifice their individuality to the group, are connected to Nature and the world around them in ways the Americans are not, and live in a hierarchal society that values introspection and self-reflection. They

exemplify the values that the OWI sought to instill in Americans, and resemble the cheerful warriors of Madison Avenue's magazine and newspaper advertisements. Taken outside of the American context of a sneak attack, the tactical and logistical accomplishments of the attack are noteworthy achievements, and the Japanese segment reflects this perspective.

These Fordian characteristics, and the mantle of Divine approval they suggest, transfer from the Japanese to the Americans immediately after the attack. Specifically, the failure of the Japanese bureaucracy to submit a declaration of war to the United States government in time betrays the warriors and strips Divine approval from them. This change is seen immediately, as Admiral Nagumo loses his nerve and fails to launch the third attack wave. Sparing the American shipyards and fuel tanks dooms Japan, because they will be used to quickly rebuild the fleet and deny Japan the time it needed to secure territory in Southeast Asia.

Unconstrained by the need to emphasize the solemnity of historic fact, and without the burden of the mythic betrayal and sacrifice, the Japanese sequence is an adventure film. It tells exactly what the Japanese perspective is - a great victory despite overwhelming odds. The intent of director Elmo Williams was to show the Japanese as robotic and militaristic, (*Tora! Tora! Tora!: A Giant Awakes*) but instead they are individuals with a sense of mission and a sense of humor. They are communally oriented, devoted to each other and to their mission. They rail against staid older officers, rejoice in each other's good fortune, set out on an almost impossible quest, and return victorious.

Unlike their American counterparts, the Japanese military are passionate but disciplined, at ease with technology, and able to manipulate it to their benefit, as shown

in their success in developing shallow running torpedoes. Their narrative is filled with color and music, and they grow to the limits of their environment, indoors and out. Their older officers are more staid, but they also interact with their subordinates, a trait not seen in the Americans. The younger officers are portrayed as having the characteristics of modern film heroes: young, virile, sure of themselves and eager to take risks. They embrace new ideas and are defiant of authority in pursuit of their dreams. They are seen joking, struggling with tactics, praying and team building, always in pursuit of glory and honor.

Although probably not intended by the American directors, the contrast between the Americans and the Japanese is very similar to the characters in Ford's pre-war films. The Americans are removed from Nature and burdened by "the blessings of civilization" (*Stagecoach*). They subscribe to a culture of hierarchy that is the only means for individual advancement and opportunity. They are rooted in a Protestant individualism and without strong ties to a community, although their identity is shaped by their military and government service. Like Lt. Col. Owen Thursday (Henry Fonda) in the 1948 Ford film *Fort Apache, Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s American military are Easterners, senior in hierarchy, but ignorant of the rules and demands of their position. They seek their own glory, and refuse to listen to the mediating hero who is familiar with both civilization and the alien other. In their failure to acknowledge the need for mediation in dealing with the alien, they are self, rather than group referential, and in both films, their individuality leads to a Last Stand and the death of innocent subordinates.

The Japanese in *Tora! Tora! Tora!* accept hierarchal structure in a Catholic light, using it as a framework for the greater good and communal growth. They follow the

messages of *Young Mr. Lincoln* and *Drums Along the Mohawk*, reaching for new environments, challenges and experiences, moving from the known and proven means of war to new and risky endeavors. They depend upon each other, and rejoice in each other's successes, are tolerant of idiosyncrasies and able to find a reason to laugh, even when facing death. Unlike the Americans, they take time to acknowledge their religious ties, pausing before the ships' Shinto shrine to reflect and pray, paralleling a Catholic self-examination and recognition of the need for mediation.

Because the Japanese are closer to the classic Western genre film protagonist, by the beginning of the attack sequence, audience sympathy tends to lay with them, rather than the Americans. By contrasting the two different attitudes and cultures, the film's sympathy with the Japanese reaffirms and reinforces the World War II cultural context of the group, the Catholic emphasis on community, self-reflection and the immanence of God and Nature and to a lesser extent, the need for mediation between the two. It rejects the individualistic and self-reflexive as a danger to innocent members of the community, offering the Catholic model of the Japanese as the one that will lead to victory.

By adopting Ford's Irish-Catholic immigrant virtues, the Japanese are able to succeed against the complacent and individualistic Americans. At the same time, the Americans are violently introduced to the values that will become their World War II cultural ethos. In this way, the Japanese become the mediating force that forces American redemption. Through their actions, they awake the sleeping giant of American communal potential, and the epiphany of a new, transcendent worldview. The Americans will succeed only when they adopt the Fordian Irish Catholic values of the Japanese Other.

The view of the Japanese changes during the attack sequence. Although there are still images of Japanese faces, they are brief, and the dominant representative icon becomes that of the attacking airplane, a reversion to the construct of the enemy as debased and inhuman. This change only takes place after the film explicitly shows the failure of the ultimatum to arrive at the State Department in time to warn of the attack. With commission of this sin, the grand adventure has been tainted, and the Japanese camaraderie is broken. They fall from grace, and the communal imperative passes to the Americans. As in *December 7th*, and *Pearl Harbor*, the innocent Americans who die in the attack will be killed not by the communal, Irish Catholics of the earlier Japanese depictions, but by Dower's mechanical beast.

Tora! Tora! Tora! is the only one of the three films that gives a substantive role to the Japanese as individuals. In *Pearl Harbor*, and *December 7th*, with their Triumphalist endings, mythic linkages and appeals to emotion cannot afford to divert emotional energy from the American view. Only in this film, which uses a lack of communal commitment as the fatal, betraying flaw, is the enemy given a face and a perspective. Its depiction of the Japanese was a source of a great deal of controversy. The culture of 1970 allowed for films such as *M*A*S*H* and *Apocalypse Now*, but adherence to the World War II cultural construct of the Pearl Harbor attack remained intact.

On the eve of the premiere of *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, Congressmen John Murphy (D-NY) and Lowell Weicker (R-Conn.) denounced the film as violating "every ethical standard" by glorifying the Japanese (Clarke *Ghosts* 22). In a study of the 1992 orientation film at the USS *Arizona* Memorial, called *How Shall We Remember Them?* Geoff White suggests that this sentiment against showing the Japanese as less than

demonic remains strong, and he cites several comments from Memorial visitors denouncing what they saw as a “pro-Japanese” attitude (“Moving History” 736). He notes that negative comments of this type tended to be grouped among older visitors, and that removal of mention of Japanese motives from the old film was believed to have been done with the aim of appeasing veteran’s groups, reinforcing the idea that a totally unsympathetic enemy is an attribute of the World War II construct (736).

This attempt at even handedness and portrayal of the enemy as human inspires anger and resentment from some survivors, who see any attempt to move the enemy from Dower’s faceless Other as an encroachment on the sacredness of the sacrifice. This reaction is particularly understandable when the attack is viewed as part of a continuum of American history, in the Triumphalist/Last Stand trope, rather than an isolated instance.

Because the event is remembered as an emotional, rather than a military or political event, a dispassionate film can be seen as robbing the event of its historic significance. It also undermines the religious associations with betrayal/sacrifice/redemption that underpin Triumphalism. To forgive the Japanese is to negate the redemption bought with the blood of those who died during the attack. Humanizing the enemy steps back from the absolute Good/Evil paradigm that makes the attack a Triumphalist icon and aligns it in the realm of the mythic. It also provides an opening to remove the veteran and the survivor from their separate, higher place in the sacrificial hierarchy, once again blurring the differences between the role of the combat veteran and the OWI’s civilian “production soldier.”

Japanese Narrative Sources

In an interesting parallel to *December 7th*, the Japanese sequence draws on a film from World War II, the 1942 *Hawaii-Marei Oki Kaisen (Naval Battles Off Shore Hawaii and Malaya)*. Like its American counterpart, it is the product of a famous director, Kajiro Yamamoto, and was also designed to remind a wartime populace of a momentous national event. It too, mixes actual footage of the attack with miniatures and stage sets, and also finds its way into documentaries as iconic footage.

The plot of the film follows a young Japanese pilot through his training, culminating in the attack on Pearl Harbor. It shows extended scenes of life aboard an aircraft carrier en route to O'ahu, including scenes on the bridge of the carrier and in the wardroom. Like *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, the pilots are seen offering last prayers to a shipboard Shinto shrine and picking up Hawaiian music in the wardroom. Interestingly, the planes are seen approaching Pearl Harbor by flying past and through forbidding mountain passes, an echo of the American representations of the Japanese attacking from the mountains, rather than around them (Figure 3.18).

The film was captured by American forces and parts of its attack sequence were released in a Hearst Metrotone newsreel in 1944, under the title "Captured Japanese Footage of the Attack on Pearl Harbor!" This newsreel can be found in UCLA Film and Television Archive holdings (Hearst Newsreel footage, VA7203) and its footage of a carrier launch is now seen repeatedly in American documentaries, even though it shares the *December 7th*'s difficulty of being a re-staging of the event.



Figure 2.18 The Enemy in the Mountain Pass

That it is a restaging is clear from several irregularities in the sequence. The first wave of planes launched for Hawai‘i at 6am from a position 200 miles north of the islands. At that latitude, on December 7, the sun does not rise until a half-hour later. Footage of an assembly of pilots may be actual film shot during the launch of the second wave, since their long shadows match still photographs taken of that sortie. However, the launch of the planes in the film show shadows directly below people and planes, indicating that the footage was shot much later in the day. It is probable that director Yamamoto, who, like Ford, made his film for his government, either used available stock film of a carrier launch, or was able to shoot the sequence later. The film provides some of the classic icons of the attack – the carrier, with protective bedding around its superstructure, echelons of bombers flying over the task force, the massed planes launching from the deck as crews wave. Its attack sequence, while not as emotionally evocative as Ford’s, is as technically competent and engrossing (Figure 3.19).

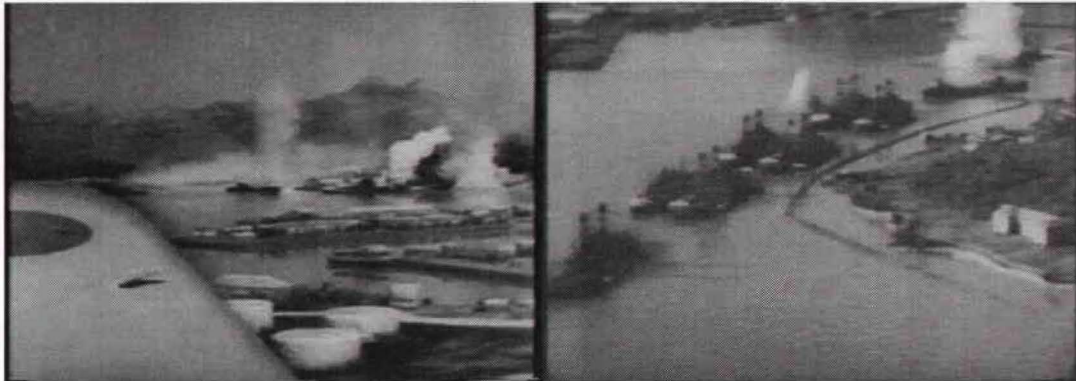


Figure 2.19 The Japanese View of the Attack

Attack Sequence

Tora! Tora! Tora!'s attack sequence, which begins as Japanese planes fly over the coast of O'ahu, forms a third, distinct narrative. The careful adherence to Prange's documentation gives way to a more mythic interpretation and the previously accurate timeline is abandoned for dramatic effect. This retreat to Walter Lord's *Day of Infamy*'s less rigorous scholarship and more humanistic tone allows the introduction of the mythic elements of *December 7th*.

Of necessity, the directors could illustrate only tiny portions of the attack, and shifted timelines for narrative coherence, but their choices and changes adhere closely to those seen in Ford's film. Like *December 7th*, the film assumes the viewer is already familiar with the events and vignettes of the attack as described in Lord's book, and that they need only the icon to apply against that knowledge. Throughout the attack sequence, unlike the preceding scenes, the film applies illustrations to historical fact without identifying its subjects. We are shown the attacks on Wheeler and Hickam Air Bases, but those locations are never identified as such. Doris Miller is shown three times, each a shorthand for recalling his actions, but without explanatory narrative (Figure 3.20).

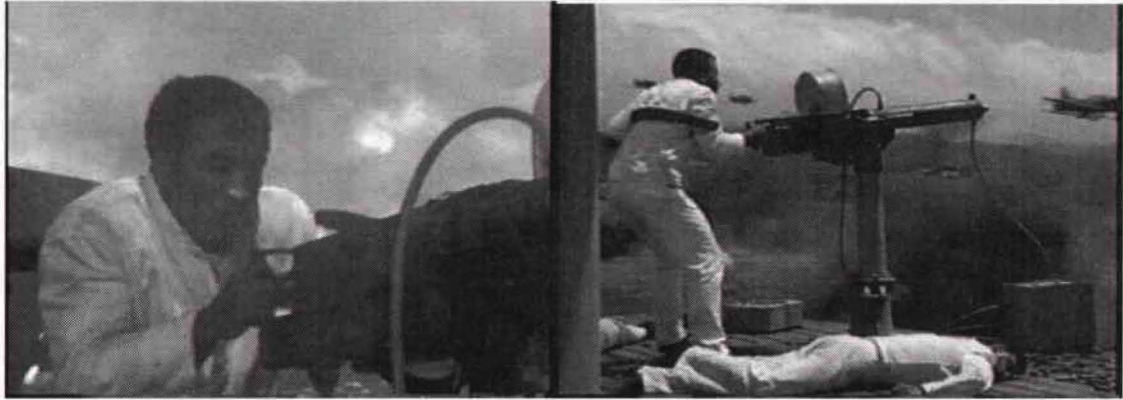


Figure 2.20 *Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s Doris Miller

Although Lord's book describes the realities of the casualties of the attack in detail, the film continues the World War II paradigm of suppressing American death and gore and expunging it when translating from written text to screen. Consistent with *December 7th* and the sacrificial nature of the deaths, the victims fall quietly, stoically, and with little bloodshed. Though a few wounded are shown, curtains of fire veil actual death. That remains the purview of written texts, as does disfigurement or maiming. Even in a scene where a sailor is seen on fire, the flames are extinguished before his skin is burnt.

The most vivid presentation of wounds is in a scene that echoes the earlier film and the climactic (and mythic) attack on Schofield Barracks in *From Here to Eternity*. As described in Thurston Clarke's *Pearl Harbor Ghosts*, there is no physical evidence or documentation of an attack on the installation, though some soldiers stationed there still insist it occurred. (214-215). A lone, muscular man, whose appearance recalls *From Here to Eternity* star Burt Lancaster, fires a large gun from a sandbagged bunker. The camera grows progressively closer to him, intercut with attacking Japanese planes.

Even the loss of USS *Arizona*, one of the centerpieces of the attack sequence, and ultimate icon of the attack, offers little suggestion of the carnage. The camera carefully identifies the ship using a photo in the Japanese bombers cockpit. We see explosions and smoke billowing, but the massive loss of life in the explosion is barely hinted at in a few falling bodies. The USS *Utah*, still a tomb for over fifty men, is invisible, and the men trapped in the capsized USS *Oklahoma* are suggested in one quick shot. The small launches are seen plying the waters, but there are no bodies to recover or swimmers to save. As the USS *Nevada* is evacuated, wounded are seen in stretchers being helped off the ship, but there is no panic or pain, and the camera keeps its distance.

There is little acknowledgement of a civilian population, with only a quick glimpse of King Street, which was the scene of an explosion. This lack of civilian presence keeps the focus on the military and their losses, simplifying the narrative strand and the moral lessons it teaches. It also helps maintain the Good/Evil paradigm and narrows the attack's target to the sacrificial victims and those who will avenge them. It maintains the separation between the military sacrifice and the civilian contribution, denying the civilian a place in the ranks of heroes.

As in *December 7th*, the Japanese attack force is shown against a backdrop of mountains. Both *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, *Pearl Harbor* as well as other tangentially associated films such as *From Here to Eternity*, use scenes of the Japanese attacking from out of the Waianae and Ko'olau mountains to dramatize the initial strike and suggest a sneaking quality. These images persist, even though most of the main attack force flew well above the mountains at about nine thousand feet. Kaala, the highest point on O'ahu, rises to only four thousand twenty five feet. The convention of Japanese planes and

mountains seems to have more to do with linking the attack to Western genre element of an Indian sneak attack than factual basis (Engelhardt 37-39).

This attachment to the idea of an attack through a mountain pass is seen in the persistence of the legend of a Japanese approach through the Kolekole pass in the Waianae Mountains above Wheeler Air Base and Schofield Barracks. In reality, there is no mountain pass in the Waianae range large enough to fly through, but tourist maps of O'ahu still show Kolekole Pass as the entry point for the attack on Wheeler. In *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, the pass is marked with a Christian cross, which can be seen clearly, as the planes fly past. (Figure 3.18) The inclusion of this cross emphasizes the symbolic value of the mountain pass for two reasons. First, the cross was set in place several years after the attack, as a memorial to the casualties. Second, the cross is actually in a different location, and was painted into the scene for effect. At least one post-war Schofield commander, COL Salvador, was buried facing the pass in a symbolic gesture of guarding against future attacks (interview with daughter, Caprice Salvador March 2001). After World War II, a cross was erected in the pass as a memorial to the attack's victims

Although *Tora! Tora! Tora!* does not dwell on religious signs in the manner of *December 7th* (and *Pearl Harbor*) the attackers are shown flying past this cross. Ed Rampell calls the shot "an historical slip" (38), but showing the cross serves to identify the pass for the knowledgeable viewer, and provides a convenient coding that the attack occurred on a Sunday morning. This serves the same function as Ford's field Mass but suggests the Christian versus heathen subtext without the emotional excesses of *December 7th*. In *Pearl Harbor*, the attacking planes fly over an even more discreet but emotionally evocative cross in the form of a clothesline (Figure 3.26).

The attacking force continues over fields, where Japanese plantation workers are harvesting pineapple. Inserting images of Japanese provides a coded reference to belief in the complicity of local Japanese in the attack. Ford uses the same device even though in 1943 it was known there were no instances of sabotage from the local community. This continues the retreat to the more mythic Fordian view of the attack, since the scene could not possibly have happened (Figure 3.21). As Hawai'i resident Sekae Uehara pointed out in an April 17, 2000 letter to the editor of the *Honolulu Advertiser*, "In 1941 ... pineapple was not being picked at 7 am on a Sunday in December, unless pineapple ripened in December that year instead of the usual summertime and was so abundant that Sunday, December 7 was a workday." (*Honolulu Advertiser*, A17, 2000 p A11) The historical incongruity strongly suggests an adherence to the previously offered presentation of the attack, i.e. *December 7th*, and to commonly held legend rather than fact.

The shift to a personal perspective is seen in the opening of the attack sequence through several scenes that offer almost the only comic relief of the film. As the Japanese approach, a civilian flight instructor finds herself surrounded by the attackers, and flees; the plans of two Navy officers to report a Japanese plane for safety violations end in a sight gag explosion as a bomb explodes between the hangers at Ford Island. Two sailors raising the flag on the stern of a submarine (the USS *Bowfin* in a cameo role) dive for the water as a historically inaccurate Zero strafes them (dive-bombers were the first to descend and attack). The USS *Nevada*'s band plays the *Star-Spangled Banner* faster and faster in a race against the impending attack, the ending notes punctuated by an explosion that sends them scurrying.



Figure 2.21 Implied Complicity and Historical Error

The choice of the *Nevada's* band to open the attack follows *December 7th's* imagery of sailors at a field Mass. The scene is a ritual meeting of men, dressed in white, grouped under an open sky, one of the first outdoor scenes for Americans. Although the scene has been transposed to a patriotic rather than religious ritual, the visual image of a homogenous group, joined in communion, presents almost the same message (Figure 3.22). As in the 1943 film, the first explosion disperses the group to their battle stations, after a hasty end to the ritual.

Although the most memorable attack scenes are of exploding ships and planes, as in *December 7th* the emphasis is on the American Last Stand response – the firing of guns of all types, and aerial combat between the Japanese and outnumbered American pilots. *December 7th* insists that the attackers were beaten off, and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* continues this emphasis on defense and retaliation by emphasizing the return fire. The

frustrations and failures caused by General Short's anti-sabotage efforts are never made explicit, except showing how the close spacing of fighters, mentioned earlier in the film, resulted in their destruction. Locking of aircraft cockpits, the removal of ammunition to locations far from gun emplacements and the fact that most civilian death and property damage was caused by American defensive fire is left unseen.



Figure 2.22 Secular Group Ritual

Also in keeping with a Last Stand subtext, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* devotes several minutes to an aerial fight between two American planes and the Japanese attackers. The aerial defense, though limited, was one of the victories the Americans could claim. About 50 percent of Japanese losses were attributed to the handful of fighters that managed to become airborne. The two depicted in *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, 2nd Lts. George Welch and Kenneth Taylor, are shown without their three companion pilots who also made the trip from Wheeler Air Field to Haleiwa, a small air strip on the North Shore of O'ahu. Their dogfight is shown in the film though it omits 1st Lt. John Webster, who also took part

successfully (Goldstein *The Way it Was* 144). Welch and Taylor would become the basis for the lead characters Rafe and Danny in *Pearl Harbor*.

The ability of the American forces to fire back, particularly during the second wave, is pointed to by some as proving an American victory. Survivors have petitioned each new Secretary of the Navy to name a ship the “USS *Pearl Harbor*.” Because the Navy generally names ships after American victories, the request has never been honored. In response, one survivor wrote to the quarterly newsletter of the Pearl Harbor Survivor’s Association asserting that “Pearl Harbor was our greatest victory since the Revolutionary War and World War I ... Take a look at any picture during the attack and you will see the sky covered with anti-aircraft flack ” (Clarke, *Ghosts* 258).

