Animation Propaganda in World War II: How Warring Governments Revived a Dying Industry to win the Propaganda War.

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Declaration of Originality

This dissertation is submitted by the undersigned to the Institute of Art Design & Technology, Dun Laoghaire in partial fulfilment of the examination for the BA (Honours) Design for Film. It is entirely the author's own work except where noted and has not been submitted for an award from this or any other educational institution.

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Abstract

In the field of propaganda, the 20th century held some of the greatest strides developing the methodology and practice of creating effective propaganda pieces that were more subtle than obvious things like satirical comics and posters. While animation today is widely regarded as an entertainment method to occupy kids and young teenagers, the narrative use of animation during the 20th century was intended for far wider viewership to play a vital part in the distribution of ideologies that the government wanted to manipulate the public into endorsing

This thesis investigates the government-sponsored animations that were developed during the 20th century, the strategies used to create a visual connection of intended ideology towards opposing countries and implementing unconscious bias into the viewers towards the wars being fought against other countries.

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Introduction

During the 20th century in the Western world, after the first World War had drained the finances from countries and its people were expected to appreciate going to war again directly after the Great Depression, it was evident persuasion needed to be used to make the idea of war palatable to normal people. At the same time, the animation industry which had been experiencing a slow financial burnout were experiencing breakthroughs in their technical abilities that made animations more memorable to its audiences. Political cartoons already existed, but the concept of applying motion to the caricature being depicted and develop a narrative using animation was novel for The Allies. This thesis investigates the correlation between progress in the animation industry, and its subsequent production of propaganda for their government in their respective countries. It highlights how classical animation productions from Disney and the Warner Bros are built upon politically charged material. It also shows how connected early animations are with the method of caricature and anthropomorphism which are used to isolate opponents through the method of othering.

The historiography of animation, a medium that is currently widely accepted as almost solely made to entertain children, contains strong concepts of heterogeneity that are often forgotten due to the modern singular view of its purpose. Therefore, the study of animation history often focuses on learning entertainment-based narrative animation and overlooks the instrumental role animation played when being used as a tool by the governments of countries to visually manipulate a broader audience during the 20th century wars, whose viewership age range extended beyond just children.

It also features an analyzation of the strategies these animations- namely caricature and anthropomorphism, used to serve a visual connection to an audience of a stereotype to the countries they were portraying through their characters, use comparative case studies to determine the intermediality within the animations of the opposing countries, and how their government structure and different ideologies reflected how that strategy was implemented and then distributed in these animations.

Chapter one introduces the political methodology of ‘othering’ and how othering has worked historically to divide an audience from ideologies that governments want opposed. Specifically, it establishes how othering is often expressed visually through exaggeration of features tied to physiology of certain ethnicities. This expression results in both caricature and anthropomorphism, which are both methods of separating the identity visually of someone with a belief that shouldn’t be trusted (‘them’) versus people whose beliefs can be trusted (‘us’). Apart from critical theory, chapter one includes historical visual references from paintings that are the origin of caricature and anthropomorphism which both feature the target in a negative light. After explaining both concepts, it also explains how these methods

were being used in political comic strips in order to twist an average civilian's perspective of war into a humorous outlook rather than one of concern.

Chapter two investigates how politics was integrated in the foundation of the animation industry through being funded by the government. The introduction of technical breakthroughs happening in animation at that time provides context of the interest countries' governments were having in investing in how they could use it. Their goal was to evolve the propaganda they were using to a larger scale. The original political cartoon comic strips could now be transformed into a moving narrative that was easier to visually communicate ideology through absurdist humour that audiences enjoy while watching animations. It also covers how it was utilised to romanticise the war and establish a sense of patriotism to young men facing conscription, that mixed entertainment with underlying messages of patriotic expectation. The characters in these animations demonstrated flawed, relatable characters that were doing silly things but were ultimately rewarded for their dedication to their cause. Or they were subsequently punished by an absurdist form of karma for doing anything that might be deemed not patriotic or self-sacrificing.

Chapter three then continues to analyse how animation was also used to demonise opponents by exhibiting their behaviour through a form of monstrous caricature or anthropomorphism in order to 'other' them, and therefore their ideologies too. It compares animations produced by both The Allies and The Soviets to highlight the influence western propaganda animation had when using caricature and anthropomorphism when visually representing 'the enemy'.

Though at the time these countries were presenting opposing views and ideals for their audiences, like the Allies VS. Fascist Germany and Italy, they would often use the same material from same well-established stories to create an alternative that viewers could already feel familiar with and therefore be more agreeable to underlying symbolism (Cowen, E. 2020) like Winnie the Pooh, or Russia's 'Vinni-Pukh'.

Figure 1: ‘Winnie The Pooh’, *Disney.*

Figure 2: Vinnie-Pukh’.

If an alternative didn’t need to be made, governments were also found to sponsor advertisements that used specific emblematic imagery to twist animations being released to the public into the genre of propaganda. For example, Snow White (1937) was released to the German public after a series of manipulative advertisements for it directed by a government-sponsored Jewish director Kurt Gerron (who was killed after the making of the propaganda as stated by Giesen, R. and Storm, J.P. (2012).) to twist the viewer’s intake of the imagery into symbolism the government had already developed in their minds to associate with negative and positive stereotypes.

Chapter three details how these animations specifically chose traits linked to physiology, for example depictions of the Japanese in western animations in World War II where their defining caricature all had the same visual depiction, and resulting implication in a character who looked like that was sneaky or slimy. There are also examples provided of how the animation industry were encouraged to use well-established characters in propaganda to inflict a bias for an audience to automatically associate the characters they know to be good with what the characters were aligning with, like Bugs Bunny and the Allies. Or to counter, what the characters were making fun of, like Donald Duck’s mocking image of Hitler, which would indicate to an audience that the enemy being mocked reflected in their own beliefs in real life too.

Chapter One: The Act of Dehumanising political opponents through ‘othering’, and how it’s represented through caricature and anthropomorphism.

Regardless of what political ideology is being analysed, whether it be the Allies or the Fascists, both opposing sides used the same psychological tactics in their propaganda for their audiences. The most popular method that can be seen in all forms of propaganda regardless of media is called ‘othering’. The term ‘othering’ was coined by Gayatri Spivak to refer to “a dominant in-group (“us”) and creating an out-group (“them”)” (1985, p.24-26) in order to perpetuate difference in a stigmatized fashion between the two groups. She used the term in reference to the language European countries use when referring to their colonies. The method is utilised specifically to develop bias against the ‘other’ group that is being targeted by establishing an inferior ‘difference’ that the in-group do not possess. This state of ‘difference’ could be either physical or behavioural, but either one should be identifiable to the ‘us’ group that it is not a characteristic they want to share with the ‘other’ group. Alienating the ‘othered’ group does tend to be supported by highlighting the physiognomy of the targets in question in order to create a negative bias associated with the ethnic features of that group. Examples of this are in well-established stereotypes in literature, for example a ‘Jewish nose’ or the ‘Jew’s nose’, which in 1850 was a term popularised by anatomist Robert Knox as cited by Preminger, who wrote the description in a study as

‘A large, massive club-shaped, hooked nose, three or four times larger than suits the face.. Thus it is that the Jewish face never can be, and never is, perfectly beautiful.” (Preminger, 2001).

The statement begins by outlining a clear difference based on a distinct ethnic feature tied to the physiognomy of one group, in order to individuate anyone with that feature from those who do not possess that feature. It follows then by connotating the presence of that physical feature with a negative remark, developing a perception based around anybody who possesses those features as inherently lesser. The term ‘Jewish nose’ very quickly transformed to ‘Jewish face’ in that statement, which then by association implies anybody with ethnic Jewish features can never attain a ‘perfect beauty’. This is othering, because it acts as an implicit warning signal to non-Jewish people to develop a negative bias towards anyone that they perceive to be ethnically Jewish. It creates a distinguishable difference between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and encourages the alienation of people due to their physiognomy.

The reason othering is used is to dehumanise the opposition into a more simplified problem to be solved, because the ‘us’ group have been conditioned to understand their safety and comfort depends on negating the ‘them’ group. Often, the method used for othering a group is by attributing animalistic traits to the lesser group and rendering the general perspective on them as ‘less than human’. The result in the action of othering a targeted group is successfully dehumanising that group. Dehumanisation is defined by David Smith as “attributing a ‘subhuman’ essence to people.” (2021, p.26). In order to emphasise these features that are to be taken as ‘lesser’ by the

intended audience of this strategic method, exaggerating these features in a mocking manner is then introduced as a more blatant act of othering. Dehumanisation veiled by humour and acceptable levels of absurdism that is seen as intrinsic to the genre, this is where caricature and animation are exploited as tools in political propaganda.
The visual language of ‘othering’ is seen with caricature through anthropomorphic portrayals of targeted groups usually based upon their ethnic features and physiognomy. The definition of caricature in the Visual Dictionary of Illustration (Wigan, 2009. P.56) refers to both the exaggeration or distortion of physical characteristics and representing behaviour that is an easily identifiable visual cue to its intended audience. It is the ability to visually communicate invective language through identifying specific features or associated behaviours of a particular group to an audience in a purposefully distorted manner. The first recorded caricatures recorded were political (See Fig 1 and 2), which means it is an inherently intentional established act of distinguishing a stigmatised difference through a visual cue as a means to distort the target. The audience are taught to direct a bias against the representation being mocked in the media they’re consuming.

Figure 3: ’O the Roast Beef of Old England’*, William Hogarth.*

Figure 4: ‘The cow-pock or the wonderful effects for the new inoculation.’, *James Gillray.*

In the first figure, the use of caricature is far more subtle than the exaggerated forms of the second figure. This is due to the difference in media used. The painting exaggerates the size of the roast beef and the depicted struggle to hold it as a form of caricature. The intention is to mock the French Soldiers who are seen hungry and defeated, a friar ‘greedily’ with his hands steepled together. The method of mockery in the painting was then taken and transformed in later years, but the principle behind it of targeting a specific group through an exaggerated act or physical feature remained. The second illustration depicts the crowd of people in a scene of chaos with deformities growing out of them or transforming into anthropomorphic creatures that look beastly. It was created by the anti-vaccine society and published as a method of propaganda against those who took the vaccine as an attempt to fearmonger and develop a bias against the opposition ideology. It established the foundations for caricature as a method to be used to form emblematic imagery as associations to subconsciously develop in an audience’s head through exaggerated outlining of the intended symbol. How this is utilized in ‘othering’ is by taking pre-defined stereotypes of features or behaviour in people suffering from poverty and embellishing them in a level of absurdity that will emphasise a negative connotation in the viewer’s mind. “Caricature is seen as the exaggeration of the defects of a physiognomy” according to David Perkins who, in his study of caricature as both use for humour and invective intent, states

“Recognition can take place with very few clues so long as features in the picture serving solely humour or other purposes (e.g., the ears of the donkey) are not taken to be attributes of the subject's real face.” (Perkins 1975. p. 24)

In political cartoons published in newspapers that were accessible to the general public, this can clearly be identified almost immediately within the illustrations depicting any opposition.

Figure 5: Nazi depiction of Jews, Gombrich.