In *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, participation in the attack and Last Stand defense is reserved for heroes and denied the bureaucrats and quibblers. In direct contrast to the action and color of the attack, the staff officers and bureaucrats remain locked within themselves and their world. Kimmel and his officers watch the fires and bombing through his office window, the window’s frame appearing to be prison bars shutting them away (Figure 3.23). His staff never stops to observe the destruction all around them or react to the loss of the men and fleet. Instead, they man their posts stoically, plodding through the motions, shuffling papers and answering phones. This same indifference is shown in all indoor scenes, to the point where the blinds have been closed to shut the destruction out. These are men outside the realm of the sacrifice, observers rather than martyrs, and their role is merely to witness.



Figure 2.23 Denial of Association with the Sacrifice

Following historical fact, a bullet breaks the window and smudges the Admiral's white coat. Neither he nor his staff seems surprised. They display no animosity or other strong emotion, and in fact, show no concern that the Admiral was almost killed. In leaving the Admiral stained, but not dead, the bullet has denied him the right to be one of the martyrs who are sacrificed for the greater good. Kimmel is quoted as saying that "it would have been kinder if it had killed me," indicating that he knows his fate. Prange reports that Kimmel removed his four star rank insignia, and replaced them with two-stars, acknowledging his fall from power and grace.

The use of windows as barriers to community is repeated in the ending of the Japanese sequence, where Vice Admiral Nagumo decides against a third sortie, a decision that saved the American docks and oil fields from destruction and made reconstruction of the fleet much more efficient. Nagumo and his staff stand in the bridge of their carrier,

viewed from outside. The bars of the window frame enclose and trap them, as they did Admiral Kimmel and his staff. Lt. Commander Fuchida, the leader of the attack force, and his men are cut off from them as their communal goal is rejected.

Japanese and Americans take on each other's traits: the Americans unify as a first step to victory, and the Japanese cut themselves off from each other and seal their eventual fate. In the last shot of Admiral Kimmel, he is seated with his men and the stiff collar of his dress whites has been opened, signaling an opening of the mind and heart. The film's final image is of Admiral Yamamoto, conceiver of the attack, alone with his prediction of defeat. A limited suggestion of Triumphalism is offered as subtitles repeat Yamamoto's prediction that "we have awakened a sleeping giant and filled him with a terrible resolve."

Along with advancing the images of heroic defense, noble death and a mechanical enemy, the visual qualities of the attack sequence, particularly the destruction of planes at Wheeler, Hickam and Ford Island, echo *December 7th*'s images. Shot most in medium to long shots, much of the attack sequence has the same set piece quality and peculiar static effect of *December 7th*. Particularly in the airfield sequences, which were emphasized in the early film (probably because they were the easiest to re-create) Gregg Toland's influence is apparent. The camera angles, screen movement, and groupings are evocative of his work, as is the use of smoke screens.

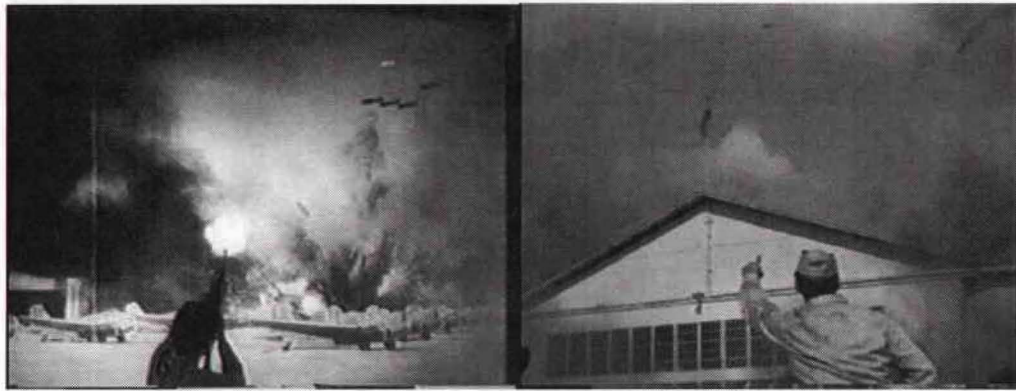


Figure 2.24 Referencing Toland's Images

The sequence showing the destruction of the PBY reconnaissance unit on Ford Island is particularly congruent with *December 7th*, including the use of rear projection to build a shot of a plane crashing into a hanger (Figure 3.24). Although not exact reproductions of the imagery, they are close enough to take on the aura and remembered meaning of the earlier film. Repetition of Ford's themes and icons along with the same omissions establishes the images in multiple channels, reinforcing their authenticity and providing an avenue for their establishment as icons. Because both Lord and Ford stress the emotional qualities of the event, their appearance in a film that proclaims its factual authority also provides reinforcement of the authenticity of those emotions.

Validation

Tora! Tora! Tora! achieves validation through its adherence to documentation, rather than approval of survivors, although the fundamental construct of *December 7th* remains intact. The film reaffirms a historic perspective that accepts betrayal as a fundamental aspect of the attack's success, and paves the way for a continued emphasis on the innocent, sacrificial quality of the casualties and the inherent innocence of America. Although Triumphalism is inferred rather than emphasized, the Last Stand

references of the attack sequence are explicit in its depictions of a righteously vengeful response.

Viewing the film after reading Prange and Lord, or seeing *December 7th*, the viewer can find support for its claim to be “authentic.” But because *Tora! Tora! Tora!* seeks authority through consistency with World War II omissions and codings, the end result is a reinforcement of visual icons depicting the attack, and a suppression of ideas and events that fall outside that paradigm. In advertising itself as an accurate re-creation, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* fails to acknowledge there are elements it chooses not to show and the bias of its point of view. Unlike *December 7th*, where viewers were aware was a government film made to evoke an emotional response, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* attempts to deny that role while cloaking its point of view in detached academic detailing. Through its announced alignment with written texts, it seems to reach for an authority that supposedly rejects the emotional mythic appeals of the World War II representation, though it fails to present images that challenge the bloodless, sacramental nature of the attack’s subtexts.

The massive effort of shooting *Tora! Tora! Tora!* on location at Pearl Harbor also raises problems of the real versus the remembered. For several months, the eyewitnesses to the actual attack saw only the aspects re-created for the film. As Zeros, Kates and Vals once again filled the sky over O’ahu, an older generation passed along to a younger the details of their experience, using movie props as a reference. Thurston Clarke speculates on how that re-experience may have corrupted the memories of those eyewitnesses and speculates that the actual experience might have been tainted by the opportunity to relive some aspects and place them into context (18). By offering the film as an accurate re-

creation, without acknowledging the cultural construct it draws on, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* may establish as authentic *December 7th's* purified version of the event, with blame assigned, heroes established, and the clean, unambiguous messages of betrayal and the Last Stand laid out.

At the time of its release, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* could boast of being the second most expensive movie ever made (Zanuck, *NYT*). The vast resources poured into its completion allowed it to stand as the unchallenged re-creation of the attack until the 2001 *Pearl Harbor*. The accuracy of its re-staging is seldom questioned, only its appropriateness in acknowledging a Japanese point of view, its technical merits and complaints of the emotional opaqueness of its representations of Americans. The switch in sourcing from the academic research of Prange to Lord's personal accounts in the attack sequence is generally unremarked, and the entire text takes on Prange's prestige. The images and narratives it suppresses have no other visual source to dispute the film's construct, and the restaging of extant still photos, also lacking in ambiguity and carnage, reinforce the film further.

Even with criticism leveled against it, the film achieves status as a substitute eyewitness to the attack. *December 7th*, with its provenance as an authentic artifact of World War II retains primacy, but *Tora! Tora! Tora!* is accepted for what it says it is – a meticulous re-creation of unprecedented historical accuracy. Because its creation preceded the establishment of the USS *Arizona* Memorial Visitor's Center in 1980, and the publication of the many relevant texts in the 1980s, the film and *December 7th* may be seen as constituting a dominant reservoir for remembering the attack.

Pearl – the Mini-series

Though not as extensively used as *December 7th's*, *Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s attack sequence is used as a source for other, less ambitious works that use the attack as a plot device. Its footage appeared in Universal Pictures 1976 epic *Midway* and most extensively in the mini-series *Pearl*, shown on ABC in 1978-79. *Pearl* is notable for several reasons. It appropriates plots and themes from more prestigious movies, but is also a source for Disney's *Pearl Harbor*. It draws on the plot from *From Here to Eternity* reiterating a scenario where a high-ranking military officer betrays his wife sexually, and she turns promiscuous as a result. Other characters from the 1953 film are seen, including a character resembling Prewitt, the bullying sergeants (complete with a full pack drill scene), and the Honolulu prostitutes, who are clearly identified as such, rather than social hall dates. A secondary plot follows the romance between a female doctor and an Army officer recalling *In Harm's Way*, and a third sub-plot is a romance between a young Navy officer and a local Japanese-American girl.

Pearl contains the broadest exploration of the attack in a commercial film, including depictions of coastal defenses, civilian reactions and post-attack military responses. The attack sequence appropriates extensive footage from *Tora! Tora! Tora!* for its battle scenes and intercuts it with additional footage shot at Pearl Harbor and on O'ahu. This footage adds in Army responses to the attack, reiterates *From Here to Eternity*'s strafing of personnel at Schofield Barracks by Japanese planes.

As part of *Pearl*, *Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s Japanese are shown, though the Japanese of the original film is slowly and tortuously translated into English as if the translator was hearing it for the first time. Included in the mini-series appropriations are post-attack

shots of Lt. Col. Fuchida's return to his carrier, though his aerial complicit gaze is not used. Admiral Yamamoto delivers a speech declaring that the failure to declare the attack first was a defeat for the Japanese, and that the war was already lost.

Within the emotional froth of a miniseries, *Pearl* does manage to give a good sense of some of the usually overlooked elements of the attack, and moves outside the usual World War II context of sexual innocence. The only sacrificial figure is that of a young Navy officer, who falls in love with a local Japanese girl the night before the attack. He is innocent, and his ability to love outside his own race attests to his pure heart. As the stand in for the sacrificed heroes, he is shown swimming back to his ship and manning a machine gun, in the spirit of Doris Miller. He later dies of his wounds, and with his death he redeems his distant father. His death also recalls and reaffirms the rightness of the musical *South Pacific's* punishment for miscegenation (See page 127).

Despite its scenery chewing and dramatic speeches, the length of a mini-series allows a much more detailed retelling of the narrative, and like *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, *Pearl* uses its length to add several details from Lord's and Clark's books, including prostitutes volunteering to give blood at local hospitals and ditch digging by Japanese-American ROTC cadets. It also suggests how rumors and myths about the attack may have gotten their start. For example, during a meeting of the military officer's wives, questions are raised about rumors of dead pilots wearing local high school rings and arrows cut into the cane fields to direct Japanese forces to Pearl Harbor. Both rumors were recorded and repeated, and the suggestion of arrows cut into fields is part of the subtext of the repeated images of Japanese agricultural workers who ignore the approaching attack force (Figure 3.3 and 3.21).

In the climactic attack sequence, Angie Dickenson travels around O'ahu in a taxi, arriving at the various bases simultaneously with the Japanese. Using the familiar rear screen technique, *Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s footage is projected behind the taxi and the actress. In keeping with the custom of transfer of images from one representation of the attack to others, the music video for *Pearl Harbor* uses the same dramatic device – singer Faith Hill (also blonde) rides in a car on an airfield (Figure 3.25).

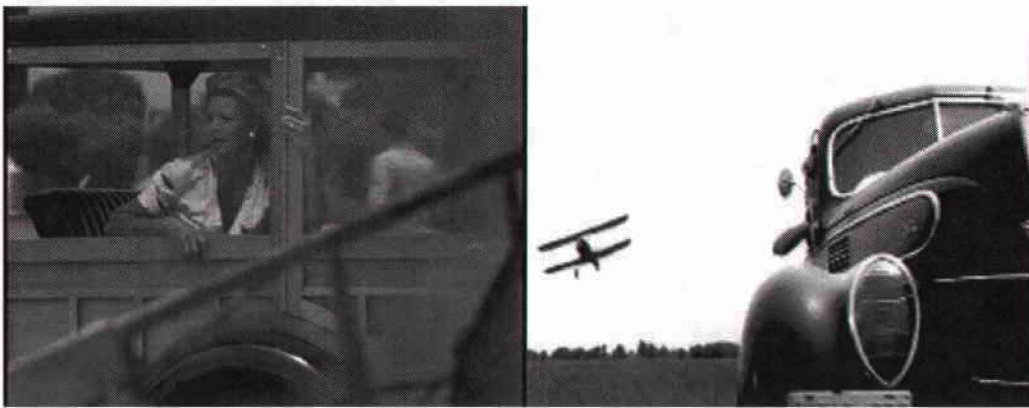


Figure 2.25 Appropriation - *Pearl Attack* and *Pearl Harbor* Music Video

Ritualization of Icons

In granting *Tora! Tora! Tora!* its position as an authoritative text without acknowledging its appropriation of Lord's and *December 7th*'s context, the film perpetuates the view of World War II as an unambiguous battle between the forces of Good and Evil, and reinforces the American myth of the American innocence, betrayal and the devastating consequences of deviating from the values of sacrifice to the group. As one of two visual representations made in the sixty years between the attack and the 2001 *Pearl Harbor*, the agreement in images and subtexts of *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *December 7th* codify the visual memory of the attack within their parameters. The acceptances of these films images as authoritative, and their near exclusive use to

represent the attack makes them convenient icons to express the attack's meaning without relating the entire narrative.

Despite the humanistic representation of the Japanese, the emphasis on aerial combat in the attack sequence reemphasizes *December 7th's* presentation of the enemy as mechanical, faceless and inhuman. The image of the Mitsubishi Zero, usually oversized and emitting loud roars, becomes the iconic enemy. The destruction of planes and ships, without the resulting blood and death, are the icons for Americans, a destruction of machines, not people. In shifting the attack from the human to the mechanical, the Zero and the destroyed American machine, (either airplane or ship, but mostly ship, with its group connotations) are established as ritual icons for remembering. There is no visual path for association with the attack outside of these ritual associations. The singular, separate place of the survivor and the veteran is enshrined in their association with the totemic icon. In the course of continuing the suppression of depictions of human death and suffering, the film establishes the destruction of the ships and airplanes as representations of those human sacrifices. It is the ships we see explode; the planes that perish in fireballs. Human deaths become an off-screen adjunct to the destruction of machinery. It is almost incidental, and unremarked, compared to the agonized throes of a dying battleship.

In presenting the ships and planes as the focus for meditation, the film offers them as symbolic of human sacrifice, whose death and suffering do not succumb to human weakness. Here, the deaths are literally explosive, but hold no taint of sin or weakness. The World War II context of concealing blood and death becomes a means to substitute

an icon that speaks to the identification with the group and continues the social view of the loss of individualism as a virtue.

This perhaps suggests a symbolic means of further associating the survivor with the casualties, and further separating the veteran from the civilian. In the group context of World War II, the individual's value is as part of a larger entity, in this case, as a member of the ship's crew. As part of that group, the symbolic "wounding" or "death" of a ship or plane becomes an attribute of the surviving crewmember. The sacrificial status of the ship adheres to the crewmember, and he is able to claim status through that relationship, rather than through individual acts.

In this way, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* can be said to establish iconic totems for the survivors. The ships provide a visual representation and substitution for the individual, and their individual actions are portrayed through their group associations with their ships. Showing blood and mutilation of humans becomes unnecessary since it is accomplished through the surrogate ship. This totemic aura is enhanced because the events in the attack sequence can only be recognized and deciphered through intimate and detailed knowledge of the attack and the ability to identify obscure references and allusions.

In the same way that *December 7th* offered World War II audiences visual cues for remembering attack narratives, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* provides referencing, but on a symbolic and iconic level. In addition to being an attempted replica of the attack, it also can be seen to function as a religious Mystery whose deeper meanings can only be read by the initiated.

Documentaries – Validation and Ritualization

Tora! Tora! Tora!'s icons and cautionary tale might have become the standard icons for the attack narrative, had it not been for the proliferation of television documentaries. Mostly produced for the fiftieth and sixtieth anniversaries of the attack in 1991 and 2001, these productions reestablished the use of *December 7th*'s footage as authentic, as well as returning the narrative to an emotional, rather than academic driven remembering.

This occurred over an extremely wide audience, using cable television and specialty outlets like the History Channel and the Discovery Channel. Between 1991 and 2001, more than a dozen documentaries, all using the same icons and narrative elements were produced and distributed on cable television. They are all still available in libraries and for purchase and are frequently re-broadcast. They take advantage of the ability to reach a global audience simultaneously, and widespread dissemination allows them to function in much the same way as the World War II newsreel, in providing a common visual experience of an event using emotional appeals and drama.

In doing so, these documentaries helped establish a national visual remembering of the attack, in much the same way that *December 7th* did for its World War II audience. Like *December 7th*, they established icons that represent the entire narrative, presenting eyewitness accounts, both human and filmic, as authoritative, but seemingly without an appreciation for the captioning and contexts of those icons, or the subtexts they also proffer.

Because these documentaries are well researched, they are generally accepted as unbiased and authoritative accountings. The use of reporters, including Walter Cronkite (*World War II With Walter Cronkite* 1961), Eric Sevareid (*Pearl Harbor: Surprise Attack* 1978) Roger Mudd (*Tora! Tora! Tora!: the Real Story of Pearl Harbor* 2000) and Tom Brokaw (*Pearl Harbor: Legacy of Attack* 2001) as well as military figure General Norman Schwarzkopf (*Remember Pearl Harbor* 1991, & *Pearl Harbor: Attack on America* 2001) all suggest authoritative, factually based products, with only minor biases.

As well as reviving the authority of *December 7th* by reusing its images, documentaries establish other authoritative images, including the icon of the Pearl Harbor survivor, particularly the members of the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association. Every documentary after 1991 features interviews with survivors, who recount their experiences and reactions and give their views about the attack. Their establishment as an icon is assisted by the fact that members of the association often wear a distinctive uniform while being interviewed - colorful aloha shirts and military garrison caps, similar to those of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. The caps have the name of the affiliated ship, medals accrued in the war, and carry small pins and personal artifacts important to the survivor. The white color of these caps suggests the sacred nature of the attack, and physically identifies the survivors as keepers of the narrative flame. As they relate their stories, they are usually shown with their photo as young men in military uniform, establishing the youthful innocence of the time. Their experiences are also often illustrated with historical photographs and film and sometimes with reenactments and special effects. The general tone of these narratives is similar, and uniformly follows the

World War II perspective of the attack, unsurprising, since they are being asked to remember their feelings and thoughts at the time.

Because they are eyewitnesses, survivor's interviews appear to have assumed Trachtenberg's authority of the image, particularly for the documentary, but they too have their captioning and context, which seems to remain unchallenged. Theirs is a personal, emotional remembering, presented in a way that reinforces the original sense of betrayal and ensuing death of innocence. They remember how they felt, but seldom offer direction for how we should feel now. As Thurston Clarke found in interviewing survivors in *Pearl Harbor Ghosts*, for many, the emotion of the attack has not changed, particularly the sense of betrayal by the Japanese.

This includes the idea of the conspiracy, with "stab-in-the-back" or "treachery," which is a tenet of *December 7th*, frequently mentioned by survivors. Along with references to it in personal opinions, conspiracy and treachery in some form are mentioned in other parts of the historical background in almost every 1991 and later documentary reviewed for this dissertation. Such suggestions of betrayal and conspiracy are found in National Geographic's 2001 *Pearl Harbor: Legacy of Attack*, CNN's 1991 *Pearl Harbor: Fifty Years Later*, three History Channel programs; *Target: Pearl Harbor* (1995), *Tora! Tora! Tora! – The Real Story of Pearl Harbor* (2000) and *Unsung Heroes* (2001), and MSNBC's 2001 *Attack on America*. By establishing the survivor's perspective as an unchallenged truth, these documentaries tend to limit the narrative of the attack to available witnesses. They also tend agree to with the survivor's and *December 7th's* perspective to shape the perception of the attack's larger historical meaning.

Following *December 7th's* lead, almost every documentary makes a point of establishing Hawai'i as a paradise and some, including the 1978 *Surprise Attack* with Eric Sevareid, claim that Hawai'i was a favored posting for sailors, an assertion repeated in the 2001 National Geographic special *Legacy of Attack* and *Unsung Heroes*. This assertion follows the construct of the attack rather than fact, as Honolulu was not a particularly favorable posting before or during the war, as described by Ed Sheehan's *One Sunday Morning* chronicles the privations and hardships of a Hawai'i posting, including the lack of available women and the limited access to entertainment. *From Here to Eternity* paints a closer picture of fact than the sunny images of sailors relaxing in Waikiki. However, the notion of a Hawai'i paradise is carried through every documentary, with images of hula girls, *December 7th's* views of Diamond Head and Waikiki and waving palm trees, and survivor's accounts do not contradict this view.

Remembering the original emotions created by the attack is the specific role *December 7th* was designed to accomplish, so the similarity between the survivor's accounts and the film are unremarkable. As an authentic artifact of the era, its footage appears in almost every documentary, often paired with the authoritative accounts of the survivors, and without acknowledgment of its context and codings. The frequency of its selection suggests that Ford's emotional messages are accepted as valid and his signs and codings continue to exert an influence on how the narrative is presented.

Even in documentaries where the explosions of the model battleships are not used, as is the case with the 1995 *Target: Pearl Harbor*, Ford's racing sailors, staged anti-aircraft fire and burning hangers are still used to depict the attack. *December 7th* footage of airplanes flying over the Pali lookout and Waikiki beach is also used in almost

every documentary as a ready visual reference of Hawai'i under attack. Built from stock footage of O'ahu landmarks, they superimpose flights of planes to represent the Japanese, and add the sound of droning engines to convey a sense of threat and menace. The authenticity of the stock footage adds authority to the faked images of the airplanes, and the original textual messages of a force attacking an innocent Paradise. Documentaries that use *December 7th*'s footage continue to contribute to its assumption of realism and dramatic effect by reinserting audio cues such as the whistle of dropping bombs, the sound of roaring engines and the rattle of machine gun fire in synch with the film. In doing so, they tend to remove the context of restaging and suggest a realism their disclaimers deny. Funeral scenes also frequently appear, and the ending sequence of the families of the dead is used in History Channel's *Unsung Heroes*.