Figure 6: The Other's Headquarters' *Philip Rupprecht 'flips'.*

Figure 5 and Figure 6 were both created by different illustrators, however the language created around the stereotype of a Jewish person can clearly be seen in both depictions. While the first illustration from the Nazis borders on monstrous portrayal of a beastly creature and the second alludes to an international meeting of Jewish leaders, the same key visual cues – the 'Jewish nose', the Star of David, and more pronounced facial features immediately identify the target depicted. In Fig 5, the writing states. "A bunch of Jews is having a meeting. They let their nations bleed, so the pan-Jewry can prevail- never mind the mountains of corpses!" (Rupprecht 1935).
Apart from physical absurdism, stereotype behaviour is also usually portrayed in caricature. For antisemitic propaganda, that often involved the 'greed' of Jewish people who were depicted to hoard and exploit the wealth of the innocent for their own benefit. This once again is a prime example of

othering, to establish a resentful dynamic between the ‘us’ group who are being stolen from by the ‘others’ in question, who are being portrayed as beastly or animalistic. It develops the notion of a ‘monster’ that needs to be slayed by the patriotic society and emphasizes that the extermination of this group would be a solution to the burdens their own group are facing. This is appealing to the people of a nation burdened with horrific debt from a previous war that they were still suffering under. Alienating a specific group of people that are distinguishable by their physiognomy, and then developing a stigma that associates the worst burdens of society with their intentions as a group is the methodology used when needing to isolate an opponent from gaining any empathy.

Smith outlines that in both the Jewish Holocaust of World War II, and in the Rwandan genocide in 1994, the propaganda that preceded both genocides were pushing the portrayal of both these people as ‘rats’ or ‘vermin’ in written works (2011, p. 26). This incentivised the perpetrators of both genocides to see eliminating both the Jewish and the Tutsis as an act of patriotic duty. It is most effectively communicated visually, which is seen both in political comics, and then progressively popularised in animation.

Dehumanising other people through animated and cartoon media by literally representing characters as animals or as exaggerated caricatures can be executed without as much backlash as writing or speeches because the media itself is already well accepted to be based in a manner of absurdity anyway.

“As a robust mass medium, the manipulative structure can direct, raise consciousness, and relieve the people conscientiously it comes into contact. In this way, propaganda can be applied to strengthen the internal dynamics of communities and generate an insight of unity among the people and undermine the enemy and create a backlash against it.” (Makalesi, 2021. P. 251).

Animation is used to develop a unity amongst one group and creating a narrative makes alienation more palatable to an audience. It has more depth than a comic strip and adds further context to the reasoning behind the necessity for isolating another group. While a single image depicts a caricature through the identification and distortion of the features of another group, the narrative element of animation brings a clearer ability to manipulate an audience by justifying bias through portraying the ‘us’ group defeating the ‘other’ group as a good ending to the story.

Political authorities often communicate a distorted perception of their opponent to their audiences through animation. The pre-established dynamics of the ‘predator versus prey’ trope is often used: depicting the targeted groups as either predatory characters who the audience require defense from, or associating the targeted group with vermin and game to be slaughtered. Either way, it dehumanizes the ‘other’ group to its target audience and develops an excuse for violence or retaliation from the formed group. Which, regardless of media is the effective method of othering as a means to establish a stigmatised difference between two groups of people.

Chapter Two: Governments at War and The Animation Industry: A Mutually Beneficial Relationship.

Previous to 1928, the animation industry was considered a dying novelty. Less than 23% of theatres carried animation, and the demand was very low (Ludwig 2011, p1). Up until the 1930s, animation was a silently played short medium that was shown before the main attraction. This lack of sound relied on the narrative of animation to be visually clear, which meant animators were expected to convey the story through solely sight-based storytelling. Due to this, it meant by the time World War II began and propaganda was needed to efficiently create a sense of collectivism through fear mongering, animation had already become sufficiently developed in narrative-based visual communication now with sound that had been added since 1930.
Initially, in the 1930s animation was still silent, and black and white. However, Ub Iwerks created the first colour animation which was “Fiddlesticks” (1930) that also contained sound. The story of the first animation revolving around two animal characters that display human behaviour immediately demonstrates the animation industry’s experience with seamlessly linking human traits and behaviour to animal characters to an audience, so in later productions when real groups of people are represented through animals it is seamless to an audience.

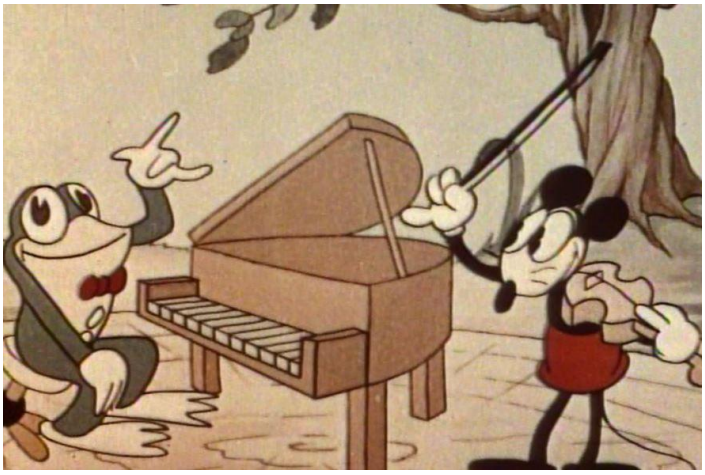

Figure 7 ‘Fiddlesticks’, *Ub Iwerks*.

Figure 8 : Fiddlesticks (1930) *Ub Iwerks*.

Two years later in 1932, Walt Disney developed the three-strip colour process which allowed for even more colour in film, as seen in “Flowers and Trees” created that year. This release led to the further funding for the ‘Golden Age’ of Animation which describes one of the key innovative years in Western, specifically American animation. (Barrier, 1999)

Figure 9: “Flowers and Trees” Walt *Disney*.

Figure 10: “Flowers and Trees” *Walt Disney*.

This story begins in a harmonious society of flowers and birds chirping with a tree couple dancing and playing music. The narrative is then given conflict by a monstrous beastly looking tree attempting to steal the woman tree away which leads the protagonist tree to save her and fight the ‘evil’ tree. In the animation itself, apart from the sound which was new to animation, the movements of the characters themselves imply to the viewers which characters are good versus evil. The ‘bad’ tree stalks towards the dancing tree, and a lizard ‘tongue’ is used while fighting the protagonist tree along with a more ‘clubbed’ branch.

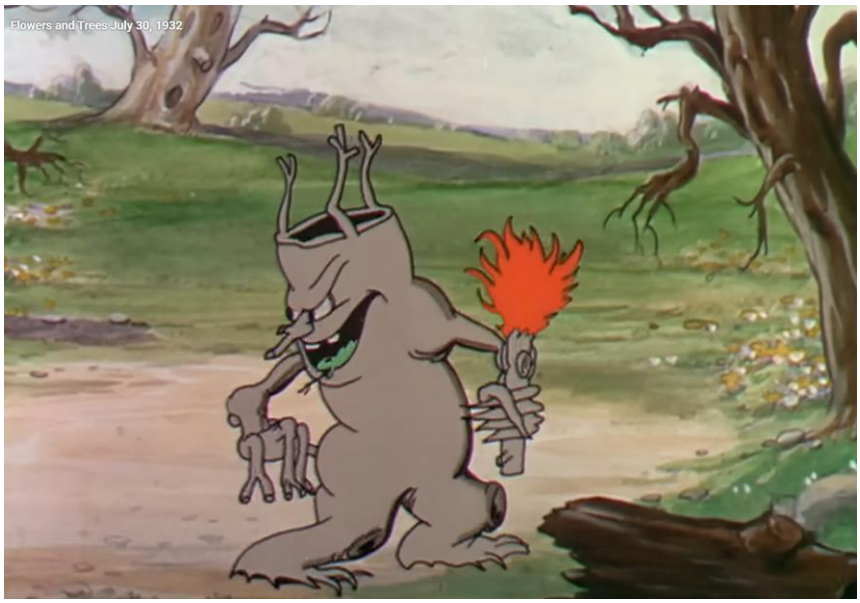

Figure 11: Flowers and Trees’. *Walt Disney*.

Figure 12: Flowers and Trees'. *Walt Disney*.

Already, in the earliest example of colour animation and sound design the baseline plot of a monstrous other causing threat to the innocent fawnlike character which prompts the protagonist character to play hero is established to an audience as a foundational plotline. This plotline can be seen in every propaganda animation that follows in the proceeding years. The animation industry demonstrates skill in creating caricature through motion which is far more clearly communicated than still comic strips with the method of 'squash and stretch' which is considered one of Disney's 'Twelve Principles of Animation' (Johnston, 1981). It purposefully 'squashes' or 'stretches' the character to exaggerate motion or expression, which brings movement to the idea of caricature. This would be immediately a point of interest to a keen government in need of propaganda. In *Flowers and Trees*, there is also a reference to fighter jets made as the birds dive in formation to purposefully cut holes into the clouds as seen in Fig 12, which give context of narratives used in animation pre-WWII taking reference from WWI.

Apart from the creation of *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* in 1937, and *Pinocchio* in 1940 which transformed Disney's experimental animation productions into longer stories, animations like *Looney Tunes* and cartoons were still being played before the main attraction at a theatre. This meant smaller-scale animators had to become familiar with creating a memorable narrative in a short amount of time, using efficient balancing between the story being communicated and the visual and sound being produced. For that, these animations couldn't rely on the expensive rotoscoping and realistic character designs that Disney were producing. The Warner Brothers instead depended on caricature to immediately identify to an audience key visual features for them to read in a matter of seconds, along with the use of anthropomorphic animals that add an inherent sense of absurdism to any story being told. The creation of Bugs Bunny (who was originally nameless) in '*Hare-Um Scare-Um'* (1939) ran for seven minutes and immediately created an understanding for

an audience that Bugs was a mischievous, playful rabbit who was the underdog character they could root for.

Figure 13: Hare-Um Scare-Um.

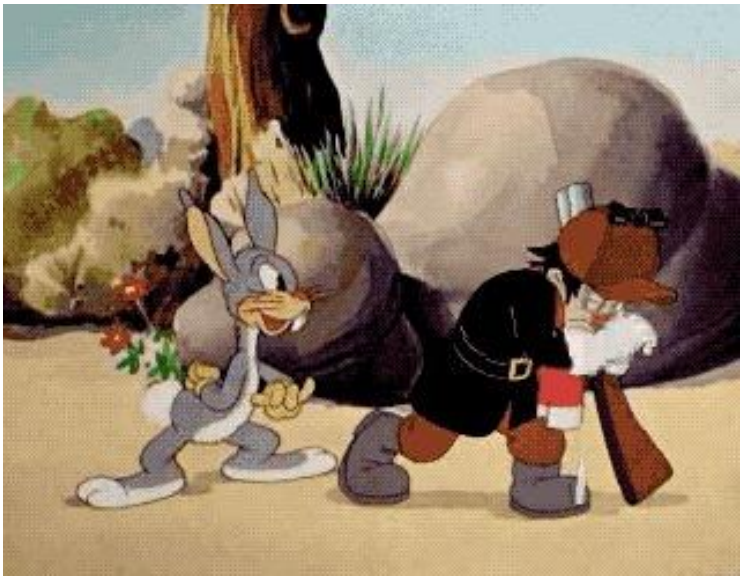

Figure 14: Hare-Um Scare-Um.