Footage from the long version seems to be a favorite source for images, and images taken from it can be seen in several documentaries. Its images of Japanese-Americans, used in the argument between Mr. C and Uncle Sam are recycled to show both friendly and hostile intent by Japanese, as well as to depict a variety of activities. *Unsung Heroes* is one of the recent documentaries to appropriate footage, by recasting a *December 7th* scene of Japanese spying as an interracial romance.

The Japanese are represented mostly by their iconic aircraft, particularly in advertisements and on the sleeves of videos and DVDs. Even though Japanese pilots are interviewed in several documentaries, they generally offer regrets and a reinforcement of the survivor's account. Visually, they are usually represented in historic footage by *Hawaii Marei Oki Kaisen*'s carrier launch and John Ford's wasp-like planes crossing the Pali and pineapple fields.

By using its images so extensively, the documentaries return *December 7th*, complete with Ford's signs and codings, to a position of iconic authority. In using it in conjunction with the authoritative human eyewitness, the two reinforce each other to establish an unchallenged visual remembering that relies on the World War II betrayal/sacrifice/redemption perspective. This emotional remembering is further reinforced by visually associating both the survivor and *December 7th* with the national shrine of the USS *Arizona* Memorial. The Memorial itself is a remembering of innocent death, of the lives lost as they slept, like the band, or before they could respond. The band, allowed to sleep late as a reward for a second place finish in a battle of the bands the night before, is a particularly apt symbol for the innocence of the martyred, since their primary role was music, rather than combat. Because the *Arizona* was destroyed in the first few minutes of the first wave of the attack, the ship was never able to mount a defense. This correlates with the presentation of the ship in the Visitor's Center. Here, the *Arizona* is shown as a "virgin" that never fired a shot in anger. In keeping with this narrative strand, in the giant mural at the entryway of the Memorial, the ship is depicted in a peacetime configuration.

The images of the USS *Arizona* Memorial reinforce the sacredness and sacrificial nature of the attack, and the aura of martyrdom of the dead. In documentaries, the return of the survivor to the Memorial is generally portrayed as a symbol for recovery and the Triumphal redemption of the survivor and America. The Memorial itself is portrayed as a solitary, contemplative retreat, although in reality it has been encroached on by Navy construction and activities, and when open to the public is always crowded.

The use of the Memorial as an icon of recovery and redemption not only underscores the religious and sacred aspects of the attack, but also focuses the visual narrative around the *Arizona* and other battleships, rather than a broader scope. This continues *Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s association of the attack with iconic ships and planes, rather than humans, and tends to reinforce belonging to a ship as a mark of authority as narrator. Linking this authority with a battleship can tend to focus the visual narrative so that it remains dominated by a small group who can claim ship affiliation.

Oral histories by survivors associated with the battleships tend to be photographed at the Memorial, and seem to be the most emotionally laden. Other eyewitnesses are interviewed in documentaries, including nurses and pilots, but like the Japanese, they appear to be supportive and are seen apart from the Memorial. Other survivors, who were stationed at non-iconic sites like Kaneohe Air Base, are also often filmed in other locations than the Memorial, suggesting a lower level of association and authority.

The World War II hierarchy of sacrifice appears to apply even in this case, with survivors being sorted according to association with iconic ships. The USS *Arizona*, as shrine and icon appears to convey the highest associative status, followed by other battleships, mostly the *West Virginia* and the *Oklahoma*. This may in part be because of the availability of survivors willing to be interviewed, but the result is the preeminence of those battleship narratives in documentaries.

By taking advantage of the Memorial as a dramatic, emotional icon, and proliferating the pairing of the survivor and the *December 7th* images, documentaries seem to establish a remembering of the attack that connects the film, the survivors and

the Memorial as required elements for a visual narrative. Documentaries that feature interviews with survivors do not challenge the perspective and context of their authoritative narrative voices, which tends to reinforce their presentation of the attack. The similarity between their views and that of *December 7th* tends to establish a continuity of remembering, as survivors reaffirm the film's sacred and historical associations and the film adds physical evidence of their emotions. Linking of both with the USS *Arizona* Memorial tends to validate their single narrative voice, and enshrine it as part of a sacred remembering. The result is a narrative more closely aligned with the emotional remembering of *December 7th* than the subdued emotion and academic grounding of *Tora! Tora! Tora!* Although the narrative they tell is valid, they limit it to an emotional retelling of the World War II context and the Fordian connections to the Last Stand defense.

In the visual world of Postman's *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, where image is accepted as reality and learning is through emotional response, *December 7th* and the survivors become authoritative gatekeepers. The pairing of the personal accounts of the potentially biased eyewitness with emotionally evocative historical footage and sacred shrine of the Memorial may encourage an apparent return not only to the perception of the attack as betrayal, but to the entire premise of the World War II context of betrayal/innocence/redemption as a model for viewing the attack. It overshadows the more complex narratives of written texts, and limits the remembering to a handful of iconic images.

Through repetition and wide dissemination, documentaries appear to have reaffirmed the World War II public visual narrative of the attack as an emotional

remembering, as well as cementing the place of icons that represent it authoritatively - the footage of *December 7th*, the survivor, particularly one from a battleship, and the redemptive sacredness of the Arizona Memorial. Their use establishes cultic icons that represent the attack by evoking specific emotional responses and associations. These icons are so well established that it suggests that they do perform Benjamin's ritualistic function for the event. The priestly class of the survivors mediates between the attack and the viewer, assuming authority through initiated association with the cultic icon of the Memorial. They instruct the uninitiated in appropriate emotional responses to the event by virtue of their secret knowledge of the attack, using artifacts of the event in the shape of *December 7th's* images to authenticate and reinforce their messages. Without associative relationship with the established icons, or authoritative images that challenge their presumptive mediation, other visual narratives cannot challenge their icons or narratives.

The images selected and validated by survivors recall not only the attack, but the heroic defense of the Last Stand, and the sneak attack as a motif of American culture and history. Its religious associations and the cycle of the Passion play redemption through betrayal and violence is reaffirmed by the USS *Arizona* Memorial, which itself is a temple with the ritual function of remembering sacrifice and the redemption that sprang from it.

Documentaries bridge the emotionally distant and academic *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and the intensely personal and emotional *Pearl Harbor*. When the producers of *Pearl Harbor* began to research the basis for their visual narrative they were able to draw a straight line from 1943 to 2000, both in terms of visual icons and emotional

remembering. They appear to have used the documentaries as a main source for their interpretive narrative. Acknowledging the role of the survivors as arbiters of authenticity, they took pains to solicit their participation, if not their approval. The USS *Arizona* Memorial was the scene of a prayer service that visually paired survivors and cast in a common image. The return to an emotional interpretation of the attack and a close following of the World War II narrative by the film suggests that the producers relied on the tenor of the documentaries and their emotional icons rather than a more distanced interpretation.

Disney's *Pearl Harbor* – Mythification

Structure and Pattern

Pearl Harbor can be grouped with *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *December 7th* as an attempt to establish itself as an authoritative re-creation of the attack, even though it also appears to use it to advance the plot's love triangle, rather than presenting an account of the attack and its precursive events. It does follow the intent, structure and context of *December 7th* and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and aligns itself with the earlier two films by depicting the attack as an historical event with national ramifications, rather than just a means of resolving personal problems. In the same way that *Tora! Tora! Tora!* attempts to establish the authority of its view of the attack by replicating documented fact, *Pearl Harbor* attempts to use emotions to connect the attack's mythic associations to modern icons. Like *December 7th*, its intent is not to recreate the attack, but to recall the emotions attached to it and reinforce their related mythical and cultural meanings. For the purpose of mythification, the accuracy of the staging is less important than the ability to confirm and reinforce the attack's ties to other American cultural legends and recall the same

emotions. *Pearl Harbor* appears to use icons and contextual authority to make history personally relevant to the viewer through the viewer's emotional response to the characters and their experiences.



Figure 2.26 Emotional Icons – Religion and Domesticity Threatened

December 7th used film genre and conventions to establish images of the attack and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* established icons from those images. *Pearl Harbor* places those icons in a contemporary cultural mythic frame but uses the original cultural context of *December 7th* to define its characters and set its dramatic tone. Its characters inhabit a world that is consistent with the World War II context of censorship and military heroism. Its depictions of social relations that stress the group ethos remain well within the World War II cultural construct, though, in the love story, minor exceptions to the Production Code are used, including premarital sex, pregnancy and mild swearing. However, the sexual transgressions are punished, the sex is never seen on screen, and the cursing is offset by an emphasis on religious signs and captioning. Depictions of sex are

limited to a few kisses, one scene of mostly symbolic sex and the mention of a pregnancy.

Because these characters and tone seem to follow the PCA/military/OWI construct, they are restricted to a narrow set of permissible actions, attitudes and points of view, which, though valid in the context of the film construct of World War II, are no longer part of the construct of a 21st century love story. In being confined to that earlier model, the characters are closer to the idealized types that Paul Fussell commented on rather than being fully realized humans. The requirements of those types seem to dominate their actions, muting the character's emotional attachments in favor of stressing their mythic roles.

The World War II adherence to the group over the individual is not as overt as in the two earlier films because this film is focused at the personal rather than the societal level. However, the core group of nurses and pilots embody many of the ethnic and character stereotypes of the war genre film, including the rural hicks (Red) and the ethnic would-be Casanova (Tony Fusco), who speaks with a mild New York City accent. Introductory scenes in a train station establish them as a discreet, unified group socialized by their common military training. These characters resemble Ford's, particularly those of the pre-war Frontier films. *Pearl Harbor* appears to imitate Ford's style of associating larger concepts through established signs and codings and uses the same religious and cultural icons, not just those of *December 7th* but also his pre-war depictions of a heroic American past. Sacrifice and redemption are main themes of the plot, framed as choices between individual desire and the good of the group. Decisions to support the group may lead to sacrifice, but also to their salvation, similar to the Fordian pre-war mythic

celebration of Irish communal virtue. These associations with the group, the intense use of religious signs and captioning and the use of landscape to emphasize conflict or spirituality all recall Ford's methods and techniques, but without his restraint. In attempting to create a film with Ford's appeal to underlying cultural beliefs, *Pearl Harbor* also seems to have adopted some of Ford's occasional excesses.

As well as presenting the characters as the Frontier film American heroes, the film seems to adopt Ford's use of the Passion play structure to add historical and religious meaning to the attack narrative. The plot structure of *Pearl Harbor* is a series of betrayals, which are followed by redemption through sacrifice, with emphasis on mythic aspects of the characters. The connection to the historic and Divine are further underscored by the film's frequent overt and implied religious signs, which are found in its cinematography, set design, props and soundtrack captioning.

While reinforcing religious meaning in the attack, the film uses contemporary cultural signs and codings of recent Hollywood films to connect newer generations to the World War II context and coding. It draws on generic images from Western movies, but also specifically references images and captions from modern film epics. As Rafe and Danny fly to attack the Japanese, the radio chatter is almost identical to the mythic space Western *Star Wars*, including the sequence where the two draw on childhood experiences to fly down perilously narrow chasms. The capsizing of the *Oklahoma* visually recalls of the sinking of the *Titanic* in its camera angles, dialogue and musical captioning (Figure 3.27). The mechanical model used in *Titanic* was reused for this sequence. The pioneering courage of *The Right Stuff* is explicit as the pilots begin training for the Doolittle Raid, which used an aircraft carrier to launch long-range bombers in a

successful attempt to bomb Tokyo. The pilots emerge from a cavernous hanger into the sunlight moving in a heroic, almost godlike formation, as the camera looks up into their faces (Figure 3.27).

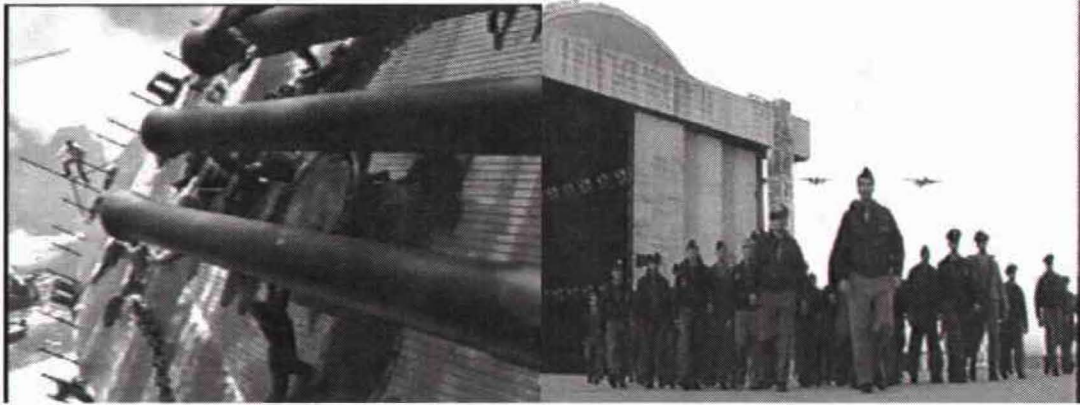


Figure 2.27 Contemporary Icons - Recalling Images of *Titanic* and *The Right Stuff*

There is blood, in keeping with 21st century expectations, but it is minimal; much of it is confined to the scenes of the hospital, outside of the area of the attack itself. Although death is seen, it is consistent with 1943 visuals available to the American public, and mutilation and untreated wounds are not emphasized. The film was given a “PG-13” rating mostly for some of the intense images during the attack, but though the camera attempts to show the attack at a human eye level, the carnage remains hidden and death romanticized. Even the post attack presents the bodies in heroic tableau, which include artfully draped flags and a floating lei.

Because *Pearl Harbor* draws on the plot and genre elements of the classic Western, there is no recognizable model for inclusion of civilians, who function as the unredeemed benefactors of the hero’s actions. They function as the undifferentiated but threatened group, the townspeople, antithesis of the Other, who need the mediating hero to save them. There must be the savior and the saved, and the integrity and separateness

of the salvific role of the combat soldier is one of the most carefully defined aspects of the Pearl Harbor narrative. That salvific nature is retained in *Pearl Harbor* through subordinating the character's motivations to their iconic functions. Even with a love story plotline, the narrative maintains separation of the combat veteran and the production soldier civilian by expanding the initiated eyewitness category to include nurses. Although the group includes women, the women are also part of the military, uniformed, and set outside the civilian world. The lack of any civilian presence in the film was commented on by Ed Rampell, who, in a 16 March 2001 *Honolulu Weekly* article "Disney Does Dec 7th," pointed out that "there was not one significant Hawaiian/local character in the entire script" (8). The lack of civilian presence in attack films, including mini-series and documentaries has been a constant complaint over the years, and their narratives continue to be found mostly in written texts.

The moral of the narrative, stressing the dangers of the selfish individual and the need for sacrifice to a greater good, are consistent with *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *December 7th*, though betrayal is depicted on a personal and intimate level, rather than a national or cultural one. Triumphalism, muted in *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, returns on both an individual and national level, along with its messages of the requirement for unrestrained violence to ensure national security. As in *December 7th*, the Japanese attack is a justification for aggression. Like the earlier film, *Pearl Harbor* assumes an audience familiarity with events preceding the attack, as well as an audience familiarity with icons from the film and *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, using them to recall emotions and actions without extensive narration.

Particularly in the case of the Japanese, who are closer to Dower's alien than they are to the fallen Fordian heroes of the 1970 depiction, the film also uses the previous films' iconization of the war ship and airplane, and their association of the combatant with their machine. The approaching attack planes threaten almost every aspect of American life, including young baseball players, Boy Scouts, mothers and girl children and established religion. Figure 3.26 overtly depicts a woman hanging laundry, but careful examination shows she is in the act of kneeling before a cross with a bassinet at her feet. She cowers, as the huge airplane seems close enough to crush her. The battleships are shown more as Kathryn Kane's havens of domesticity than warships, and remain almost unseen until they are under attack. When they are shown, it is as a home, rather than a machine of war.

Pearl Harbor uses a love story plot to solicit personal identification with emotional reactions to the attack, while attempting to reinforce its mythic associations and icons. Rather than humanizing the attack, it continues the perspective of the sacrifice of innocence, the righteousness of vengeance and the purity of American prosecution of the war. It retains the narrowness of the World War II interpretation and reinforces religious rhetoric and American exceptionalism.

Synopsis

The film appears to follow the plot sequence established by *December 7th*, and continued in *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, depicting the attack as a sequence of innocence/betrayal/sacrifice/redemption. The plot of the film is described as a love triangle with a Navy nurse and two Army pilots. It begins with two friends from a farming area of Tennessee, who learn to fly at a very young age. Rafe (Ben Affleck), the

stronger and better pilot, becomes a surrogate father figure for Danny (Josh Hartnett), protecting him from a father traumatized by World War I trench warfare. When the war in Europe begins, both join the Army as pilots, though Rafe is almost disqualified because of his dyslexia. He is saved from rejection by Nurse Evelyn (Kate Beckinsale) who allows him to avoid reading an eye chart, and then falsifies his records. They meet afterwards, and fall in love, bringing together their respective entourages of young pilots and nurses. Because Rafe wants to fly in combat, he secretly volunteers to join the Eagle squadron, a group of Americans who fought with the outnumbered British Royal Air Force. He does not tell his protégé Danny, who he believes is not confident enough to succeed in combat. While flying against the Germans, Rafe's plane is shot down, and he is presumed lost at sea.

Danny and Evelyn have both been stationed in Hawai'i, along with their original group of nurses and pilots. In keeping with all attack narratives, Hawai'i is shown as an innocent paradise, with scenes of beach parties and depictions of Honolulu as an American small town. Evelyn is seen as being usually alone in various idyllic locations around the island, writing to Rafe in England, or reading his letters. (His dyslexia is apparently cured.) After Rafe is reported missing and presumed dead, Danny and Evelyn fall in love. The day before the attack, Rafe arrives in Hawaii, having escaped his downed plane and been picked up by a fishing boat. Evelyn, pregnant with Danny's child, has to choose between the two.

Just as this occurs, the Japanese launch their attack. The subsequent sequence follows the pattern of *December 7th* and *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, showing the attack both as a religious sacrifice of innocents and a heroic defense. Iconic ships and airplanes are used

to represent the group experience of the American forces, while images from Lord's *Day of Infamy* are inserted to add historical underpinnings. The Last Stand scenario is reinforced by emphasis on return fire from individual Americans and Doris Miller's manning of a machine gun. Rafe, Danny and their pilot group fly against the Japanese, initiating the pilots into the alien world of combat, and reiterating the *December 7th* assertion that the Japanese were driven off by the defenders.

As in *December 7th*, funeral observances segue between the attack and the preparation for revenge. In keeping with the earlier film, each death is treated respectfully and individually, rather than mass burials. Separate caskets are on display in a hanger, complete with individual flags, leis and photos of the deceased. Civilians and military move between the coffins, paying their respects and mourning. As they mourn the dead, Rafe, Danny and the other pilots are summoned to a secret mission - Doolittle's Raid. The attack succeeds, but their bombers are forced to land in China, where Danny saves Rafe's life twice before being mortally wounded and dying in Rafe's arms. The heroes of the battle are decorated, as Evelyn describes the impact on America and the world. The visuals show underwater shots of the Arizona, linking the film to the new Memorial orientation film, which also uses a female narrator and images of the submerged wreck.

In the final scene, Rafe and Evelyn have returned to Rafe's Tennessee farm to raise the young Danny. Rafe still seems to be more involved with Danny than Evelyn, focusing on him, and keeping her as a supporting figure. The scene suggests the continuity of the American land, its redemptive and regenerative powers and its ability to become an Eden again.

Narrative and Coding

Pearl Harbor seems to construct a dense narrative with so many mythic and religious references that the narrative is lost to illustrations of the sacred nature of the attack. Its use of archetypal characters, mythic associations and supernatural connections are consistent with the reverential tone the producers sought, but also seems to make the film an exercise in film rhetoric rather than a popular narrative tale. *Pearl Harbor* appears to imitate Ford's style of associating larger concepts through established signs and codings and to use the same religious and cultural icons that he uses. It draws not only from those of *December 7th*, but also from the pre-war depictions of a heroic American past found in Frontier films. The associations with the group, the intense use of religious signs and captioning, and the use of landscape as a dramatic element all recall Ford's methods and techniques. The film contains many more signs and codings than can be enumerated and analyzed in this brief section. Instead, I will focus on those elements that suggest connections to the World War II cultural context of *December 7th*, John Ford's signs and codings, and *Tora! Tora! Tora!*.

Building Mythic Characters

Like *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, *Pearl Harbor*'s characters are subordinated to the needs of ritual, and seem to have as few individual traits as characters in the earlier film. *Pearl Harbor* appears to follow what Peter Stowell calls "Ford's trademark" in film construction, including condensation and cutting of the story to eliminate all but a few characters, recognizable secondary characters designed to showcase the mythic characteristics of the main characters, and direct, forward action that retains only the essence of human interaction (45). The major characters, Rafe, Danny and Evelyn are

iconic figures, but unlike Ford's heroes, they have no idiosyncrasies or internal motivations that make them truly human. In attempting to reduce the characters to the "type" described by Fussell in *Wartime*, the film instead seems to eliminate the personal flaws that allow audiences to identify with the characters. The film also fails in its use of minor characters to amplify the films message and expand on the characteristics of the main characters. Ford uses minor characters to illustrate social types or cultural precepts. The bankers, schoolmarms and town drunks that populate Ford's films have distinct symbolic roles, and are not just background for the heroes, but representations of the society and pressures that build the films world. Victor McLaglan's stereotypical Irish brawler, seen in the cavalry trilogy, is not just a foil for John Wayne, but embodies the immigrant spirit and earthy drive that helped shape the character of the United States.