The use of caricature taught audiences to unintentionally pay attention to character design and the equivalent moral compass it represented. Apart from the fact a prey animal would already naturally imply an ‘innocent’ character, Bugs’ big eyes and wide smile along with his mischievous behaviour shown on screen and his prancing indicate him to be a design viewers can trust. Including a well-established character that an audience has a predetermined bias towards, was a likely advantage in pushing propaganda, as opposed to

creating a whole new character that viewers were not familiar with. With the state of the Western World in the 1930s during the Great Depression, which had started in 1929 due to the Wall Street crash in the USA and had gone on for a decade, the idea of another war and further poverty was deeply unpopular. In order for propaganda to succeed, the animations being consumed had to sell the concept of war to the public. So, the governments leading the Allies used established pop culture iconic characters to spread visuals that connotated positive feelings with fighting in the war. The use of loved characters like Bugs Bunny, Daffy Duck, and Porky Pig as insignia for soldiers during that time created a feeling of honour and pride around fighting and dying in a war. It satirized the events and distorted the representations of opponents into laughable characters that an audience could enjoy mocking.

Figure 15: Herr Meets Hare', *Warner Bros.*

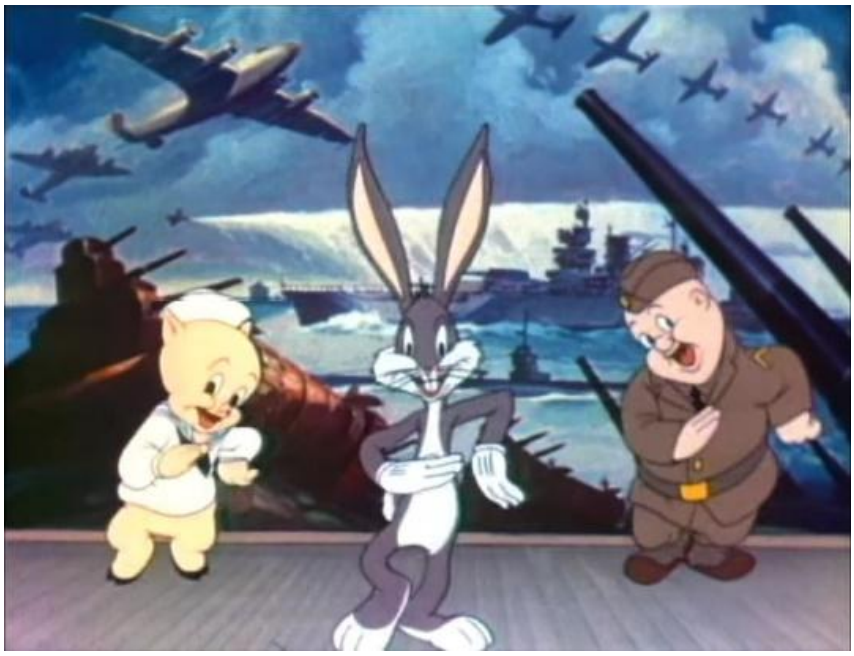

Figure 16: ‘Any Bonds Today’, *Warner Bros.*

Leon Schlesinger, the founder of the Warner Bros., even wrote a letter to the US Director of Training approving Bugs Bunny be used as an emblematic character that was aligned with the military beliefs. According to Beck (2008) Schlesinger stated in that letter “It is my hope that BUGS BUNNY, as their insignia, will be an inspiration to the boys in their work.”

'BUGS BUNNY' RIDES AGAIN—ON A BOMB—The famed movie character created by Leon Schlesinger has become the official mascot and unofficial insignia of the San Angelo Army Air Field bombardier school. The insignia was designed by Lt. Col. Harry Crutcher, Jr., director of training, and drawn by Tech. Sgt. William Walker, post headquarters draftsman.

Figure 17: Cadets posing with Bugs Bunny’, *Hollywood Citizen News*.

Figure 18: 'Cadets posing with Bugs Bunny' *Hollywood Citizen News*.

Apart from encouraging the general audience to see the war as something to be supported, animations were specifically used to target soldiers. During World War II conscription was mandatory for all men ages 18-40 in the countries belonging to the Allies according to the UK Parliament. So, in order to maintain high morale amongst soldiers who were forced into another war less than a generation from the last World War, propaganda was used differently. It wasn't just used to create a negative bias against opponents, but to create a sense of community around the military and invoke a feeling of camaraderie that united the government sending these soldiers to war with the soldiers themselves. Regarding how animation achieves this, Raiti states:

> According to University of Southern California historian Christine Panushka, animation was an effective medium for propaganda because people associated cartoons with something whimsical and jocular; people 'let their guard down' when they saw cartoons because they were expecting to be entertained, not recruited for war. (2007, p 156)

As seen in Fig 11 and Fig 18, Bugs Bunny was a major character being used as insignia, specifically serving as a squadron logo for the Marine Torpedo Squadron. The 'cheeky' expression Bugs Bunny is drawn with while on a real Torpedo and the resulting enjoyment being seen on the marines' faces in Fig 18 demonstrates how comedy and absurdism was being used to sell the war. There were also Private Snafu and Daffy Duck from the Warner Bros. Disney provided the Donald Duck character, both himself and Private Snafu were portrayed with relatability in mind.

Figure 19, ‘Donald Duck in Donald Gets Drafted’, *Disney*

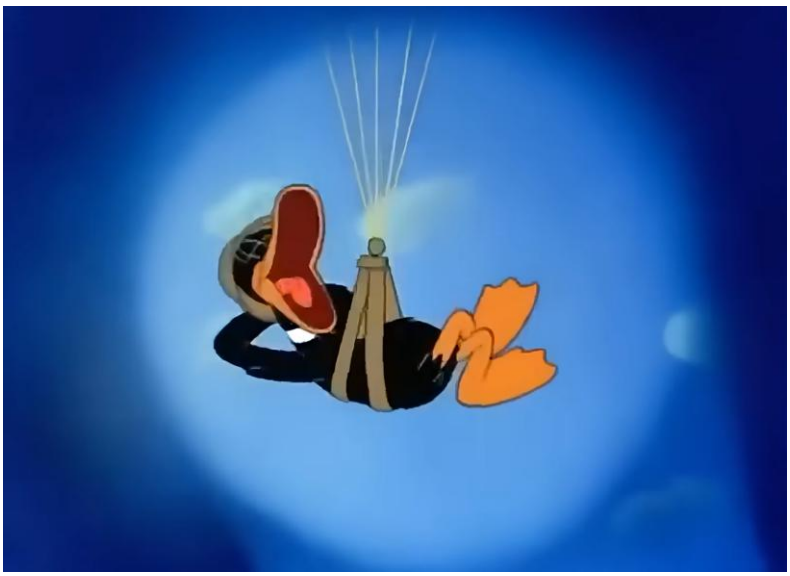

Figure 20: *Disney* Daffy Duck in Daffy the Commando, *Warner Bros*

These characters are seen as the underdogs that are being shown going through the trials and tribulations of being a soldier and were often shown in military training exercises. As stated by Raiti (2007, p159), “From 1941–5 the US government practically bought the Disney Studios, and Disney produced approximately 32 short films as well as numerous educational and instructional film.” Meaning, the educational videos that were produced for soldiers were supervised by the government. It gave the men who were drafted a character that they could relate to and connect with, and the comedic tone of all of these cartoons reframed a brutal reality through the light of absurdism that was then provided as entertainment for soldiers existing in extremely stressful environments. Examples of these light-hearted depictions can be seen in Figure 13 and Figure 14, where both ducks experiencing conscription are being depicted in a comedic manner.

Private Snafu specifically was used for animated training films, commissioned from the Warner Bros. The animations, similar to any other entertainment piece, were no more than five or six minutes long and served as infomercials presented in a more simplistic, readable manner. Fischer stated (2018, p.1) “The military leveraged the success of popular animation to educate and acculturate new enlistees and conscripts who had no previous military experience.” Soldiers being presented with a more entertaining form of media to be educated by through the lens of absurdist cartoon. In regard to the intention the government had, Fischer remarked (2018, p. 2) “Wartime cartoons brought together “the military, the media, and the corporation,”.

Figure 21: Private Snafu’s ‘Fighting Tools’. *Warner Bros*

Figure 22: Private Snafu’s ‘Fighting Tools’. *Warner Bros*

In one example of the Private Snafu videos played for soldiers as part of training, he encounters a Nazi and has the initial upper hand until it is discovered his tools weren’t being regularly maintained, causing him to lose and end up in a German prison camp at the end of it. This twisted very real,

horrific possibility of soldiers potentially ending up in prison camps into a laughable, light-hearted matter. As Fischer observes (2018, p.4) “The cartoons put Snafu through the wringer to demonstrate how to fashion a disciplined body fit for military service.”

Figure 23: Private Snafu ‘Spies’ (1943) *Warner Bros.*

Figure 24: Private Snafu ‘Spies’ (1943) *Warner Bros.*

In another animation called ‘Spies’ that aims to communicate the warning of Nazi Spies, Snafu is seen drinking carelessly at a bar and picking up a beautiful woman. She reveals she is a Nazi robot that brings Snafu to hell at the end of the episode. Once again, another instance of using animation to twist a grim reality into a comedic lesson using a well-loved charcter through the lens of absurdism. It disarms the soldiers watching it and socially engineers a level of care the government want to perceive to have for the military force of ordinary men who were perpetually exhausted and

overworked. The additional use of sound, voice acting and exaggerated motion and displays of emotions to make the characters feel more relatable also causes animation to stand out as a form of propaganda. It has a unique ability to present media in a way real life film and still comics can't.
The commissioning of these characters from the government boosted the financial profit of the animation industry. Disney studios, which had been struggling as part of the Great Depression and almost went bankrupt were an example of this government funding.

> The fixed-rate government contracts for American nationalisticpropaganda allowed Disney to salvage his studio during the war yearsand to endear his marquee characters into American patriotic culture. Disney Studios produced the first 20 shorts and educational films for $4,500 each – arate that was 18 times Disney's standard production rate (Raiti, C. 2007. P 157.)

This lasted until the 1960s, meaning that propaganda played as large a role in animation, as animation played in propaganda for the government. It played such a large role in fact, that after the war was over in the 1950s and 60s as television was popularised, animation actually took a dive in popularity which was considered the 'Dark Age' of animation and did not rise in popularity again the way it had been during the war until the 80s, (John 2018).

Chapter Three: The Use of Caricature in WWII as a Method of Othering Opposition.

Regardless of which ideology was being promoted, both the Allies, and the Nazi's used caricature depictions of the opposing side to encourage the audience to agree with their own views. Their process was to identify a distinct visual difference in the leaders that the viewers are supposed to side with versus the rivalling ideology. It is then demonstrated in an exaggerated manner that clearly communicates the enemy to be lesser and untrustworthy. To accomplish this, animators would depict the antagonist as a caricature version of a character to make a mockery of that character, and by extension the ideals that they stood for. Prior to war propaganda of the 1940's, animation studios in the West used the method of caricature for minstrelsy to degrade and encourage the continued oppression of African Americans at the time of the 1930's, an example being from a Disney animation in 1933 – "Mickey's Mellerdramer" which featured the characters from 'Mickey Mouse' dressing up in blackface to prepare to perform in a minstrel show. Liana states that this popular caricature method to other African Americans in society was fundamental in animation to prepare for the methods of mockery they used in World War II:

> "These acts of blackface and minstrelsy had a huge impact on the animation industry during the past, and it played a major role in shaping the humour of the people in that particular era." (Liana, 2020, pg 561).

With a pre-developed method to communicate to an audience a portrayal of a 'monstrous other' in the antagonist they are to dislike, it acted as a foundation for animators creating this propaganda to employ the same methods, in order to isolate the view of the enemy through either mockery or villainization.