Pearl Harbor's minor characters, including Red, Betty, Col. Doolittle and the nurses and pilots, instead seem to be shaped to merely reinforce or illustrate the mythic qualities of the main figures. They do not comment on, or impact, the main character's progress, but merely provide a background chorus or comparative example. Red, a pilot who is thin, shy and has a speech impediment, is a foil for Rafe, and he is used to highlight the hero's bravado, resourcefulness and ability to talk his way out of difficult situations. Col. Doolittle is the older father figure, who presages what Rafe will become. This future is made explicit in the dialogue, where Doolittle tells Rafe "You remind me of myself." Danny is a reflection of Rafe, rather than a counterpoint. As a shadow, without the substance that makes Rafe heroic, he is the failed hero, the Judas who loves but betrays, betraying his beloved father and attempting to take his father's place.

Evelyn is the embodiment of the woman as domestic symbol suggested by Kathryn Kane in *Visions of War* (18-19). She is both lover and nurturer, but not overly sexual with the heroic Rafe, or emotionally engaged with him, though they are destined for each other. Even with Danny, who is more emotionally accessible and vulnerable, she is more of a maternal figure than a sexual entity. Nurse Betty, the most clearly defined of the group of nurses, is the opposite of the reserved Evelyn, girlish and effusive, excited by all she sees and needing to be part of a crowd. She aggressively pursues Red, preferring him to the heroic Rafe or the handsome and sensitive Danny. The other nurses conform to the World War II female group seen in films like *Cry Havoc!* and *So Proudly We Hail* and tend to display characteristics that Evelyn, as female lead, does not possess. One is classically unfeminine, the librarian/schoolmarm wearing tailored clothes and glasses, and is shown as being timid and practical. Another is stocky, with dominatrix undertones, a formidable figure that administers injections to male buttocks with a Nurse Ratched attitude. Another is sophisticated to the point of hardness, too knowing to be the girl next door. The pilots that follow Rafe function in the same way, almost undifferentiated, and inferior, but also referencing the stereotypical minor characters of World War II films without being fully developed.

Introduction of Sex

Pearl Harbor attempts to build a romantic drama around the mythic characters of Rafe, Danny and Evelyn, and the selection of a love story as a narrative framework meets the cultural expectations of early 21st century movie audiences. As in Ford's Westerns and Frontier films, it can also be used to express the codings of civilization and domesticity as well as the religious subtext of the Passion narrative. The use of military

nurses as love interests keeps the focus on the uniformed services while appealing to a larger potential audience. The introduction of a feminine element into the narrative, outside of the symbolic femininity and domesticity of the ships described by Kathryn Kane, can be seen as an attempt to expand the pool of eyewitnesses of the narrative, an expansion that was protested by the President of the Aloha Chapter of Pearl Harbor Survivor's Association. In an interview with the *Honolulu Advertiser*, Bob Kinzler said, "We don't want a love story. ... The main point of the picture should be to portray the attack on Pearl Harbor in as factual a means as possible." (*Honolulu Advertiser*, "Pearl Harbor: Reality and Fiction Clash" April 11, 2000, A2) In the same article, Ray Emory, chief historian for the Chapter said, "The event is so sacred it shouldn't be told with fiction. There are too many good stories that are true that could be told."

Ed Rampell, author of *Pearl Harbor in the Movies*, sees the introduction of women not as an expansion of the eyewitness pool, but as a consistent narrative thread. He suggests that infidelity is a subtext for many of the movies that use the Pearl Harbor attack as a plot device, and proposes that the attack is used as a metaphor for punishment of illicit sexual relations. He points to the infidelities of *From Here to Eternity* and *In Harm's Way*, as well as their prominence in the plots of the television mini series *Winds of War* and *Pearl*. He suggests, "unfaithful lovers unconsciously symbolize Japanese invaders, who conspire and commit treachery – on the morning of a Sunday, no less, the Christian day of rest" (xvi – xvii). However, he supports his argument by using mostly the films where the attack is a plot device to advance or resolve the plot, rather than attempts to create historical accounts. Along with using films that only deal with the attack as a plot device, Rampell does not address the Triumphalism that ends almost every attack

portrayal, and which figures prominently in *Pearl Harbor*. If, as he suggests, the consequences of infidelity are destruction and defeat, the transgressor's response is unlikely to be a promise of revenge and righteous anger.

Although *Pearl Harbor* references these films and uses them to make an emotional connection with the viewer, it remains grounded in its stated purpose of recreating a visual narrative of the attack, not just exploring the lives of those affected. Rampell's suggestion of infidelity as metaphor is relevant to the Disney film, since, and as he points out, in *Pearl Harbor* the cycle of personal betrayals and sacrifices are used as a metaphor for the greater betrayal of the attack. It allows an introduction of betrayals and sacrifice without humanizing the enemy Japanese or shifting focus to other possible motives for the attack.

Rampell also does not address the role of the individual's failure to sacrifice his personal desire for the greater good, which is the root of the infidelity. Rafe's leaving to satisfy his personal desire to fly in combat is a failure to assume responsibility for his family, the same failing that dooms the family of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Tobacco Road*. In leaving, Rafe places his own desire and need before that of Danny, his surrogate son, whom he abandons. He rejects his role as a father figure to Danny as well as the social values of domesticity in leaving Evelyn, Kane's symbol of hearth and home and Ford's of the mother. Rafe atones for the sin of self-interest first by his failure in aerial combat. The price demanded is his supposed death. He nearly drowns, but this near death experience allows him to be born again through a symbolic baptism, and he is given a second chance to take his place at the head of the family group. Further betrayal occurs in his absence as Danny and Evelyn become lovers, as they attempt to reconstruct

a family without Rafe. The blame for this infidelity is laid on the male friend, in his role as Rafe's weaker self, even though the female lover initiates the sexual relationship.

This betrayal is portrayed in ways that suggest that the relationship between Danny and Rafe is deeper and more emotional than the one between Rafe and Evelyn. Evelyn, as a mother figure and symbol, remains outside of the emotional engagement. Instead, it is Danny and Rafe who seem locked in a lover's quarrel. Danny and Rafe say goodbye to each other in a last embrace, while Evelyn is separated from Rafe by a door. Upon learning of Evelyn and Danny's love, Rafe seeks out Danny and they attempt physical contact in a fight. When Danny lies dying, Rafe cradles him in an embrace that could easily turn to a kiss. It is Danny's child that Rafe takes flying, rather than Evelyn. The intensity of the relationship between the two suggests that the infidelity was Danny's loss of focus on Rafe, rather than his love for Evelyn.

Infidelity appears to be tied closer to religious and Fordian social bonds, rather than sexual ones. The lack of passion between Rafe and Evelyn, and Evelyn and Danny reinforces this idea, as does the intensity of the relationship between Rafe and Danny. It is when all are in their appropriate roles, Rafe as father, Danny as forgiven son and Evelyn as passive observer that they are at their most noble and connected to a greater purpose.

Landscapes and Settings

Pearl Harbor places its characters into a series of landscapes and settings that reinforce the mythic associations in the narrative. The lush backdrops of the opening farm, images of exotic Hawaii and the flames and darkness of the attack all seem to echo Ford in their drama and symbolic meaning. Like Ford, the film uses light and shadow to

signify spiritual crises and epiphanies and doorways and portals to reflect its characters inner lives. Richard Slotkin, in *Gunfighter Nation* discusses this use of landscape, suggesting that Ford initiated the use of landscape as a cinematic icon (305), and how he uses it almost as a separate actor in his narratives. Slotkin is not alone in his admiration of Ford's use of landscape to express larger meanings, Monument Valley being the most often cited instances. Ford biographer Lindsey Anderson writes that although Ford's actors talked, the landscape said more about them than their words (213). Lee Lourdeaux sees a religious connection for Ford's settings, suggesting that "in the tradition of Catholic visual arts, Ford's world on screen was not based on the Anglo-Protestant Word, but on a visible place that emanated a sacramental reality" (94).

Pearl Harbor seems to strive for both the religious meanings of its setting and their establishment as iconic representations of a heroic people and a lost social and cultural paradise. It opens with an American idyllic landscape, a small farm in Tennessee lit in golden shimmering light (Figure 3.28). The farm is removed from civilization, with its tall crops and trees blocking out any visual references to the outside world, and is evocative of the Jeffersonian ideal of agrarianism. The ramshackle barn implies a freedom from the evil of excessive wealth, while the possession and use of airplanes suggests the farm as a choice rather than a necessity, as well as independence and self-sufficiency. As much Garden as farm, this is the cultivated Eden of Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden*, though here the Machine, in the form of the airplane, and the Garden exist in harmony and support one another. The symbiosis of the land and the airplane allows Rafe to achieve mastery of the Machine while retaining his identification and sustenance from his rural roots.



Figure 2.28 American Idyll

Rafe's childhood on a farm establishes his background as one of purity and is a deliberate rejection of urbanism and excessive civilization. Its presentation as an idyll establishes the American roots of his upbringing, as well as evoking the small town/rural purity as opposed to the urban corruption of popular film coding. In its rural simplicity and romantic poverty, it hints at parallels to the log cabin roots of *Young Abe Lincoln*, and Lincoln's persona as redeemer/leader, which is also Rafe's role. The strength of the land is Rafe's strength, and its simplicity is reflected in his uncomplicated and naïve worldview. Like the *Stagecoach* character of Ringo (John Wayne), who appears out of the wilderness of the desert of Monument Valley, Rafe contains the virtues and strength of Nature and is the most potent when physically connected to them. John Goss, author of *Geography and Film*, suggests that Rafe contains the attributes of the Corn God, in his

connection to the land and his resurrection after sacrifice (East-West Forum, December 2001). His continuing connection to Nature and the land is reinforced by visual connection to the outdoors in all his appearances. He is almost never shown in a closed room, or a small space. When he is inside, he is almost always seen against a light background, with windows connecting him to the outdoors, or in a structure like a hanger or train station that blurs the function of the building as a container.

Like almost all buildings that Rafe is seen in, the medical processing building where he first meets Evelyn is oversized, with an arched and groined roof. Although there are enclosed spaces, he is shown with windows behind him, connecting him to the outside. His first date with Evelyn also occurs outside, on the steps of the medical building, where they drink champagne, and she cradles him in a pieta while she kisses him. Their second meeting takes place in the semi-enclosed space of a train station, with the open night sky visible. Smoke from the train adds to sense of being outside, as it swirls like woodland fog. Rafe and Evelyn stride towards each other out of this enveloping mist, with dramatic backlighting portraying them more like resurrected gods than people, their friends ranked behind them like acolytes, a configuration which is repeated as they train for the Doolittle Raid (Figure 3.29). After a ritual greeting and kiss, their two groups meld in a raucous and overtly sexual nightclub, an enclosed space that Rafe and Evelyn abandon for the outside spaces Rafe identifies with. When the two part before he leaves for England, he remains outside on the street, while she enters the building, and he is seen through the revolving door, looking in.



Figure 2.29 Meeting of Icons

His last glimpse of Evelyn is on the train platform, as he struggles to open a window. Unlike her nighttime appearance with flowing hair and swirling gown, she is contained and wrapped, hair hidden and body concealed in a coat, a figure more maternal and appropriate for the church like atmosphere of the daytime station. Contact between them will be by chaste mail, and their letters to each other will be written and read outdoors, Rafe's as he sits outside a distinctly European edifice and Evelyn's in various scenic spots in Hawai'i. Rafe's positioning suggests that he is engaged in the defense of established civilization, upholding the values of civilization and society. Evelyn's setting references the paradise/innocence theme that is found in every Pearl Harbor narrative, but she is also shown in isolation and communion with Nature. She is alone in the Garden that Rafe is battling to protect, learning to be part of Nature and representing the untouched innocence.

The Navy hospital in Hawai'i where she works is a white temple, high ceilinged and full of light. Until the attack, it is a bastion of women, where men are helpless and, in its introductory scene, naked. Like the in-processing station where she meets Rafe, the Hawai'i Naval hospital resembles a religious structure with arched roofs and tall windows that suggest a cathedral or sanctuary atmosphere and gauzy curtains and pale furnishing that give an impression of a sacred space.

This use of religious styles of architecture is prevalent throughout the film. Rafe leaves from the same train station where Evelyn arrived. From a mystic, fog shrouded cave, it is transformed into a church-like space of tall arched windows and golden light, a reminder of his spiritual role. He takes his leave of Danny in this sanctuary space, heading towards sacrifice. The Japanese headquarters resembles a Greek temple, shaped like an amphitheater with a pool of water as its focal point, and open to a deep blue sky. Flags and ensigns flutter in a complicated pattern and white figures like statues are seen on the amphitheater's rim. The temple's implied gods are the weapons of war, and torpedoes are placed in central positions. Men stand waiting in rigid poses, suggesting postulants, while the high command, like an archaic priesthood, draws diagrams and studies giant maps and scale models of the American military installations on O'ahu.

The depictions of Washington D.C. also recall religious structures, though they suggest the monasteries of Europe, with dark woods and fortified walls. President Roosevelt is reached through long halls lit from above, like clerestory windows in medieval churches. The planning room, where intelligence is gathered and analyzed could also be part of a cathedral's apse, with rounded walls and vaulted ceiling. Its huge

round map resembling a scrying glass or magical mirror. It is dark and atmospheric, a contrast to the blue skies and open air of the Japanese structure.

The consistent use of religious detailing in the set design indicates an attempt to connect the narrative to religious codings without overtly referencing them. The suggestion of the Japanese temple and the Washington monastery insinuates the conflict between the heathen and the Christian that was a large part of the original World War II context of interpreting the attack. It also reinforces the religious aspects of the iconic main characters. This referencing of religion as a subtext is also reinforced by the use of religious music, the appearance of priests and the subliminal presentation of crosses that run throughout the film (Figure 3.26).

In contrast to the religious coding of these structures, the pre-attack city of Honolulu is depicted as a small town America, with diners, a movie theater and a main street quiet enough to stroll down the middle of. Unlike the crowded and raucous streets filled with sailors and civilian workers described by Sheehan in *One Sunday Morning* and Bailey and Farber in *The First Strange Place*, this is an all-American town, decorous and constraining, rather than exotic and challenging. There are no exotic storefronts filled with Asian goods, no tattoo parlors or Hotel Street brothels. Asians are notable by their absence, though one furtive figure on a bicycle suggests the possibility of a few. This is not the seedy Honolulu of *From Here to Eternity*, or even the hyper-civilized groups of a Fordian outpost, like *Fort Apache* and *My Darling Clementine*. It shields the characters from the world rather than exposing them, and serves to provide the only glimpse of the home front America the war will be fought to preserve. Its communal character is such that Admiral Kimmel walks its streets in full dress uniform, without a retinue or sense of

displacement. The small town is a part of both the great and the humble America, and as such, can accommodate all.

The other self-contained world, the world of the battleships, is not showcased before the attack. In fact, it is only seen in glimpses, and is used mainly to establish the character of Doris Miller. The nurses travel by boat between these ships and one crew is shown standing in long white rows for inspection, but outside of these glimpses, the ships are only seen in conjunction with Miller's actions. When they are shown, they, too, are filled with light and pale tones. The cramped quarters and dark recesses of the ship are never shown, and they seem more decorations than working vessels. The huge guns are a shady spot for sailors to read the paper and pet the ship's mascot. Because the ships have not been seen in detail before the attack, their military character is not as apparent, and they fire in defense, rather than in anger.

They only become the focus of the film as part of the post attack denouement. With smoke and flames illuminating the oil-smeared bodies draped on their twisted metal, they provide a transformative landscape than suggests an American passage of the innocent through the hell of the attack, and the movement towards the redemptive violence of World War II (Figure 3.30). This large set piece suggests a mythic Stygian passage that Danny and Rafe have experienced on a smaller personal scale with Rafe's return from the dead. Having donated blood together under Evelyn's watchful eye, they visit this scene together, and attempt to help save the trapped men in the capsized *Oklahoma*. This shared horror binds them even more closely together, as it bound American sentiment and opinion during the war. To make clear the right to American redemptive and vengeful violence, blackened hands reach from the hull of the ship that

will be a tomb and then they fall limp, making a last handclasp between the true, innocent sacrifice and those who will be redeemed and exact vengeance.



Figure 2.30 The Valley of Death

The film ends with the return of Rafe to his childhood farm in Tennessee, and the beginnings of new attempt to live in Paradise. However, this Garden, though still the childhood Eden, is also a paradise built on sacrifice and revenge. Danny's tomb is a prominent feature of the new landscape, a reminder of loss, but also in keeping of Goss's Corn God suggestion as a pagan folding of sacrificial blood into the land to ensure safety and fertility. This fertility is also promised by the arrival of Evelyn as Rafe's wife. The original farm/Garden was a world without women, and her presence, along with the blood sacrifice, promises an America of abundance in a new, more hopeful cycle. Although the land has had its sacrifice, as in the Corn God tale and Christianity, there is resurrection, and a return to Paradise. It seems to be the small town America that

appeared in the OWI and Madison Avenue posters, and was touted as what the war was fought to preserve.

Rafe

Pearl Harbor attempts to incorporate so many myths and codings into its images that its main characters tend to lose clear archetypal characteristics. Rafe, in particular, displays traits from a variety of conflicting roles, though his actions and motivations suggest that he is meant to tie together the film personas of the group oriented and sacrificial World War II veteran and the individualistic and self-referential modern protagonist. To appeal to modern audiences, he recalls the brash, independent hero type of Han Solo from *Star Wars*, and the archetypal fighter pilot of “Maverick” from *Top Gun* (1986).

To reflect the film view of the World War II veteran, he is presented as the mediating figure between the civilian and the experience of war, as well as the strong, silent protector who sets aside his goals and desires for the greater good. His humble upbringing and connection to Nature through the American land tempers the elitism of his extraordinary flying skill. His dyslexia suggests a rough-hewn wisdom that comes from native intelligence rather than academic achievement. He is leader and member of a unified military group with common goals and shared experience, and his skills and strength are suggested as advancing and defending the safety of the group, particularly as he volunteers to fly with the embattled RAF while his group plays in a Hawaiian Paradise. He protects his weaker friend, Danny from the harshness of the world, teaching him how to fly, and shows his self-sacrificing side again by stepping aside from Evelyn in Danny’s favor when he learns she is pregnant by him. He takes part in the

Triumphalist attack of the Doolittle Raid, avenging the Pearl Harbor attack, and survives the war to return to the land as husband and father. This portrayal validates and celebrates the quiet sacrifices of the World War II veteran while reaffirming their heroic status and reinforcing the idealized version of the OWI and genre films.

However, this idealized version of the warrior, which reflects the images advanced by military and PCA film censorship, leaves little room for the heroic flaws and independence expected of film heroes of 2001. In attempting to appeal to modern audiences, Rafe is shown as essentially selfish, and he does not see the moral value of society's strictures when they contradict his desires. Instead, he is focused on his own needs and desires, and never truly makes a transition to working for the good of the group. Unlike Rick of *Casablanca*, who represents the Hollywood hero's shift from individual goals, Rafe's own needs and desires remain his driving force. Rick sacrifices the opportunity to be with his lover, and prepares to lose his life in the war for the greater good. Rafe repeatedly leaves those who depend on him to seek out new challenges to his flying skills, and ends the film where he started, on his isolated farm.

This self-focus is demonstrated early in the film by his stealing a police boat to woo Evelyn, and in performing aerial stunts during his military pilot training. In the first instance, he commits theft for his own needs, and in the second, concentrates on his pleasure in flying rather than the reactions of those around him or the consequences of his actions. Both are presented as boyish pranks, but do not meet the mythic requirements of the heroic veteran, because they have no greater purpose and do not serve to advance group cohesion or bonding. Instead, they merely serve to satisfy Rafe's personal desires, and demonstrate his self-reflexive disregard for social convention.

Rather than accepting responsibility for his actions, like Ford's Ringo of *Stagecoach*, who admits the lawlessness of his quest for revenge, or Wyatt Earp of *My Darling Clementine*, who recognizes his inability to conform to community conventions, Rafe claims exemption from the rules. This evasion of the group ethos is presented in a way to suggest that, as a hero and the sacrificial figure, Rafe is entitled to ignore the group. Claims of special privilege and individual indulgence are considered acceptable because the fighter pilot is generally viewed in American society as requiring a great deal of individuality and exemption from rules. This is showcased in films such as *Top Gun* and is seen in the celebration of the rebellious and individualistic characters of the astronaut/pilots of *The Right Stuff* (1983). (A film, incidentally, which critic Chris Peachment, in the *Time Out Film Guide* suggests, "John Ford might have made" (759)). Using a fighter pilot as a heroic character allows the film to offer this model of individualistic hero that modern audiences can relate to, even as it attempts to portray him as one of Paul Fussell's "types," modeled on the group-oriented construct of the World War II film.

As part of the argument used to exempt Rafe from ordinary rules, the film suggests he has the disarming earnestness of Shirley Temple in Ford's *Wee Willie Winkie*, but Rafe's attempts at ingratiating himself do not have her saving grace of true innocence and mediation. She has the true innocence and charm to break down the by-the-Army-book defenses of Victor McLaglan's training, while Rafe uses flattery and elitist flying skills to escape punishment and responsibility. Where she honestly aspires to emulate her heroes by wearing a military uniform and insisting on participating in Army life as a "soldier," Rafe claims he is attempting to emulate the established pattern of Col.

Doolittle's behavior by breaking the rules. Using these tactics, both are successful in establishing themselves as being outside the normal rules that would govern the military life they demand membership in. But unlike Rafe, who sees the Army as a means to satisfy his craving for flight, Temple's Priscilla uses her freedom from the group discipline to mediate and bring together warring factions of the British and the local Indian tribe. By contrast, Rafe claims a right to break the rules about aerials stunts by claiming them as part of a successful fighter pilot repertoire.