Figure 25: *Hiter dances to Stalin's tune'* , Anson Dyer

Figure 26: Bury The Axis', Lou Bounin

The first instance to exhibit both mockery and creating a monstrous form are in the propaganda animations created for the British public by animators Anson Dyer and Lou Bounin, commissioned by the government. The first animation depicts Joseph Stalin being visited by Adolf Hitler, and while their physical appearance is on the more realistic side, the performance they give of posturing and dancing in an exaggerated fashion displays caricature through action. The message mainly depicts Hitler as the fool for his fascist views and is titled as a mockery that he is 'dancing to Stalin's tune' in accordance with the phrase that implies he's complying completely to Stalin. This method is effective in communicating to the audience not only is Hitler a fool, but he is a fool playing into the hands of a stereotypically 'unpolished' and 'rough' looking set of people, reflective of the United Kingdom's views of the Soviet Union at the time. In a similar manner to Disney's portrayals of minstrelsy in preceding Disney animations, the act of performing a caricature through action encourages the audience to perceive the characters as lesser and not take them seriously.
The evidence that Disney was the foundation for these animations can be found in a direct statement from the head of the Films Division at the British Ministry of Information in 1940, Kenneth Clark, who had the belief that animation cartoons could be a 'very flexible medium of propaganda' to show 'what Britain is fighting for'. He stated:

"Cartoons have the advantage that ideas can be inserted under cover of absurdity, how cartoons can present (as in Mickey Mouse) a system of ethics in which independence and individuality are always successful, bullies are made fools of, the weak can check the strong with impunity, etc.". (Breakell, S. 2015, p 45.)

This serves as evidence that the following animations were created by the British under the advisement of the head of the Minister for Information, who commissioned this propaganda used Disney animations. These animations were created through the lens of inspiration for propaganda as a base for their own creations.

The second animation, “Bury the Axis” uses stop motion to create a more disturbing depiction of Hitler. The puppet that is created to portray Hitler is gaunt with wide eyes and a deep brow bone that always causes intense contrast on the face in order to further emphasize bulging eyes. This intense puppet that frames Hitler’s appearance similar to that of a corpse as seen in Figure 26, along with his jerky uncoordinated movement, is encouraging the audience to be disturbed, othering him into a less human, more monstrous category. Purposefully creating the characters in this manner manipulates the viewer to feel a sense of the ‘uncanny valley’, which is a phenomenon of the negative emotional response towards entities that appear ‘almost’ human. It elicits an eerie feeling, and connecting the negative emotion to that of the people being portrayed directly communicates with an audience not to trust the villain.

This animation includes anthropomorphism as an identifying symbol of negative connotation to ostracize the animalistic character from the human protagonist. Each decision is made with the intention of creating a distinguishable difference between the side that should be taken, good humans with grace, and the side who should be opposed, monstrous beasts that make fools of themselves and act predatory in attempt to ‘taint’ the good world. Another example of this animation relating to Disney’s interlinking use between anthropomorphic characters and how it forms racial bias, is specifically looking at how this animation portrays Hirohito. He was introduced to the narrative as a snake, an animal connected to the implicit understanding of ‘distrusting’ from well-known literature like the Bible. His character also is specifically exaggerated in the stereotypes seen of Asian people with jagged teeth, deeply slanted eyes and jester-like movements when bowing which is a part of Japanese culture. Apart from displays of anthropomorphic caricature that exaggerate characters to perform in an absurd manner to establish a general sense of mockery, the use of animated ‘Yellow Face’, a term to describe the disrespectful portrayal of East Asians in American film and theatre, is consistently seen in these animations.
Liana indicates these choices were used purposefully by the Office of War in the U.S when they commissioned their animations for propaganda, starting:

> “In times of war, animations were abundant with these imageries to perpetuate the Japanese as inferiors and unlikeable in accordance with the propaganda. Animated films during the War era were spearheaded by the United States’ Office of War, which worked with Hollywood studios in creating content in the war effort (Arnold, 2016, p. 110), thus the creation of these portrayals was made in an effort to influence the people to oppose the enemies.” (Liana, 2020. pg 563)

This was not coincidental and was a conscious choice in the animation industry in the 1940’s. Animator Waldman remembers “deliberately drawing an offensive, bucktoothed caricature of a Japanese spy for the World War II propaganda short The Japateurs” (Cohen, 2013).
The admission of the depiction being a deliberate choice not only with the studio managers who detail to animators what to do, but by animators

themselves while creating the animation, proves that the intention was there from the beginning.
In fact, Wells makes the argument that depictions of race in animation is indistinguishable from an offensive portrayal within the time of the 1940's. He says "The issue of the representation of race in animation is essentially clouded by the self-evident racism of cartoon caricaturing from the early teens of the century to the late 1940s" (Wells, 2015, pg 215.)
So, the purpose of creating these animations were to harm the opposing force and encourage a societal implicit bias towards anyone of a certain ethnic background. Also, to have a total single-minded opinion with the government view that is being promoted is very clear in the deliberate decisions that were made in portraying both the visual stereotype appearances. The caricature performances being displayed by these characters that are connotated negatively and are now a well established representation of pre-determined villainous, othering light.

Figure 27: The Ducktators', *Warner Bros.*

Figure 28: ‘Popeye The Sailor – You’re a Sap, Mr. Jap’, *Warner Bros.*

The Ducktators and *Popeye The Sailor- You’re a Sap, Mr. Jap* which were created by the Warner bros are examples of how the government used well-loved pre-established ‘good’ characters from entertainment animations in order to immediately give the audience a visual cue on which side to oppose and what to align with. As chapter one mentioned, this example of ‘othering’ takes a pre-established stereotype and exaggerates it further to imply negative connotation to an audience. It hands the viewer an easy narrative to understand, due to the fact the characters being shown are already familiar and are already understood to be protagonists who do the right thing.
The Looney Tunes are the strongest example of using the absurd exaggerations of anthropomorphic characters and expected running gags to create a very clear expectation of the ‘good’ versus the ‘bad’. They can tie the characters’ behaviour to nonsensical madness which is easily digestible for an audience to connect with the real-life people they depict. Similarly, the Warner Bros use of caricature to depict Hirohito once again in an offensive manner with slanted eyes and an unserious expression being beaten by the character Popeye, a character whose entire narrative is already known to the audience as defeating villains and anti-justice. This is a clear display of manipulation to the viewer in order to establish their views aligned with the views of their favourite ‘good’ characters.