Although he is affiliated with a group, they are shown as acolytes rather than companions, and are used to magnify and define his talents through their weaknesses, rather than to form a community working towards a common goal. Rather than mediating to support the group, as in the model of the combat veteran and the Fordian pre-war heroes like Priscilla in *Wee Willie Winkie*, Rafe's motivation seems to be to search for new ways to practice his flying skills. Even in his intimate relationships, he cuts himself off from other's needs. He rejects Evelyn's sexual overtures and dismisses Danny's continued need for his presence, abandoning them in pursuit of self-gratification flying with the RAF.

The film suggests Rafe's volunteering for the RAF is a personal sacrifice by cross-cutting between images of grey, cold England and warm Hawaiian paradise, but he goes to Great Britain not out of patriotism or a desire to defend those that look to him for leadership, but out of a love of flying, and a quest for new, more exciting challenges in the air. His letters to Evelyn tend towards self-pity, and emphasize that even while flying in combat he is still a loner. His near-death is shown with mystical lighting and religious codings, suggesting it has the sacrificial qualities of British pilots who died defending

their country, but because he is already an idealized character it does not prompt him to real change or growth.

Instead, when he returns from apparent death, he tries to pick up his life where he abandoned it. He arrives on Evelyn's doorstep expecting her to have been waiting for him, and castigates Danny for betraying him with Evelyn while he was presumed dead in combat, neglecting to acknowledge that he chose to abandon them both. This selfishness is only minimally transformed by the Pearl Harbor attack, and there is no sense that Rafe is a nobler person for that experience, although the movie presents the attack as a spiritual epiphany and uses overt sacrificial signs such as donating blood and sunburst backlighting. Rather than transforming his character, the attack provides a means for continuing to demonstrate his unique flying skills.

The film does reference the uniting of American sentiment and the rise of the group ethos by having Rafe admit his error in leaving Evelyn, but it is done while he is preparing to leave again. It also moves him from the individual fighter plane to the teamwork of the bomber, though it maintains Rafe's self-reflexivity by showing the Doolittle Raid as a new challenge to his flying skills. This impulse towards the group is attached to the Pearl Harbor attack by having Rafe summoned to the Doolittle Raid while he is leaving the flag draped caskets of the victims of the attack. In joining a group as a bomber pilot, rather than the loner fighter pilot, Rafe shares his heroic attributes with others like Red, and subordinates his anti-group impulses for the greater good. In a visual reference to implied ties between Rafe and Rick of *Casablanca*, he sacrifices his claim to Evelyn's love by getting on a similar airplane, and leaving Danny on the tarmac with her.

As with many of Ford's heroes, this acceptance of the group ethos and submission to the group is temporary, and Rafe's intentions are to leave the group after the war.

Although the character of Rafe is presented as *homage* to the veteran, his sacrifice is a result of his special skills and following his desires, rather than a gift to others or a defense of group goals. Because he is the heroic veteran, he is not allowed correctable failings from the beginning, and that lack denies him the chance at transformation, even as he goes through transformative experiences. By attempting to keep a modern hero within the censorship and propaganda constraints of the World War II construct, the film continues the myth of the perfect warrior, but that model cannot contain its opposite, the self-reflexive individual, and the trajectory of Rafe's filmic odyssey is too small for a truly heroic character. Although he returns from the dead once, and experiences the Triumphalist Despair of the Pearl Harbor attack, it is still the personal loss of Danny that sobers him and reins in his loner impulse. His love for Evelyn is obviously secondary to his love of flying rather than his sense of duty to his country.

The true Fordian hero, and the World War II construct both require a commitment to something greater than oneself, whether it is the vengeance of Ringo or Wyatt Earp, the dedication of Martin to building a home in *Drums Along the Mohawk*, or the call to destiny of *Young Abe Lincoln*. Rafe dedication is to himself first, and then to Danny, who is his shadow and reflection, rather than a truly separate being.

Danny

Because he tends to be a mirror of Rafe, Danny's character also seems to present conflicted messages. He is the sidekick, but also the admiring son who attempts to emulate his father and grow into his position. He is also the Judas who doubts his hero,

and who, because of that betrayal, must die. As his mirror, Danny shares Rafe's flaws, those of self-absorption and a failure to join with the group, but those traits are portrayed in less attractive ways. Where Rafe's self-absorption rests in admiring his own physical prowess, Danny's lies in his emotional introspection. He broods on his own internal grievances, shown in his failure to join in the pilots' and nurses' dancing and drinking in a nightclub. He does not attempt to engage a woman in conversation, preferring his own thoughts or Rafe's company. However, in the end, he transcends his flaws, and sacrifices himself to save Rafe, earning an implied reincarnation in his own child.

In addition, he suggests the Baby Boomer generation, who attempts to rise to the nobility of the Greatest Generation, but whose lack of self-confidence and willingness to face death condemns him to an inferior status and dependency on his elders. Like Danny, they seem too emotionally sensitive, too protective of their own wounds and unable to make the hard choices demanded of heroes. Like Danny, they wish to emulate Rafe, but balk at the choices that must be made, and the willingness to leave that Rafe's sacrificial aspect is intended to impart. The film presents Danny's ultimate salvation in becoming like Rafe, losing his fear of death, and stepping into the role of the sacrificial veteran who dies that the group may live.

Unlike the assertive Rafe, he is soft, a softness seen in both his name, which is always the diminutive "Danny" rather than "Dan" or "Daniel" and in his appearance, which more closely resembles a 21st century young screen star than a World War II boy next door. He is beardless, and wears his hair in a wispy tousle, rather than sleekly groomed like the others. He is essentially passive, reluctant to take the initiative, waiting for Rafe to show the way. He is generally seen with Rafe dominating the foreground.

This background role begins in their shared childhood, when Rafe takes the front seat of the plane and he the back; as they wait for their physicals and he whispers the answers in Rafe's ear as he hides behind him, and in the nightclub, where Rafe and Evelyn dance while Danny sits at a table in the background. The inability to take center stage, or act aggressively is shown even after Rafe's death, in his relationship with Evelyn, where he first stumbles through returning her handkerchief, and then allows her to take the lead sexually. The only aggressive move he makes is to emulate Rafe in taking an airplane and bringing her flying with him.

Unable to be Rafe, and seemingly unable to function well without him, Danny betrays his would-be savior and mentor. In his inability to be confident and his continued need for Rafe, he fails to practice Rafe's lessons of leadership and self-confidence. Although he is as good a pilot, he lacks the fighter pilot persona and swagger, opting instead for a role more closely aligned with the dependent female. Without that persona, he cannot become the independent heroic figure and therefore Rafe's equal. He fails as a sidekick by not having his own separate skills or distinct talents to compliment the hero's, mimicking them instead. He does not fulfill the role of son by separating himself from his surrogate father or by struggling to build his own worldview and position. His introspection and lack of interest in the outer world keeps him from the role of the innocent small town "Kid in Upper Four" of Madison Avenue, a role claimed by Red.

Danny's betrayal of Rafe is compounded by his attempt to replace him with Evelyn, suggesting the incest of the son taking the father's place. To accomplish this, Danny imitates Rafe and uses the fighter plane as a means of seduction, where Rafe was able to rely on charm and personal appeal. His success with Evelyn occurs only because

she takes the initiative, both by seeking him out and aggressively initiating sex. Their relationship does not make them part of a group activity, and they are only seen together, with Danny seemingly replacing Rafe with Evelyn in an intense one-on-one connection.

When Rafe returns, Danny has grown enough to stand up to him, but also invokes family ties to attempt to reestablish their relationship. The arrival of the police to arrest them for fighting causes them to close ranks and escape, and they end up sleeping together in Danny's car, waking up to the attack. During the attack, Danny's fear of death prevents him from responding as decisively as Rafe, and he almost fails to move his plane from the hanger. Rafe must return to his role as parent, scolding him and staying beside him through the first few minutes of flight, like a father teaching a child to ride a bike without training wheels. Memories of shared flying experiences strengthen Danny, and he is able to gain confidence enough to fight effectively.

The aerial battle sequence is reminiscent of *Star Wars*, particularly in its use of radio chatter and the use of unconventional flying techniques such as "playing chicken" that allow the two pilots to survive against overwhelming odds. The sequence ends as Danny makes his first kill of a Japanese pilot, and they land safely at the burning airfield. In an attempt to stress Danny's growth and the shedding of his less admirable, fearful self, he is shown climbing from his cockpit with the sun backlighting and almost obscuring him with its glow. The mechanic asks him who taught him to fly and Danny replies "*He* did" (Figure 3.31). In this way, Rafe the father has redeemed himself to Danny the son by facilitating his passage to real manhood and true fighter pilot status. Danny's betrayal can be forgiven as he finally validates Rafe's ability to lead and redeem

Danny. Once Danny proves that he can fly without fear, the two are reconciled, though Rafe proves his continued superiority by sacrificing again in ceding Evelyn to Danny.



Figure 2.31 Danny Redeemed through Violence

The uniting of the father and the son is shown as they visit the aftermath of the attack together. They first visit the hospital, where Evelyn is tending to the casualties. Lying down next to each other, and they shed blood into matching Coke bottles, while religious music plays, and a priest gives Last Rights to a dying man. With that gesture, Danny completes the ritual of taking blood in combat and giving it freely in sacrifice. Although this reestablishes the bond between them, and makes him acceptable to Rafe as a mate for Evelyn, both Evelyn and Rafe consider him too emotionally delicate or childlike to be told that she is pregnant. Acting in parental roles, they agree to keep the information from him.

Danny and Rafe, along with the original group of pilots, leave Evelyn to train to fly bombers off a carrier in order to bomb Tokyo in retaliation for the Pearl Harbor

attack. The Doolittle Raid is successful, but the planes are forced to land in China rather than returning to the safety of the carrier. Rafe, Danny and the others, including Red, survive the forced landing of their planes, but they are discovered by the Japanese, who are depicted as being as brutal and inhuman as any of Dower's descriptions.

Here, Danny shifts to another aspect of his character, taking on Rafe's sacrificial aspect and expiating his sin of betraying Rafe while removing himself as an obstacle to Rafe and Evelyn being together. This role is in line with the PCA restrictions against out-of-wedlock sex and its demands for moral compensation for sin, even if the transgression is unintentional. In keeping with this World War II construct, Danny expiates these sins, and confirms the shedding of his weaknesses by saving Rafe's life twice, once by firing at the Japanese from his plane and the second time by attacking the Japanese guard. The redemptive and sacrificial purpose of his actions is emphasized by his crucifixion to a cattle yoke (Figure 3.32). By stepping into the role of the sacrificial redeemer, Danny also finally takes Rafe's place, leading to his ultimate resurrection as Evelyn's baby, who will be raised by a more complete, responsible Rafe.

Evelyn

Like Rafe, Nurse Lt. Evelyn Stewart is more archetypal than real, and her name is biblically derived and associative. She is the Eve and also the classic Fordian character, the mother/Mater Dolorosa of the Passion play, the observer, mother and nurturer. In *Visions of War*, Kane expands on the Ford concept of the female as the symbol of hearth and home and applies it to the war film genre, in films such as Ford's *They Were Expendable* (1945) and Howard Hawk's *Air Force* (1943). Evelyn is tied to so many of the religious and cultural signifiers described by Kane that it is sometimes difficult to

view her as an individual person rather than an icon and metaphor. Though she is the agent for Rafe's betrayal, she is always less important than the relationship between the two men, and seems to be an observer and plot device rather than a character in her own right.



Figure 2.32 Danny's Crucifixion

Like Evelyn, Ford's women were often idealized depictions, cast into specific, almost stereotypical roles: the nurturing mother, the sorrowing mother, or Mater Dolorosa and the fallen, but redeemable woman. It can be argued that *Pearl Harbor* assigns Ford's roles to Evelyn in much the same way it uses the Fordian hero in Rafe. Evelyn is Rafe's spiritual guide, much as Ann Rutledge is the guide for Abe in *Young Mr. Lincoln*. Like Ma Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath*, she is abandoned, attempting to hold her world together, and like the prostitute Dallas, she is a fallen woman, who has lost her propriety and can only be saved through the intercession of a hero. Like Ford's women,

Evelyn has very little sexuality, or strong emotion and even her love scenes are more ritualistic than emotionally compelling. She is instead self-contained, absorbing the sorrows of those around her and providing benediction and support, but not personally involved.

As with many of Ford's women, Evelyn takes on the role of the Marian, the Catholic mother, who mediates between God and Man, and who understands and consoles (Figure 3.33). She plays this role for Doris Miller, appearing to him after he has won his fight, affirming his worth as he shares his frustration at not being able to be trained as a gunner, and again at the funeral, where he has found the path to go on in the Navy. In the hospital scene, her role as mediator is crystallized. She is chosen to triage the incoming wounded, to separate those who are dying from those who might be saved. Armed with a red lipstick, she travels down a misty corridor into the sun. There she mediates between death and life, marking each man and choosing his fate.

She has played this role before, in her first appearance. Dressed in white, she is the gatekeeper that challenges the fitness of the hero Rafe. He overcomes her resistance, but though she allows him to pass, she also exacts a price by giving him a painful injection in the buttocks. She is the mediator and gatekeeper again, as she initiates Danny into sexual manhood, a role for which she wears red, instead of nurse's white. Danny's sexual initiation takes place in a gauzy white pillar of white that strongly resembles a woman's vulva, and at the same time a return to the womb.



Figure 2.33 Evelyn as Symbol – Mater, Tempress, Solace

She becomes the mother and nurturer abandoned as her two men reconcile and leave on their secret mission. In keeping with her role as the Mater, she finds a way to observe them from afar, the classic Marian figure. With Danny's death, like Dallas in *Stagecoach*, she is redeemed from her errors, and is free to be with Rafe. They return to the frontier wilderness of Rafe's Tennessee farm, and assume the duty of raising Danny's child without the flaws that diminished his life.

Betty

As a contrast and amplification for the introspective and reserved Evelyn, her fellow nurse, Betty, is portrayed as very sexually and emotionally open, though innocent. Betty is blonde to Evelyn's brunette, young to her maturity and passionate to Evelyn's

reserve. She seems to represent the Fordian/Passion play figure of the Magdalene, the fallen but redeemable woman. The name 'Betty' itself is suggestive of sexuality: Betty Boop, Betty Page, Betty Grable, Backseat Betty, etc.. The Magdalene figure is seen in the array of redeemable fallen women found in Ford's films: the half-breed Chihuahua in *My Darling Clementine*, Dallas in *Stagecoach* and Denver in *Wagonmaster*. These women do not have the standing of the Mater figures because they lack a moral purity, and they do not function as a means of uniting men. Instead, they are outside the group because they do not conform to strict propriety. Betty has the potential to be a Mater, but her emotions are too open and freely given, and she has not suffered enough. Her interest in sex (she asks Rafe "you have any friends?"), however innocent and channeled into an appropriate venue, is indicative of the self-interest and inward focus that can be dangerous to the unity of the group.

She is fortunate enough to be attracted to an equally innocent partner who lacks her sexual exuberance. Her chosen mate, "Red," is the "Kid in Upper Four" whose innocence acts as a control on Betty's sexuality. They become engaged, but agree to wait two years to marry, until she is 19. Once her sexuality is channeled into a socially acceptable form, her brashness is shown as innocence and lack of worldliness. Since she has aligned herself with an appropriate male, she can serve as the female victim of the attack. There were no nurses killed, including those aboard the USS *Solace* that was docked in the harbor during the attack. However, Betty's death in a hail of gunfire allows the film to peripherally connect the sacrifice of the sailors with other military and civilians. She meets the criteria of innocence, she is killed attempting to reach her duty

station, and her death will be shown as a catalyst to cure Red's stutter and dedicate him to the cause of vengeance (Figure 3.34).



Figure 2.34 Death and Redemption of the Magdalene

Doris "Dorie" Miller

Doris Miller is the only character to appear in all three films. He has no role in the Passion play framework, but his presence in *December 7th* was the most recognizable of the many deliberate references to individual heroic narratives the film depicted. Miller is one of the most frequently re-used images in *December 7th*, appearing in written texts and film documentaries, and seen almost as often as the crumpled superstructure of the burning USS *Arizona*. Miller's stature as an icon is also demonstrated by his own display in the USS *Arizona* Memorial's Visitor Center, even though he was assigned to the USS *West Virginia*. He is the only enlisted man so honored; other displays focus on group activities and accomplishments, rather than individual actions.

The three representations of Miller show a progression that reflects the evolving cultural status of African-American males in films. In attempting to establish him as a fully realized hero and unifying icon, he becomes increasingly competent, assertive and masculine, but at the same time, historical accuracy demands degradation and marginalization. As a result, he is always depicted as being both more and less than the actual man. In all three films, Miller is depicted as much smaller and light-skinned, less formidable and threatening than the actual man. In photos of the awards ceremony where he received his Navy Cross, the real Miller is huge and very dark skinned. Standing by himself, apart from the White officers, he seems awkward and out of place, with downcast eyes and wearing a rumpled uniform with sleeves much too short. However, a portrait taken immediately after the medal ceremony shows a powerful, dignified man who looks forward bravely. These two images, the hapless servant and the noble hero are the essence of the Miller icon.

Miller's story became known in large part because the Captain's Aide submitted him for the award. Because of his size and strength, Miller was sought out by the Captain's Aide to attempt to carry the wounded Captain Bennion to safety. Unsuccessful in their rescue attempt, the two men manned an empty machine gun station, a deed the Aide mentioned in his citation to accompany the award of the medal. Although the original citation does not mention Miller actually downing an airplane, *December 7th* and *Pearl Harbor*, both visually suggest that he did, and it has become part of his legend.

Miller's story was well publicized, and seized upon as an example of the racial unity the OWI wished to promote. His presence in *December 7th* demonstrated their theme of inclusion of African-Americans in the Pearl Harbor experience, stressing that

they supported the war and could and would perform heroic actions in support of the common goal. It also suggested that such actions would be acknowledged and applauded by society as a whole, giving African-American encouragement to join, and perhaps change, a segregated and discriminatory Armed Forces. The pre-war Navy restricted African-Americans to its Steward Branch, which provided servants for cooking, cleaning and serving meals in the ship's Officer's Mess. As a member of the Steward Branch, Miller, like all African-Americans of the time, was not considered a true crewmember, but a second tier functionary who provided personal services for officers which White sailors would not be expected to perform. His promotion opportunities were extremely limited, and he would not exercise authority over sailors in other specialties. Even as the OWI used narratives like Miller's to appeal to minorities, they obscured the institutionalized racism of the Armed Services by touting celebrity tokens like Miller and boxing champion Joe Louis, who spent much of his time in the US Army on promotional tours and campaigns.

The importance of the theme of unity and of Miller as its icon is reflected in his subsequent appearances in *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor*. He is portrayed as dying in both *December 7th*, and *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, although in reality, he survived the attack and received the Navy Cross for gallantry, as seen in *Pearl Harbor*. This repeated film death, in contrast to known fact, may serve two purposes. First, it connects an African-American with the sacrificial martyrs of the attack, providing a point of identification for an often ignored or debased minority. Conversely, his death after having assumed the role of a White male may be a subtle reassertion of the status quo. An African-American with a gun may turn it against other enemies after the war, so his death in sacrifice to the

White-dominated country becomes a display of devotion to the status quo, as well as an act of heroism. Killing him symbolically after his transgression against racial norms atones for his encroachment and he remains in the unthreatening and the subservient posture expected of an African-American in the 1940s. The images can be read either way, depending on the perspective of the viewer.

To meet twenty-first century expectations of portrayals of African-Americans, *Pearl Harbor* attempts to establish Miller as fully masculinized while downplaying historically accurate racial discrimination. Boxing was a popular recreation for Navy personnel before the war and a winning fighter was a prestigious figure. The real Doris Miller was the heavyweight champion of his ship, the USS *West Virginia* and *Pearl Harbor* uses his fighting ability to establish a more masculine, less emasculated world for him, showing him fighting and winning against a larger, White opponent. Efforts to keep Miller within the World War II context of race relations appear to create some difficulties in the *Pearl Harbor* script. To accommodate the historical and the mythic views, *Pearl Harbor* shows Miller as having personal contacts and opportunities that would have been impossible in the protocol of the 1941 Navy. He is shown as preoccupied with the idea that he was not taught to fire a gun and complains frequently about it. Although this device is probably used to highlight Miller's bravery when he does man a gun during the attack, the effect is to make him appear out of context, since he must have been aware of unequal treatment before he joined. Also, on a large ship like a battleship, not everyone will be assigned to man weapons. Firefighting, damage control, and other jobs keep many crewmembers below decks during battle, and many never fire a weapon as part of their duties. Carl Clark, an African-American MessMate during World War II, writes in his

memoir *Pieces From My Mind* that most mess stewards were assigned battle stations in the ammunition magazine, a dangerous job that would keep them below deck. Doris Miller himself was assigned to battle stations in an Anti-Aircraft weapons magazine, though because of damage to the *West Virginia* he was unable to serve there and instead was detailed to assist in moving the wounded (Goldstein *The Way it Was* 77).

For the film, he is promoted from his actual low rating of MessMate 2nd class to Petty Officer, a mid-level non-commissioned officer rank. This symbolically raises him above the common sailor, and contrary to an authentic World War II context, Miller is given a personal relationship with the ship's Captain, Merlyn Bennion, who is depicted as speaking with a Southern accent. Naval officers were almost all graduates of the Naval Academy at Annapolis, an institution that still encourages a formal relationship between officer and enlisted ranks. An informal visit to the galley would have been almost unthinkable for a ship's Captain of the time, as would be chatting with the African-American cook. The improbability of a Navy Captain from the South in the galley is strained further by his calling Miller "son."

Miller is also allowed to interact freely with white nurses, specifically Evelyn, in her role as Mater. They meet as she tends to wounds he receives during a boxing match. Before the war, segregation and racism would have strictly limited the contact, even in an official capacity. Ship's doctors and corpsmen would have tended to him, rather than the land-based nurses. As Beth Bailey points out in the *First Strange Place*, women in Hawai'i were scarce and highly sought after; class and race division would have prevented contact with each other. However, the meeting is consistent with the OWI construct of the war and military, where common bonds outweigh differences of class

and race. It also serves to include Miller within the religious circle of the Mater's care, and her protection. They see each other again after the attack, when he comes to grieve over the Captain's coffin (3.33).

Having spent most of his screen time rebelling against the rules that kept him from being a full member of the crew, Miller's first impulse during the attack is to race to the side of the Captain, the man in charge of the system that oppresses him. He comforts the Captain as the man dies, affirming his obedience to that system. Having lost his father figure, Miller wanders the ship as it is under fire, and finding a gun, inserts himself into its shoulder harness and begins to fire it.

Firing a gun is the action that defines Miller, and his growth as an icon can be traced in his relationship with the gun he is shown firing. In *December 7th*, he lies on his back as he fires a small hand-held machine gun, dying as he fails to clear a jam (Figure 3.9). The gun is portable, but Miller never stands, and he is replaced by a White sailor, who clears the weapon and continues firing. In *Tora! Tora! Tora!* Miller is shown emerging from the ship and racing across the deck to a 23-caliber Anti-aircraft gun, which is bolted to the deck. It has a slender aiming sight, and a backrest to lean into while firing (Figure 3.20). This Miller fires it competently, though directly ahead, rather than at the sky. The destruction of the USS *Arizona* appears to kill him, too. This is a step up both in his position and the size of the gun, and he is dressed in a mess attendant's jacket rather than *December 7th* and *Pearl Harbor's* white tee shirt.

In *Pearl Harbor* Miller's gun has not only expanded in size, it now has two barrels. Giant braces, reminiscent of a theme park ride wrap around his shoulder, making him an integral part of the gun. As he fires, he screams in an oddly orgasmic way. Like

Doris Miller of *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, he appears to be firing horizontally, rather than at the sky. He continues to fire, and a Japanese plane is shown in his gun sight, falling away in flames to strike an adjacent ship. The gradual expansion in the size of the gun suggests the expanding modern acceptance of African-American men as full members of the Armed Forces, even if the historical context cannot (Figure 3.35).

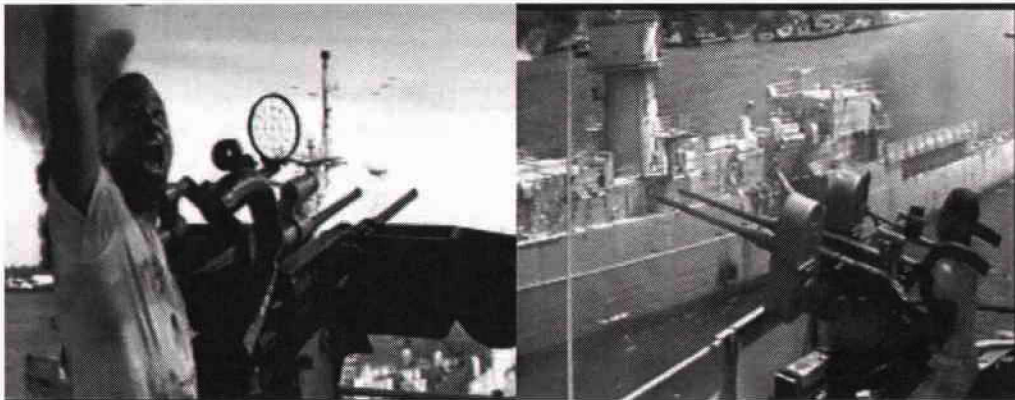


Figure 2.35 *Pearl Harbor's* Doris Miller – 21st Century Man

After firing the gun, Miller is shown as a dispirited mourner rather than a vengeful warrior. His loss of his Captain and momentary assumption of a White man's position seems to have left him drained and disoriented, rather than purposeful and angry, as is the case with Rafe and Danny. Instead of actively working to mitigate the disaster or help with the rescue efforts, he floats in a small boat, observing the destruction. Miller rescues a flag, presumably his Captain's, from the water and mourns the dead alone. As a survivor and mourner, he goes to the Captain's coffin and there rededicates himself to the group goal of defeating the enemy. This dedication seems to be more a result of a personal attachment to the Captain rather than a result of the transformative experience of firing the gun and killing the enemy. He is the only one at the Captain's coffin, and the scene suggests Miller as a childlike "faithful retainer," an unfortunate tone that keeps it from being poignant. Set alongside his protests, the sentiment carries an undercurrent of

the Uncle Tom role expected in 1940s Stewards, but that the 21st Century Miller should not display.

The historic Miller is problematic for modern audiences in search of iconic heroes, and the emphasis on firing the gun and insistence on his success in downing an airplane are probably intended to mitigate the less desirable aspects of the story. But like the main characters, whose conflicting characteristics make them opaque rather than complex, *Pearl Harbor's* melding of the mythic and modern Miller does justice to neither.

The Japanese

Pearl Harbor seems to attempt to draw on *Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s images to provide icons to depict the Japanese. They appear only briefly, in quick scenes that recall *Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s more extended narratives. The Japanese are never named or humanized, except in brief sequences before the attack force launch. In images drawn from *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Hawaii-Marei Oki Kaisen*, the prayer at the Shinto shrine, the ceremonial sake, and the tying of ceremonial bands are depicted, but without dwelling on individual faces. The film reprises *Hawaii-Marei Oki Kaisen* and *Tora! Tora! Tora!* for depicting the carrier launch, reverting to the earlier film's presentation of a daytime launch, rather than the more accurate launch in darkness.

By using *Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s iconic images for the carrier launch of the Japanese, *Pearl Harbor* associates itself with the film's nuanced humanistic portrayal without totally re-staging it. In the same way that *December 7th* uses coding from Ford's earlier films, and that *Tora! Tora! Tora!* appears to have appropriated its signs and codes from *December 7th*, *Pearl Harbor* seems to use *Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s familiar images to provide

the cultural referencing for the Japanese without devoting extensive attention to their depiction.

John Dower, in an article “Complexities of Pacific Theater Need to be Told”, printed in *Honolulu Advertiser*’s 10 June 2001 edition, comments that the Japanese of *Pearl Harbor* are “a far cry from the old image of the invaders established in John Ford’s ... *December 7th*, sweeping in on our Hawaiian paradise like a droning horde of locusts” (B4). He writes that “Following the precedent of *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, they have taken care to portray the enemy as admirably disciplined and capable” (B4). In fact, once they leave the deck of their carrier, they become exactly like Ford’s depictions - robotic, swarming hordes. In publicity stills and advertisements, the image of the Japanese remains the iconic Zero established in *Tora! Tora! Tora!*. When Japanese faces are shown in publicity photos, the images are tinted a deep blue (Figure 3.36). What may drive Dower’s comments is that in referencing and replicating *Tora! Tora! Tora!*’s humanistic portrait of Japanese, and restaging a few iconic scenes, *Pearl Harbor* seems to appropriate the earlier film’s narrative and associations, in much the same way it does with John Ford’s signs and codings and in its use of images from films like *Titanic*, *Star Wars* and *The Right Stuff*.

The musical captioning for the launch sequence is a blend of Taiko drums playing a rhythm distinctly similar to the “tom-tom” music used in Western films to signify Indians on the warpath. The Japanese commanding officer, a composite of Admirals Yamamoto and Nagumo, bears a distinct resemblance to Admiral Nagumo in *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, whose face had an Amerindian cast. As in *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, the “sleeping giant” quote will be made on the deck of the Japanese carrier, but by the composite, rather than

Admiral Yamamoto. The association with a sneak “Injun” attack is emphasized by the score, and Japanese characters are introduced with the beating of tom-toms under the dialogue in Japanese, captioning that continues in each scene depicting the Japanese Navy. The long version of *December 7th* contains vignettes of covert Japanese spies, who take advantage of American innocence and openness to gather military information as part of a network of spies that includes the Nazi Germans. In line with Ford’s suggestion of widespread underhanded spying by the Japanese, the spy returns in *Pearl Harbor* complete with a camera, and reverts to the sneaked glances and covertly gathered information of *December 7th’s* long version.



Figure 2.36 Alien Enemies

Though the Japanese spy is depicted as covert and sneaky, the actual spy, Ensign Tadeo Yoshikawa, had few of the sinister characteristics shown in the film. However, he did use sightseeing to gather information during tourist tours, invited his secretaries and

female embassy staff to join him, and did his picture taking quite openly. A short while before the attack he rented a tourist plane to fly over the harbor and photographed the ships. But rather than being a sinister figure, he frequented bars and teahouses and favored aloha shirts (Clarke *Ghosts* 45-47).

As in *December 7th's* long version, *Pearl Harbor* also suggests the complicity of Japanese-American civilians as spies. In one scene, a local dentist receives a phone call from an unknown person in Japan, and gives out information on the weather and location of Navy ships. The incident is drawn from an actual phone call to a Honolulu housewife, the well-known "hibiscus" call, where a caller from Japan asked what flowers were in bloom, presumably using a code for the ships. The woman's culpability was never clearly established, and the dentist's is also left uncertain (Clarke *Ghosts* 120-129).

During the attack, the Japanese planes are shown as flying extremely close to ships and the ground. The closeness of the enemy helps to highlight the efforts of Miller and others in a Last Stand defense. The ability to place humans in the scene with the iconic planes, rather than just showing them with battleships helps to add a human element to the battle that is missing from *Tora! Tora! Tora!* It also subtly validates the accounts of witnesses that planes were close enough to see the pilot's faces, an event that seems to have occurred an improbable number of times. Clarke suggests that these accounts may be prevalent because witnesses attempt to personalize their experience, rather than viewing their attackers as machines.

Hospital

The hospital sequence seems to perform two functions. It confirms the religious meaning of the sacrificial deaths and establishes the figure of the Mater Dolorosa as the

symbol of grieving America. Although *December 7th* focuses on the dead, instead of casualties, Ford anticipates the Mater Dolorosa early in the film's field Mass, when the priest advises the men to write home to mother, and he continues the image in both funeral sequences of the short version. In the first funeral, the gathering at the graves is composed of civilians, both male and female, but at the second beach service, where the Mass took place, the only civilian present is the grieving female. In his "talk to the dead" sequence in the long version, Ford also uses images of women, and although most are grieving mothers, he does include one new mother, whose son is born on his dead father's birthday, fulfilling the promise of resurrection. In *Pearl Harbor* women are participants in the attack, though only in a peripheral way. Their main purpose is the same as in Ford's film - to show a mother's grief and intercession.

The differences between the actual attack and the feminine world of the hospital are seen in radical changes to the film's cinematography. Unlike the sharp focus of battleship row, the hospital scenes in *Pearl Harbor* are distorted in framing and color, giving them a dreamlike quality. The sound is also different, muted with voices heard clearly only intermittently. This disruption of color palette, tone and camera perspective provides a means of separating the ritual sacrifice of the casualties and the ships from the supporting narrative of the medical staff and volunteers. While the film acknowledges their contributions and they are seen under attack and dying, they are removed from the scene of the battle both physically and through visual effect. Although participating, they are not associated with the iconic ships and their crews.

This may be to provide a forum for a composite of the civilian experience, particularly since Betty is dressed in civilian cloths when she dies, rather than a uniform.

Allowing an experience of the attack without iconic references solves the difficulty presented by expanding the validating group. It recognizes death and suffering of others outside the primary group, but isolates the nurses and others from the Last Stand defense of the harbor and the airfields. These characters are never associated with the major images of the attack, the ships and airplanes, and their associations do not extend to the sacrificial tableau of the Harbor. Although the film acknowledges their contributions, it does not establish an icon for them or allow them to be associated with established icons such as ships, even though the USS *Solace*, a hospital ship, was in the harbor at the time of the attack. Even while including the medical staff, the film maintains a hierarchy of participation and sacrifice.

Inclusion of the hospital presents an opportunity to move from the World War II context of the suppression of blood and mutilation as seen in *December 7th*, and the idea of the wounded as stoic, willing sacrifices in Blake Clark's *Remember Pearl Harbor!*, but this expectation is subordinated to the mythic requirements of the attack. *December 7th*'s deaths take place out of sight of the camera, with the exception of the one young sailor, whose face is tenderly bandaged before an officer kneels to cover it. In Clark's book, emphasis was placed on the idea that the casualties were all disciplined, quietly waiting their turn for attention, and dying with smiles on their faces (134-136). This heroic anecdote maintains the religious quality of willing, innocent sacrifices and stresses their attributes of martyrdom. *Pearl Harbor* moves very slightly from this position, keeping its dead either unmarked or mute and off-screen, maintaining a lack of mutilation and blood that might detract from the purity of the sacrifice.

The horrific experiences of hospital staff in combat is generally still suppressed, even in movies like *M*A*S*H* and numerous hospital dramas. *Pearl Harbor's* lack of focus and blurring of images in the hospital sequence diverts attention from the visual absence of horrific injuries and uses sound rather than image to depict suffering. Although amputations are mentioned, and men are covered in black oil, most of the casualties are not grotesquely wounded, and are being treated. Burn victims are not shown, and the most graphically wounded casualty is also the one that Evelyn saves. The replacement of blood with oil suggests the iconic death of the ships rather than human individual suffering, offering a perhaps unintended but effective way of suggesting death without showing blood and mutilation.

The hospital is also the scene of Danny and Rafe's reconciliation, as they both give blood, sitting side by side, the blood flowing with historical accuracy into matching Coca-Cola bottles. As noted, this represents Danny's acceptance of the shedding of blood, including his own, and the reconciliation between the two. The background captioning is the sound of a priest comforting a dying man, while religious choral music is sung and the light streams in slanted rays. The religious references, paired with the giving of blood, specifically tie Danny's loss of his fear of flying in combat to an epiphany.

Recovery

The recovery sequence follows *December 7th* in its depiction of honoring the dead through religious ritual and in showing the transformative effect of those deaths. The baptismal theme is continued as a priest, attended by two sailors, prays over the bodies still floating in the harbor (Figure 3.37). A camera shot from underwater, entitled "*Dead*

Angels” is repeated, tying Rafe’s resurrection and Danny and Evelyn’s rebirth to the promise of resurrection for these dead (Figure 3.38). The image of small boats searching for survivors duplicates the images of the searchers in the movie *Titanic*, emphasizing the pathos and innocence of the dead. Hands reach up from the hull of the capsized *Oklahoma*, and fall limp as men drown, providing an impulse for anger and rationale for the unrestrained violence to come. The Admiral and his staff, in spotless white uniforms, ride motor launches across the harbor to view the destruction. They travel through dark canyons and smoke, and corpses dangle from struts and float in the water around them (Figure 3.30).



Figure 2.37 Religious Rites – Baptism and Resurrection



Figure 2.38 Dead Angels

Though not as culpable as the officers of *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, they too must stand and see the result of their failures. The Admiral is handed the telegram warning of a possible attack, and after reading it he drops it into the water, where it lands next to a floating corpse and a flower lei. The image is in keeping with the film's layering of messages and meanings. The lei, floating next to the sailor recalls the *December 7th* sermon at the field mass, where the priest suggests "a pikake lei for Mom." It also presages the floating of leis that will become the standard memorial gesture for dignitaries at the USS Arizona Memorial. From the corpse, telegram and lei, the camera climbs to an extended overhead shot, showing a panorama of the floating sailors and burning ships.

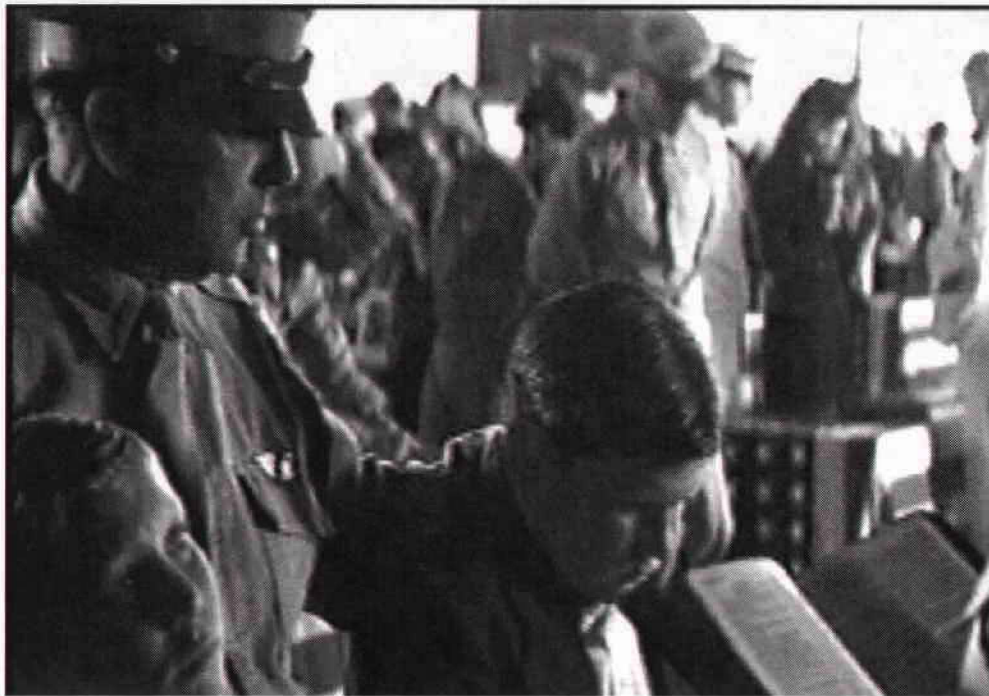


Figure 2.39 Individualized Death

In keeping with Ford's portrayals of the dead being honored individually, the film depicts the casualties arranged in neat flag draped rows in a huge hangar (Figure 3.39). This is a visual image familiar from the Vietnam War, rather than World War II. In reality, the need to quickly dispose of a large number of bodies forced the use of mass graves, and there are still unidentified burials at Punchbowl cemetery marked only with the inscription "December 7, 1941." In *Pearl Harbor's* depiction, civilians and military are shown paying their respects to the dead at a large ceremony, reminiscent of the Robert's Commission service shown in *December 7th*. Ford's priest appears again, leading a similar funeral service, but on a larger scale. Similar to the *December 7th* field mass, he stands framed in the opening of a structure, this time a hangar, dressed in green.

In both films, contact with the dead is transformative and redemptive. In *December 7th*, the priest becomes a warrior, as the second verse of *My Country 'Tis of Thee* promises Divine blessing. In *Pearl Harbor*, Dorie Miller visits his Captain, and

finds his sense of military pride and group dedication renewed. He straightens and salutes, as Evelyn, in the role of the Mater, watches him (Figure 3.33). Red, Betty's fiancé, rises from her coffin with Evelyn's hand on his shoulder, no longer the "Kid in Upper Four" but a grimly determined man who has lost his stutter. Danny and Rafe face Evelyn together, and their deliverance comes with a telegram, calling them away to a new sacrificial mission. She is left with the dead, and the task of rebuilding the domestic homefront.

Revenge/Triumphalism

As in *December 7th*, the focus of the true redemptive recovery is in the preparation of the machines of war and the skill to adapt them to new needs. The inclusion of the Doolittle Raid as part of the Pearl Harbor attack is consistent with Engelhardt's Triumphalist despair, which demands a unified, violent response and a victory to offset defeat. The unification is symbolized by Danny and Rafe's reconciliation and their transfer from the individualized fighter to the more powerful, but also group-centered bomber. Like Tex, the fighter pilot in Howard Hawks' *Air Force*, Rafe the individualist must merge with the group in order to achieve the war's goals, and his skills must be used in a disciplined, united effort, rather than the freeform of the aerial dogfight. Revenge is dependent on the group and their machines, as opposed to the natural skill of individuals like Rafe.

The raid is successful, though as John Dower points out in his commentary on the film, it "maintains the mystique of American innocence by doing the opposite of what it does in depicting the Hawai'i attack: it never follows the American bombs to their destination" (*Honolulu Advertiser* 10 June 2001 B4). Fearing discovery, Doolittle's

attack force was launched further from Japan than initially planned and were out of fuel before they could return to the carrier. Instead, they instituted the planned alternative of landing in Japanese-occupied China, hoping to rendezvous with Chinese resistance fighters. In the actual raid, five American pilots were captured and executed as war criminals, but in the film, this is not mentioned. Instead, the pilots are attacked by Japanese as they crash land.

Danny saves Rafe's life twice, first by strafing the attacking Japanese search party with his bomber, then by throwing himself into a Japanese soldier about to kill Rafe. That he has redeemed himself through sacrificing his life is made explicit through a visual crucifixion. His diversion allows the Americans to overcome their captors, but he is mortally wounded. With his last breath, he gives Evelyn back to Rafe, and charges him with raising his son. Rafe, Red and the other pilots are rescued by Chinese partisans, and return to Evelyn and Hawai'i.



Figure 2.40 Rafe and Danny – Redemption and Resurrection

Validation

Pearl Harbor seeks validation through context and emotion, but also through appropriation of other cultural icons and messages and association with modern film icons. It attempts to suggest its authenticity by adhering to World War II contexts in its

allowable images and messages and in its continuing suppression of social ambiguity and cultural tensions. The historic context is followed not only in costuming and sets, but also in the behavior and attitudes of the characters. *Pearl Harbor*'s world is built on the culturally unambiguous world of the Production Code. In doing so, the construct of the morally untarnished, error free military seen in newsreels is reinforced and further codified. There is no room here for Fussell's "Great SNAFU" and even minor failings are rectified and forged into strengths. This perspective is reiterated as fact even though Adams, Winkler, Fox, Fussell and others have stressed how realities of World War II American society are not reflected in the visual presentations due to censorship and propaganda.

Pearl Harbor also attempts to claim historical authority by referencing written texts. Like *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl*, *Pearl Harbor* includes a number of visual references drawn from Lord's *Day of Infamy* and Clark's *Remember Pearl Harbor!*. The clothesline incident of Figure 3.26 is drawn from an eyewitness account, and the film adds religious and cultural overtones to reinforce the wartime propaganda associations. In using details that can be referenced back to written texts the film advances the idea that its larger elements are also historically verifiable even though they are fictitious. *Tora! Tora! Tora!* used this referencing to written text in a similar fashion, though more as a means of displaying the depths of its research. *Pearl Harbor*'s referencing seems to attempt to evoke emotional responses in much the same way that John Ford used iconic references in *December 7th*.

The film's producers bolster their claims of authenticity and depth of research through publication of a movie tie-in book, *Pearl Harbor: the Movie and the Moment*.

Using visual images and text, the book exhibits the attention to detail in design and staging, and lists the sources used for re-creations. Each character and several important scenes are given a written explanation, complete with quotes and references to written texts like Lord's *Day of Infamy*. The actors' reactions to the plot are stressed, as well as patriotic sentiments attesting to the importance of the event. By displaying attention to detail, the book suggests an actual re-staging of the attack, in contrast to director Michael Bay's claims of showing only the "essence" of the attack. As Shlain suggests in *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess*, and Postman fears in *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, the written text is used to expand and reinforce the image, rather than the image illustrating the text.

Because the image, rather than the written text, dominates the narrative, communication depends on emotional and intuitive meanings. Emotionally, *Pearl Harbor* draws on John Ford's pre-war depictions of a Catholic, immigrant, group-oriented America, suggesting the same sense of historic continuity for its narrative. It uses landscapes in ways similar to Ford, signifying and shaping the characters. Evelyn's Hawaiian Eden helps connect her to the absent Rafe, the post-attack harbor resembles the Valley of the Shadow of Death that America moves through to Triumphant resurrection, and the Tennessee farm is the original Garden, where Rafe and Evelyn will live out their lives.

Pearl Harbor also depicts Rafe as a Fordian, mediating hero with special skills and abilities, who understands both the group and the Other, and is able to function in both worlds. Although he is patterned after Ford's Ringo Kid, Abe Lincoln and Wee Willie Winkie, all of whom can balance the tensions between civilization and the

wilderness, his being seems to be focused within the narrow confines of the airplane and Danny and he does not have a connection to a larger world. Rafe stands outside the group not as a true mediator, but by choice, a self-absorption that conflicts with the World War II group ethos. This may be in part because he is intended to conform to both the World War II context of the perfect warrior and the self-reflexive modern hero. In this respect, the film seems to fail because of the emphasis on individuality expected of modern heroes conflicting with group centeredness.

The assignment of the additional role of the savior is one aspect that attempts to continue Ford's portrayal of the attack as a sacred event. In suggesting its characters as metaphors for a sacred Passion play the film returns to the emotional voice of *December 7th*. *Pearl Harbor* expands on his representations of betrayal, sacrifice and redemption, expressing it on the personal, as well as the cultural level. The personal is found in the love triangle of its main characters, the cultural in its representations of the World War II society they live in. Ford's innocent sailors playing baseball reappear as unquestionably innocent children who watch the attackers fly past their little league field, the Last Stand defenders, including Miller, are superhuman in their abilities, and the enemy returns to his place as mechanized and almost faceless, seen mostly in the icon of the Zero airplane. As in *December 7th*, the attack is bracketed by overt references to Christianity, visually and in music and captioning, leaving no doubt as to the response demanded from the viewer. The religious subtext is also one that returns the narrative to the Triumphalism of *December 7th*, suggesting the need for unrestrained violence directed against an unsanctified foe. Even before Doolittle's Raid, the weakest character, the Judas figure Danny, is redeemed and transformed by flying in combat against the faceless Japanese.

At his moment of truth, Rafe helps him overcome his fear of failure and redeems him from his childhood scars. Lee Kennett, in *For the Duration*, remarks on the American puritanical perception that the war “was therapeutic... somehow good for us” (182-183). The transforming power of the war on Danny and Miller recalls this OWI construct of the sacrificial civilian and the pride of the production soldier. The underlying messages of the beneficial aspect of the sacrifice are rooted in Ford’s assertion in his films that “people must die for anything of value to be achieved. People die so that others may live, so that the building of society can continue” (Place 7).

Pearl Harbor marks a return from *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and its attempt to present an unemotional, secularized version of the attack. In the 1970 film, the emotional aspects of the attack were subordinated to an attempt to establish an authoritative visual representation without the emotional subtexts of World War II. The 2001 film returns to overt Christianity and Triumphalism. It reaffirms the cultural importance of the Last Stand defense by the American forces and the continuing affinity for redemptive violence in the American psyche. Its use of *December 7th*’s iconic images and emotional associations suggests strongly that the ritual icons of the attack and the emotions they are intended to evoke have not changed since John Ford’s film. Although imperfectly presented in the film, and obscured by the need for a self-reflexive, individual hero, the underlying text is that the individual must sacrifice for society; that in the face of betrayal and defeat American society is unified and unambiguous, and that betrayal and redemptive violence are the necessary, transforming acts that keep it from decadence and corruption.

Although it uses the perspective of individuals, the film is a symbol-driven depiction, which reaffirms the machine icons established in *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and remains within the emotional purity of *December 7th*. The film raises no questions, and in fact, almost ignores the reasons behind the attack. Unlike *Tora! Tora! Tora!*'s condemnation of bureaucracy, the film seems to exonerate Admiral Kimmel as well as the intelligence agencies of Washington D.C. In *Pearl Harbor* there is no American blame beyond that of the individual betrayal and the failure to read the mind of an alien enemy.

The film seeks its emotional authority not only by appropriating Ford's film techniques and his use of religious subtexts, but in its attachment to survivors as validating authority, as well as referencing the Visitors Center and Arizona Memorial. This is done in the film by maintaining the separation of the military from the civilian, and by reinforcement of the association of the survivor with the icon of the ship or plane as a means of establishing the hierarchal precedence of the survivor. This precedence by iconic association is seen in how the role of medical personnel in the larger narrative is limited in the film by failure to associate them with an icon, though it allows them a peripheral role through their appearance with strafing bullets and explosions. They are not part of the Last Stand defense, and their experience can be argued as being derivative of those who are associated with the iconic ships. Even the representative death allowed this ancillary group is of a character (Betty) whose behavior had already placed her on the fringes of appropriate social behavior, and that death could be argued as a refining of the group as it prepares for triumphal revenge, rather than an innocent sacrificial martyrdom.

The producers and cast forged strong public links with various Pearl Harbor survivors' associations and with the USS *Arizona* Memorial. By claiming proximity with them, the film seems to suggest that it has their approval and authority. This seems to suggest a relationship with the television documentary, all of which depend on the icon of the survivor and the Memorial to establish their authority. *Pearl Harbor's* producers follow this attempt at association in the accompanying movie tie in book and in publicity. *Pearl Harbor: the Movie and the Moment* features three different survivor group photos, as well as personal recollections that document the film's depicted incidents. Quotes from the survivors are placed within the text and cited by the cast and crew as inspirations. The result is an impression of an adherence to the survivor's stories and desires, even though they had initially expressed reservations about the idea of a love story.

The cast and crew also began the filming with a visit to the USS *Arizona* Memorial and widely publicized images of them standing reverently in the shrine. Dressed in suit jackets, the main cast members and the producer and director are depicted with hands over hearts, and the ceremony is recounted in the movie tie-in book. A double page color photograph of the cast at the Memorial also appears in Ed Rampell's *Pearl Harbor in the Movies* (48-49). The last scenes of *Pearl Harbor* are of underwater shots of the sunken *Arizona*, similar to those found in the orientation film (and the film *Titanic*) and several of the documentaries. These shots tie the film directly and explicitly to the USS *Arizona* and television documentaries, while inferring a closer alignment of the film's perspective and the historical narrative than is the case.

Although the producers repeatedly claimed the film was a fictive, impressionistic piece, the appearances of the survivors and the Memorial allow it to assume some of their

authority by suggesting their approval and association. The film's premiere took place on the USS *Stennis*, a Navy aircraft carrier brought into Pearl Harbor for the event, where the survivors were honored guests, continuing the suggestion of assumed authority and historical accuracy.

Mythification of the Narrative

Whatever its strengths and failings, *Pearl Harbor* will be the last film of the attack made at the scene of the attack, and the last that will be made in consultation with a group of living survivors. Ford Island, where both *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor* were re-staged is being converted to a housing and light industrial area. It is also unlikely that another major film about the attack will be made for some time, since both major efforts of the last 60 years have not been successful in quickly recouping their production costs.

Because it is the last attack narrative that will be made using the voices of eyewitnesses, *Pearl Harbor* has attracted a great deal of attention, and its references have been analyzed extensively in seminars, even as critics dismiss it as a mediocre work. Part of that attention may also be because the film seems to appropriate a wide range of icons, messages, and codings and apply them to its interpretation of the attack. The presence of so many references and signs suggests that while the film attempts historical accuracy, it is mainly intended as a mythic, rather than realistic presentation of the attack. It seems to deal almost entirely in emotions, rather than facts, but at the same time, has removed everything truly human, and replaced it with archetypal symbols in ritual roles. Its emphasis on Christianity and a sacred Triumphalism also argues for a mythic

interpretation, as does its appropriation of Fordian Frontier/Western conventions, which are mythic in themselves.

Pearl Harbor places the attack within the realm of a universal myth. Its layering of myriad signs and codes is a shotgun approach to attaching coding to its images, as if it is attempting to attach itself to every possible aspect of the trope of betrayal/sacrifice/redemption. Even as it proposes to place a human face on the attack, its use of the World War II context ensures that the censored reality becomes the normal, accepted depiction of the attack, and eliminates the last vestiges of ambiguity and social deviation. Instead of expanding and diversifying the view of the World War II military, the film reaffirms Ford's historical perspectives and communal values, adding mythic qualities to characters already weighted with expectations of heroism.

In maintaining the OWI and censorship perspective of the eyewitnesses to the attack, the film continues a narrowly constructed, rigid narrative that does not deviate from *December 7th*. The characters, both named and representative, appear to reinforce the view proffered by the gatekeepers of the Pearl Harbor attack narrative, and reaffirms the combat survivor as the sole redemptive figure, pure, sacrificial and holy. Despite the introduction of nurses as eyewitnesses, it reaffirms the association with an icon, specifically the ships established in *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, as the determining factor in the hierarchy of authority in shaping the narrative of the attack.

In using the personal accounts found in the texts of Lord and Clark, the film restates the OWI view of heroic, sacrificial heroes, some of whom have to overcome flaws to make their sacrifice acceptable. Even Rafe, who is the idealized heroic figure, begins by failing his family of Danny and Evelyn, and does not win his reward until he is

integrated into the group of the bomber crew and agrees to raise Danny, junior. In keeping with World War II types, none of the major characters is truly an individual, but assumes characteristics of mythic and religious roles. Even in its attempts to bring an individual narrative as a new perspective of the attack, the film reverts to World War II film “types” that reinforce the stereotypical view of the Good War and Greatest Generation.

Unlike the Cold War restraint of *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, *Pearl Harbor* returns to Triumphalist despair and the belief in redemption through violence seen in World War II. In tone and philosophy, it is very much a film of that era, believing in the redemptive power not only of violence, but of sacrifice, and the possibility of a return to the Garden. As Cawelti points out in *Six-Gun Mystique*, and Slotkin affirms in *Gunfighter Nation*, the use of violence as a means for salvation is a constant theme in American Western narrative, and the joining of a savior figure with a killer does not present philosophical difficulties to the American psyche. On the contrary, even pacifist heroes such as Dr. Martin Luther King are characterized as “fighting” for rights or a cause, and “wars” on poverty, drugs and crime are an American norm.

The film’s disappointing commercial reception may be in part because it attempts to function as a Ford film without his nuance and understanding of cultural legend. It presents the images and icons of myth and legend, but at the same time, removes everything that made them human. The betrayal has become a faceless bureaucracy, almost inevitable, and the focus is on moving the heroic to the mythic savior, the casualty to the sacred martyr, and the stripping away of their flaws and imperfections from the memory.

Though critically a failure, the film does display the ability of a select group to control and focus the narrative of a major event in American consciousness. Although 60 years have passed, the visual narrative of the Pearl Harbor attack in 2001 remains remarkably similar to that of 1943. Changing cultural values, the cost of re-staging the attack sequence and the turning from the group ethos to the celebration of the individual seem to remain subordinate to the original vision of the attack.

Chapter 3 Conclusions

Persistence of Vision

As the Pearl Harbor attack moves from immediate experience to memory and history, the negotiation of its narration is mediated in new ways. It becomes not only a discreet event, mutually experienced, but also part of a past that needs to be contextualized and interpreted. John Ford's *December 7th* appears to be a dominant part of that process, and despite criticism it remains the authoritative visual narrative of the attack. As it is used and referenced, its cultural reality has influenced how other visual narratives present the attack. Through repeated use of its ideas and images, the film's images and unacknowledged messages are widely accepted icons of the attack, despite their Hollywood origins. With the increased tendency of a computer and television-based society to rely on icons to convey complex narratives, its acceptance and authority in public discourse seems to be universal.

The emotions *December 7th* was designed to elicit help define how other visual narratives present the attack and, when they accept its authority, they too present it as an emotional rather than factual event. This perceived authority of *December 7th* to define the attack creates pressure on other visual narratives to conform to its original World War II context of censorship and propaganda as a means of achieving an aura of authenticity. As a result, the attack remains not only emotionally based, but narrowly seen and interpreted through a strict code that suppresses ambiguity and nuance.

The narrow framework delineated by *December 7th* is the attack as an iteration of betrayal and redemption, with religious underpinnings, rather than a military defeat

stemming from miscalculation and poor communication. The iconic elements that will be seen in almost every documentary and in the two major motion pictures are the establishment of an American Garden Paradise, its betrayal through complacency and self-interest, the resulting deaths of innocents at the hands of an alien enemy and the recovery of American might to strike out in retribution.

Even *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, which attempted a dispassionate recounting, accepts its internal assumptions of betrayal and redemption. Although it validates its version of the attack by translating written documents and scholarly research into images, it still takes betrayal as its framework. This perspective persists even though Dr. Prange, who was its historical advisor, found no betrayal in the attack, merely missed opportunities (“20 Years Later...The True Story of Pearl Harbor” *U.S. News and World Report*, Dec 11, 1961).

Instead of *December 7th*'s external treachery, this film's Cold War betrayal is an internal one. Whether by accident or design, the Japanese demonstrate the group ethos of World War II and Americans separate themselves from each other. It is only as the film begins the attack sequence where the roles are switched, and even then the Washington bureaucracy and ranking officers remain spectators as removed from the attack as the audience. In stressing the film's warning against the consequences of complacency, the film implicates the viewer in the success of the attack. Lt. Col. Fuchida's complicit gaze makes it clear that the viewer shares responsibility, even as the iconic ships tend to remove empathy with the sacrificed casualties.

Although the film gives faces and names to the Japanese, it also establishes the Zero, the faceless enemy, as an icon. Despite the previous views of the humanity of the

Japanese, the attack sequence reverts to *December 7th's* alien enemy and the battle is depicted as a clash of machines, with roaring Zeros destroying ships and aircraft. The focus on the ships and planes keeps within the World War II context of the depiction of violence and blood, reserving American death for off screen and anecdotal. People man machine guns, and fight from bunkers, but they are dwarfed by the flames of burning ships and planes. In using the death of machines to represent the death of men, *Tora! Tora! Tora!* continues *December 7th's* imagery of the ships and planes as actors, but the emphasis tends to establish the convention as icon. *Tora! Tora! Tora!* preceded the major written works about the attack by about a decade, and although not an initial financial success in the United States its iconic Zeros fly in almost every composite photo representing the attack.

Its deliberate distancing from emotional images of the attack may be a factor in its acceptance as an authoritative account because it suggests that drama was eliminated in favor of historical accuracy. It removes itself from the overt emotionalism of World War II films, with its even-handedness displaying a scholarly detachment and rejection of popular myth.

Disney's *Pearl Harbor* rejects both scholarly detachment and adherence to written text, returning instead to the partisan emotionalism of World War II. It attempts to use that emotionalism as a mark of its authenticity and to translate the emotions of the attack to a new generation. It makes the betrayal personal and intimate, giving it a human impetus rather than a national or global one. Still, betrayal is the overriding element of the attack narrative, as is the need for redemptive violence and the rewards of sacrifice for the group and the greater good.

In establishing its claims to authority, *Pearl Harbor* appropriates the iconic images of *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, also staging its version of the attack as a battle of machines. Ships die fiery deaths and wounded men are depicted as covered in the ship's blood (oil) rather than human blood. The Japanese return to their role as faceless enemies, contained in the Zero, attacking out of the mountains, and menacing women and children. The ships of the American fleet are manned by humans, but it is still association with these icons that designates martyrdom, rather than the collateral death of nurses and civilians. The nurses and doctors in the hospital are allowed to be ancillary eyewitnesses to the attack but are also separated from its icons of sacrifice and have no true authority to dictate the narrative.

Although the plot follows identifiable individuals, they are also representative types, typical of the World War II context and further burdened with Ford's religious roles. His religious codings and signs dominate the film, both the Passion play aspects of his commercial films, and the religious rituals and signs of *December 7th*. Priests, choir music, and crosses are inserted throughout the attack sequence, and bracket the attack even more emphatically than they do in *December 7th*. The dual burden of religious icon and World War II type seems to suppress their individuality, and therefore viewer empathy, and resists allowing them to move beyond the established heroic models.

Pearl Harbor attempts Ford's techniques and conventions without Ford's skill, striving to build seminal mythic representations of American legend as he did. Its attempt to establish a mythic narrative is instructive because it suggests the selection of messages by the generation who will say goodbye to the last eyewitnesses. They remain precisely

the same as those of *December 7th*, suggesting that public awareness of the attack will continue to remain limited by the film's narrative perspective.

The feature film draws its authority from film documentaries that validate *December 7th's* construct of the Pearl Harbor attack. Documentaries seen on cable networks like the History Channel and Discovery Channel follow the pattern established in *December 7th*, relying on its footage even when arguing different opinions of culpability and innocence. They consistently pair its images with reminiscences of attack survivors, alternating Ford's footage with footage of survivors visiting the USS *Arizona* Memorial and sites around Pearl Harbor. Survivors' narratives, the Memorial and the film are associated by the use of the film's themes and footage in the 1982 version of the USS *Arizona* Memorial's orientation film. As part of the visitor experience, the film assumes the status of an authoritative eyewitness and an illustration for the survivors' experience.

Further authority is claimed by the use of footage that looks to be authentic, whether it actually is or not. *December 7th* is the footage most frequently used in documentaries, but the carrier launch scene from *Hawaii-Marei Oki Kaisen*, a propaganda film captured by the Americans, is seen almost as often. Since both *December 7th* and its Japanese counterpart are used so frequently, it is generally sufficient to use a few moments of their images to allow the audience to build the entire narrative of the attack. The result is that in many cases, both sides of the attack are presented using staged footage, taken from films with clear propaganda intent.

The appearances of *December 7th* and *Hawaii-Marei Oki Kaisen* as illustrations of the eyewitness accounts further reinforce their status as authoritative representations of the attack. When paired with oral histories and reminiscences, the interviewee appears to

approve these images as they accompany his narrative, adding to their authority and authenticity. In this way, the survivor becomes a gatekeeper not only for the oral history, but for the film images that support the story. Their association authenticates its messages and its right to represent the attack.

This use of historical film clips and oral histories as tools for historical documentation and sources for commercial feature films may also have the tendency to establish the interviewee as the driver for the narrative. Because survivors are accepted as the mediators between the attack and visual/oral history, the narrative tends to be limited to subjects they can discuss and that has associated historical footage. A narrative with little imagery to support it, such as the actions of civilian shipyard workers, or the experiences of hundreds of other Stewards like Doris Miller, is seldom given wide exposure.

The close pairing of the survivor and the authoritative images of *December 7th* seems to have resulted in the perceived need for other film narratives to gain approval of survivors as signs of authenticity. The producers of *Pearl Harbor* went to great lengths to associate the film with the survivors groups and to include them in the authentication process. The need for their approval, or at least to avoid their repudiation, means that the narrative remains under the exclusive control of the survivor groups and the iconic images of *December 7th*.

This control maintains the attack as a separate, sacrificial event that can only be narrated using approved icons. These icons are so limited, and so emotionally attached that they become almost more symbolic and ritualized than real. Deviations from the narrative are greeted as a betrayal of the memories of the dead, and as Thurston Clarke

notes, the presence of Japanese at the memorial is still deeply resented after half a century (*Ghosts* 24-25). This same sense of the sacred is not found at the Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Punchbowl Cemetery), where many of the casualties were buried, nor is it found for the USS *Utah*, which is also a tomb. The sacredness of the attack is grounded in the physical location of the USS *Arizona* Memorial and the emotional rhetoric of film images. These symbols are tightly organized and specific and have successfully resisted even Disney's powerful myth making machine.

Context

The ritualization and mythification of the Pearl Harbor narrative and establishment of *December 7th* as a representation of the attack did not take place immediately after the war. The event's importance was established after the Korean War, as the Cold War and Vietnam called the cultural assumptions of World War II into question. The Pearl Harbor Survivor's Association was founded in 1958, the USS *Arizona* Memorial opened in 1963, and the steady stream of books about the event did not appear until the late 1970s. The current Visitor's Center, which for many years was the main source of visual images of the attack through its orientation film, was turned over to the National Park Service in 1980 (Slackman *Remembering Pearl Harbor* 91). Tom Engelhardt, in *The End of Victory Culture*, suggests that memorialization of Pearl Harbor during the Cold War represented the last pre-9/11 remembering of America as a noble and innocent country whose enemies could be drawn in black and white, and who, when betrayed and beaten in a sneak attack, could rally and defeat them. Pearl Harbor was an event that could be placed in a larger historical context of the Alamo and Custer's Last Stand. It recalls pioneer bravery and gallantry of heroic deeds. The development of

nuclear weapons appeared to eliminate the need for personal sacrifice or mobilization of American righteous anger and sacrificial manpower that is the root of the Pearl Harbor narrative. Instead, combatants could destroy and be destroyed with the push of a button, without nobility or connection to other American cultural references or history. In a nuclear war, there would be little contact between individuals and armies, merely an exchange of similar destructive technologies.

Intercontinental missiles allow no time for mobilization and regrouping and leave little to memorialize and mourn over. They negate the need for human courage and resilience in the face of a Last Stand. The sole moral high ground is in a refusal to strike first, a demand to be the victim of a surprise attack, rather than the perpetrator, even without the hope of a triumphant regeneration.

Separation of the Veteran

The national understanding of how to conduct war, brought to its most noble expression in World War II films, appeared to become irrelevant during the Cold war and Vietnam. Rather than the model of the soldier as an individual mediator able to mitigate or avenge in the face of a clearly defined evil, the soldier and civilian were equally powerless to deflect the enemy's blows and equally involved in self-defense measures such as backyard bomb shelters. In the Cold War, the undifferentiated nation faced the enemy, and the continued threat of nuclear war tarnished the luster of World War II's victories. Subsequent failure of both the nuclear deterrent and the heroic mediating soldier model in Korea and Vietnam, and the resulting loss of military prestige, made the codification of the World War II icon appear even more urgent to those with a stake in how they will be remembered.

The post-war closing of the figurative military frontier and the shifting role of the liminal figure of the soldier/outsider was reflected in the plot of the Western film. Michael Coyne points out in *The Crowded Prairie* that the theme of the Western film, including John Ford's cavalry trilogy, moved from its pre-war focus of the claiming of alien wilderness, to the holding of that territory. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Drums Along the Mohawk*, *Wee Willie Winkie*, and *Stagecoach*, Ford's characters are in motion, heading for the unknown, grounded by their immigrant Catholic values and ready to claim it for their own. In post-war films, they are no longer immigrants: their towns and fortresses are firmly established and well on the way to displacing any of the individualistic impulses of the outsider.

Restricting the attack narrative to John Ford's *December 7th* resists a blurring of roles and deflects cultural challenges to the original view of the attack. It maintains the ritual of the stab-in-the-back, the Triumphalist Despair of the Last Stand and ensuing redemptive, unified violence as an American rite of passage. It displays the images and signs that remind viewers that war can mean noble sacrifices made by heroic mediators. It recalls the emotional group experience and the shared memory of newsreels and theaters.

Its warnings against complacency and sneak attacks address Cold War political and nuclear fears, and its heroic depictions speak to the veteran's impulse towards carving an indelibly separate place for himself in the narrative of America's World War II experience. It justifies unrestrained violence as redemptive and places it, along with sacrifice to the group, into the larger framework of American culture and history. It uses the sneak attack theme to frame the event as an historic successor to Custer's Last Stand,

the sinking of the *USS Maine* and the *Lusitania* and recalls the Indian attacks on early American pioneer outposts. It reinforces the innocence of the dead, the blamelessness of America and the savagery of the enemy, which in turn justify the use of unrestrained violence. Using religious and historic references, it ties the attack to a ritual of betrayal, sacrifice and redemption, both the secular event of the Last Stand and the Alamo and the religious Christian Passion play.

Ford presents the attack as a means of refining the American character and another iteration of the pioneer fort attacked by Indians or the stagecoach ambushed in the wilderness of the West. In his construct, betrayal always leads to death and sacrifice, but the group is strengthened by this loss, and the corrupting influences of over-civilization are scraped away. By defining the attack as a recurring rather than extraordinary event, Pearl Harbor can be placed in American history as one of a series of heroic and redemptive Last Stands. As such, it is a painful but necessary experience to cleanse American society of its accumulated sins and restore the original bonds of community.

Slotkin calls the Last Stand “the sanctifying trope of the combat film and the Western alike” (*Gunfighter* 336) and the rationale for total destruction of an enemy in response to that sacrifice. Death at the Last Stand strips away the mask of the brotherhood the enemy has hidden behind, revealing his savage heart. Only death can carry that message effectively, and the living can only honor sacrifice through annihilation of the enemy and the end of their threat to the community. As Engelhardt points out, the sneak attack is “the ultimate ambush ... for it offered up in miniature a vision of the fate the enemy had in store for all Americans, a fate implicit in every

unsuccessful ambush, in any sneak attack. In their hearts *they* desired *our* total annihilation” (37).

From that perspective, the Last Stand construct provides the justification for retaliatory savagery by America – total destruction being the only thing the savage understands. Failure to destroy or to follow the impulse for mercy allows another chance for treachery and makes the merciful American complicit in deaths that result from his failure to act without mercy. This is the message in many American World War II films, where characters die because an enemy life was spared or a humane impulse followed (Slotkin 324). The unswerving and perverted impulse towards death found in the savage Other, even when mortally wounded, is used as further evidence of his inhumanity and insect or bestial qualities.

The righteousness and consequences of such violence is never questioned, and censorship kept the results of such violence away from the American public. The censorship of Hollywood’s Production Code excised much of the ambiguity of American society out of the visual record of World War II, and the newsreels and images used to illustrate the war show only an innocent America, moral and inclusive, living in a world where good is rewarded and evil punished. The universal triumph of the perceived good suggested both a sense of certainty of victory and Divine approval of American actions. It placed the war as a battle between good and evil, with the enemy as a perfect villain and the Americans as perfected heroes. Within the Production Code, the use of violence against evil is not just satisfying, but a requirement of the Code doctrine of moral compensation.

Because all public images seen in the war fit this construct of censorship, there are no authentic images to counter *December 7th's* view of the war. Instead, these perfected heroes become the models and icons who are shown to modern viewers as representative of their society and culture. Attempts to re-create them in modern films can result in the characters of *Pearl Harbor*, whose humanity becomes submerged in their mythic importance. Even as their personal narratives attempt to connect to the viewer, the need to stay within Code/OWI limits distances and idealizes them.

As seen on the screen then and now, the American response to the attack was clean, precise and redemptive. The attack provides the rationale for American might to intervene in the world and save it from antique European corruption and heathen Asian peril. The newsreel American soldier/missionary spreads not only the Four Freedoms, but the gospel of the superior American Way of Life. The Kid in Upper Four comes to save the world, not just from the Nazis and Imperial Japan, but from itself.

The deaths of the Kid in Upper Four types at Pearl Harbor are also necessary as salvific acts, as their martyrdom provides a connection to religious narratives and signs. The addition of religious subtexts agrees with the larger American self-perception as a divinely favored people. As their deaths harden the resolve of the American people and provide an excuse for unrestrained violence, they make revenge a religious duty as well as historically grounded action.

The sacrifice and violence are redemptive, in that they rescue Americans from the sins of complacency and self-interest. In war short films, posters, radio ads and war Bond drives, across the spectrum of the OWI products, the war is the unifier of a nation, a dissolver of the differences of class and race that hold the nation from true greatness. In

these visual images, the country joins behind a single, great task and people are judged by the degree to which they are willing to sacrifice themselves to the group goal. The conduct of the war is tied directly to civilian actions, and the resulting success of the war and the combat soldier depends on the degree of personal sacrifice each person demonstrates.

Personal sacrifice included the subordination of individual desire to the group goal of the war, and this seems to have built a social hierarchy where degree of sacrifice determined social standing, and adherence to the group goals of the war allowed a crossing of class and race lines impossible before the war. In the film world, self-sacrifice to the war was redemptive, with death at the apex of the sacrificial social order. Within the Pearl Harbor attack paradigm, this place is held by those who died during the attack. In the most recent film, *Pearl Harbor*, these actions not only purify and strengthen through suffering and violence, but also save the individual from his own weaknesses and failings.

This ranking makes those closely associated with them the gatekeepers of their stories and the larger narrative. As presented in documentaries, this association stems not only from personal acquaintance, but also from association with the ships that were lost. The ability to influence the attack narrative begins to be tied to the ability to identify with the casualties, but also with an icon. When associated with the historical footage of *December 7th* and the mechanical battles of *Tora! Tora! Tora!* and *Pearl Harbor*, the authority of a narrative source seems to become dependent on its association with an identifiable established icon such as a ship or airplane. This also agrees with OWI themes and cultural context by stressing the association with a group, rather than an individual

action. The exception is MessMate Miller, who is already a representative symbol for a group.

In focusing the attack on the ships, film can establish icons that are emotionally resonant, but that also limit participation in the sacrificial aspects of the attack. The closer the association with the ship, the closer the individual is to heroism and martyrdom. The survivors assigned to the destroyed and damaged ships can claim the status of mediators for their dead comrades and can become their spokesmen. This is the case even where the crewmember is of such low rank that it would have been impossible for him to have understood or influenced events during the attack. Presence and membership become the primary attributes of authority. Those that do not have an associated icon, like civilians and medical personnel, are lower in the hierarchy of the attack and have less authority to shape its narrative.

Outside of the world of research and written works, maintenance of the popular and physical memory of Pearl Harbor is a role assumed by survivors and veterans who have inserted themselves as gatekeepers of the messages, coding, and icons used to narrate the attack. They have effectively established a ritualized function where their participation and approval is necessary for any film narrative about the attack. Walter Benjamin's requirement for an aura of inapproachability in ritualized art is provided by these gatekeepers, who have resisted modification of the classic icons of the event, expansion of the narrative to include other affiliates such as civilian casualties and distancing from the emotional and cultural messages of *December 7th*. What this ability to dictate narrative suggests is the establishment of a new type of mediating agency in the construction of visual histories. Benjamin's aura of inapproachability and limited access

controlled by initiated elite becomes a function of a new type of group, who claim ownership through special knowledge and association, similar to a priestly function. By appropriating the event, they assume authority to select its icons and dictate its visual representations and therefore the emotional responses to the event.

Recognition of their ownership and authority was evident in the making of the revised USS *Arizona* orientation film and *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, and is implied in the use of survivor's narratives paired with footage from *December 7th* in almost all newer documentaries. The most deliberate and overt acknowledgement of the approving function of survivors is seen in the production process of Disney's *Pearl Harbor*. The film's producers not only announced their consultation with survivors, they also orchestrated publicity campaigns that showed the producer, director, and stars at the USS *Arizona* Memorial and in several group shots featuring the survivors. These contacts form an entire chapter in the movie tie-in book *Pearl Harbor: The Movie and the Moment* and were the topic of several newspaper and magazine articles.

There will be no more re-staging of the attack at Pearl Harbor, and the sacred ground of the USS *Arizona* Memorial is being compressed by new development. The construction of the Admiral Clarey Bridge, which created a causeway to Ford Island, cut off views of the Memorial from the surrounding communities. US Navy is implementing plans that will convert Ford Island to a housing/light industrial area, demolishing what had been a relatively untouched area, and making it impossible to use the site (a National Monument) as a set. (Department of the Navy, *Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Ford Island*, January 2002.) Even hilltop views are crisscrossed with wires and utility poles, and the Memorial is seen in glimpses and past obstructions.

There is no place for civilians to see the Memorial except from the vantage points controlled by the military. Like the mediated visual narrative of the attack offered by films, the Memorial is shut off constrained and narrowed to a few approved visions.

Claiming Authority: Pearl Harbor and 9/11

Research for this dissertation began before the events of 9/11 and was directed towards establishing the source and underlying meaning of the limited icons that represented the attack on Pearl Harbor, and how they had resisted change over 60 years. However, during analysis of the Pearl Harbor attack and its visual narrative, several parallels with the 9/11 attack became noticeable.

The most intriguing is the attempt by firemen to establish themselves as the iconic representatives and gatekeepers of the attack on the World Trade Center. In *American Ground: Unbuilding the World Trade Center*, William Langewiesche reports on struggles between the firemen, police and construction workers to control the site, and the conflicts that arose from firefighter claims to special sacrifice and authority. Like the Pearl Harbor survivors, “the firemen’s claims were based on the unspoken tribal conceit: that the deaths of their people were worthier than the deaths of others – and that they themselves, through association, were worthier, too” (156). Firemen also paralleled Pearl Harbor attack survivors in that they are “initiates in a closed and fraternal society who lived and ate together at the station houses, and shared the drama of responding to emergencies” (147). As such, they seemed to have coalesced into an advocate for advancing the view of the world Trade Center collapse through their perspective.

The firemen appear to have been successful in emerging as the defining iconic group of the attack, with a commemorative stamp and poster, a proposed statue, and sales

of NYFD logo merchandise. Interestingly, the World Trade Center affiliation are referred to as “firemen” rather than firefighters, and the attempt to universalize the iconic flag raising image placed on stamps to include different ethnic groups was the cause of widespread and successful protest by firemen. A cover of the *Atlantic Monthly* suggested a religious dimension to both the 9/11 attack and firemen. Shot through a cross made of broken windows into the World Trade Center site, the picture shows firemen moving like monks across the ground. The remaining façade behind them resembles a cathedral wall. The referencing is as explicit as Ford’s crosses and hymns. (Figure 4.1)

Apart from the firemen, casualties have tended to fade into the background, particularly the civilian victims of the attack who do not have an organized group identity and association. The failure to establish icons for them beyond the towers of the World Trade Center has seemed to result in the marginalizing of the victims of the Pentagon attack and Flight 93, which crashed into a field in Pennsylvania. This is very similar to the marginalizing of the USS *Utah* and the civilians and other eyewitnesses of the Pearl Harbor attack. An attempt at establishing an icon in the form of a sculpture by Eric Fischl titled *Tumbling Woman* failed when the piece was deemed “too gruesome,” and removed from the Rockefeller Center.

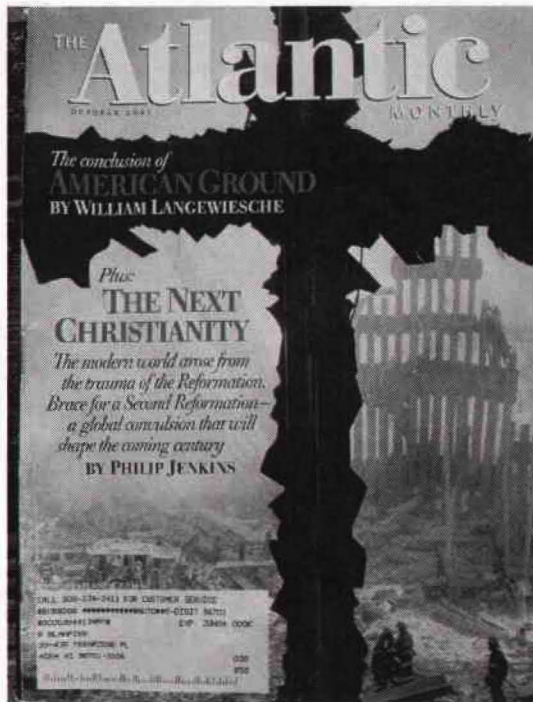


Figure 3.1 American Ground

These parallels with the construct behind the visual narrative of Pearl Harbor suggest that an organized group with similar training and affiliations, such as firemen, may be able to dominate a visual discourse, particularly when they are identifiable by iconic uniforms. Although the attacks, particularly the New York City attack, were intensely visual and thousands of photographs exist, the tendency to narrow the event to selected icons and affiliations that is seen in the Pearl Harbor attack narrative also appears to be operating here.

American response to attacks on the Pentagon, the World Trade Center, and an unidentified third target seem to fall into the pattern of the Pearl Harbor visual narrative. The Triumphalist call for unity was iconized through display of American flags, though the call for sacrifice was not forthcoming, and its absence was criticized. There was an immediate demonization of a faceless foreign enemy and demands for unrestrained violence as a response. Although these are natural responses to a tragic crisis in the heat

of the moment, the similarities have persisted across time and in the actions of the United States. This suggests that the context and paradigm of the Pearl Harbor visual attack narrative is being used as a model for responding to similar events, whether appropriate or not.

Although it provides a touchstone to tie 9/11 to a larger historical framework, the narrative of the Pearl Harbor attack may be inappropriate as a model for responding to modern events like 9/11, since one of the attack's most important icons is the concept of the betrayal of an innocent America. The sneak attack of this model correlates terrorists not only with the Western film element of Indians attacking the fort, and the Pearl Harbor images of Dower's inhuman Japanese, but also the "sneak attack" constructs of the World War I sinking of the *Lusitania* and the Spanish American War's explosion of the USS *Maine* in Havana, encouraging a view of the attack as one of a cycle of incidents, rather than a unique situation requiring independent analysis.

When viewed as one of a series, the heroic Pearl Harbor narrative becomes a desirable model, without examination of its shortcomings. Although it appears to be an appropriate historical model for referencing the September 11 attacks, the construct of innocence betrayed, which is a necessary part of the Last Stand/Pearl Harbor model, diverts attention from the idea of American responsibility for its political influence and military, especially nuclear, power. Insistence on an innocent America, or claims of American exceptionalism, make it difficult to build an internal discourse on national and global responsibility in terms of issues including the United Nations participation and the impact of American culture on traditional societies.

Using the Pearl Harbor model of viewing attacks like 9/11 as a result of unprovoked outside treachery against an innocent nation also arouses expectations of the World War II and Fordian constructs of unrelenting unity and suppression of internal conflict. It suggests the inevitability of Triumphalist victory and redemption of the general populace through regenerative, unconstrained violence. Instead of a measured and nuanced response, it encourages indiscriminate and patriotic unity, along with a return to the World War II pressure to conform and the suppression of dissent. The call for unrestrained violence against a nameless, but alien, enemy encouraged proposals for protective detainment camps for Americans of Middle Eastern descent and may have helped in the acceptance of a military prison camp at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, along with the arrest and detainment of American citizens without due process.

In framing the 9/11 attacks as being launched against innocents, the Pearl Harbor context also suggests a reactive, rather than proactive stance, and continues the cultural notion of the United States as above the necessities of global engagement and understanding. As the perpetual victim and sacrifice, the American perception remains one of elitism and exclusion. Tied to the ideas of a divinely favored nation and exclusive religious morality seen in bumper stickers urging “God Bless America’ and “Pray for America,” it perpetuates ideas of the inevitability of Triumphalist victory.

Ongoing military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq also follow World War II expectations and limitations, including censorship of images of dead Americans. In fact, a ban on photographs of coffins arriving at Dover AFB was put in place soon after the invasion of Iraq in March 2002. The absence of images of their deaths or of their remains allows a romantic view of the war and encourages a view of the dead as heroic. Another

stance that repeats the World War II visual context of posters and advertisements is the pressure to “support the troops” by failing to challenge the fallibility of military strategy or the policies and actions of the Administration and the military.

Military censorship of the war, which would seem problematic in the age of satellite feeds and digital images, may have been able to appropriate and corrupt the detachment of the news reporter by “embedding” them with military forces. Although this seems an attractive option for unfettered press access to military operations and allows a close, uncensored view of military engagements, small units that reporters are assigned to have the least opportunity to understand larger tactics and strategies or even comprehend the engagement beyond their small involvement. Being under fire on the ground level is perhaps the least objective way to report on a battle. Reporters still need military interpretation of their experiences, which in turn influences the reporting more effectively than overt censorship. This is particularly true when the interpretation is given by officers with whom the reporter has been under enemy fire, rather than by a formal and detached briefer or general officer.

The persistence of the visual images of World War II as a model for current behavior can be seen in a 2002 book by comedian and social critic Bill Maher. Titled *When You Ride Alone You Ride with bin Laden: what the Government Should Be Telling Us to Help Fight the War on Terrorism,*” the book uses classic OWI posters to offer new messages for today (Figure 4.2). Like the original posters (Figure 1.8, page 104), these call for sacrifice and change on the part of the public. While Maher makes several solid points about the questionable nature of some responses to the 9/11 attack, he too makes

the assumption that the posters represent an expression of universal cultural belief and virtue rather than government propaganda.



Figure 3.2 Reuse of OWI Themes

Failure to expose the American public to the realities of war can exacerbate not only triumphalism, but also the true understanding of war and the consequences of using military power. For most Americans, war is an elective topic, a report on the news or web site. It can easily be ignored and romanticized. The contempt voiced against European countries before the invasion of Iraq failed to acknowledge that the peoples of those countries have a personal experience of war that civilian America does not, and their experience of fighting goes beyond buying War Bonds and waving flags.

The unmediated use of *December 7th* and other World War II films allows a view of war that is redemptive, heroic and sanctified. Its images suggest that there can be a true American innocence and that the use of violence can be clean and judicious without consequence or stain. In its depictions of true evil, it dismisses the complexities that

allow a healing and an understanding and an ability to move beyond icons to an understanding of root causes. In losing sight of its original intent as a reminder of the emotional impact of the attack, and instead allowing it to become the authoritative visual memory, the deeper lessons of the Pearl Harbor attack may become lost in the superficial associations with myth and legend.

Trachtenberg asks, “How was it seen then?” In the case of World War II historical films, it needs to be recognized that they are constrained and biased messengers that show us only a small portion of wartime America. They conceal more than they impart, and their signs and codes deal in an idealized world, rather than our actual history. Because the world they project seems to be so much better, more connected and dedicated than our own, the temptation is to attempt to judge ourselves by their example. They are a coherent, organized world that suggests that there once was a simpler, easier time that we can almost touch, and that innocence and selfless unity are possible.

These films have lessons to teach us and are precious glimpses into another world, but their use as narratives needs to be carefully delineated and understood within their own context. *December 7th*, usually considered a minor film, has been able to have a lasting impact on how we see the Pearl Harbor attack, because it gives us an emotional remembering that has been accepted as the authoritative narrative. Its emotional resonance is so strong that its lack of authenticity is freely acknowledged and discounted without challenging its authority. If we use films like *December 7th*, with their emotional codings and appeals, to be the dominant narrative of our past, we risk losing the complexities and richness that may be the true American heritage and legacy of World War II.

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