Figure 29: Onward to the Shining Future: War Chronicles', *Dmitry Babichenko.*

Figure 30: Fascist Barbarians: Fascist Boots Shall Not Trample Our Motherland', *Ivanov.*

Apart from the West, the Soviet Union also took inspiration to transform their caricatures of the opposing forces into animalistic depictions. In their earlier propaganda animations, while they do use caricature in order to depict characters in an antagonistic light, they do not exaggerate the features in the same anthropomorphic style that the Allied Powers did. Instead, they focus the gestures and movement of the characters throughout the narrative to indicate righteous from unworthy, along with the use of colour to visually

symbolise two opposing forces and draw the audience further towards one than the other.

However, in the later animation produced in 1941, there is an immediate use of displaying Hitler and the fascist power of Nazism as pigs to create an immediate hierarchy between the character showing beastly behaviour, and the righteous hand that stops that behaviour when it defeats the big before it can occupy the Soviet Union. The fact that in 1941 the Soviet Union officially joined the Allies against the Nazis who they were previously neutral with, and instantly produced propaganda that used that same method proves it was an encouraged technique in publishing animated propaganda. This was pushed by both the Minister of Information in the UK and in the Office of War in the U.S. Blackledge provides the statement:

“The industrial turn in animation production that took place in both countries (Russia and Germany) at the time was aesthetically and technologically inspired by American animators Walt Disney and the Fleischer brothers.” (Blackledge, 2018. Pg 4).

This indicates the same studio that was producing the Looney Tunes propaganda was inspiring the new animation studios in the USSR, which can be seen by the transformation in style. The earlier animation looks unique, but the later animation is reminiscent, near copying the art style of the Looney Tunes.

Regardless of what view was being promoted in either the Allies or opposing countries, the same dependency on the use of caricature and anthropomorphism to ‘other’ the antagonists as monstrous beasts or foolish idiots to the audience was used. This is a clear indicator of manipulation in narrative to encourage one specific ideal and message that reflects the governments’ views, as shown in both the first and second chapter.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the connection between animation media and political propaganda in the West is fundamentally interlinked, due to how animation only evolved through the production of propaganda disguised as educational or entertainment videos.

Chapter one began by outlining how the very foundation of the western animation industry was financed through government-funded interest, which highlights its importance during the 20th century in creating and distributing propaganda. It explained what the concept of caricature was before the 20th century, and how the method of exaggerating features tied to physiognomy of ethnic groups was used to portray them as lesser. It also analysed the cultural context of the method of 'othering' seen in older art forms, like classic paintings and traditional illustrations which used caricature to exaggerate difference in a negative portrayal.

Chapter two then further investigated the relationship between the animation industry and the governments leading the Allies during World War II. It demonstrated how government-funded projects for propaganda served to establish a clear link between the foundation of reference in the animation industry, and its ties to methods of propaganda. For example, using caricature to push a narrative that teaches audiences to form unconscious bias against the 'villain' represented in the story. Additionally, it explored the use of absurdist humour in these propaganda animations in order to sell the idea of war to both civilians and soldiers in the military. Chapter two connected the aspect of relatability that were in well-liked protagonist characters like Bugs Bunny with promoting war through humour, as seen in Fig 18 where marines are posing with a poster of Bugs Bunny on a torpedo. This chapter built upon the concepts discussed in chapter one of how the animation industry was developed with a funded interest in the 20th century.

Chapter Three used the context of the previous two chapters to provide analysis of specific examples of animations using the methods of caricature, absurdist humour and othering to form bias in audiences. It also included the connection between anthropomorphism, caricature and establishing negative bias against physiognomy in certain ethnic groups. An example of this is how the Japanese are portrayed, as seen in Fig 28, with their eyes drawn using exaggerated slits and demonstrating idiotic behaviour. Similarly, how Hitler was often portrayed as an animal as shown in Fig 27 as a duck and Fig 30 as a pig. These animalistic depictions have character demonstrate more 'savage' animal-adjacent behaviour, which is used to 'other' the real person in the eyes of the audience.

The use of caricature and anthropomorphism which is already popular in cartoons was used to instil bias to audiences by taking pre-established 'hero' characters like 'Bugs Bunny' or 'Donald Duck' and having them demonstrate either patriotic support of the Allies ideology or mocking oppositional ideology

in an absurdist manner. Caricature was represented both in exaggerating the physiology of characters, like the Japanese forces as seen in Figure 27 in chapter three, or by demonstrating behaviour that was intentionally ridiculous looking to audiences. The fact animation could create these narratives through hand-crafted motion rather than static images like political comics, or real-life films which would take more to achieve exaggeration animation can already lend itself to, made it more useful. Additionally, how these animations were distributed on military equipment and insignia as seen in Figure 16 in chapter two was effective in re-presenting the reality of war through the lens of something to be entertained by and motivated for. It also evidently influenced how other countries in the world created their own propaganda, such as the difference in the Soviet Union animation before they joined the Allies and after when representing enemy characters, as shown in chapter three.

Therefore, the intermediality between animation and politics is imminently linked due to the very foundation of animation principles being established in order to be used for propaganda. The significance of how the animation industry during the 20th century mainly survived in the Western world due to government funding for the purpose of propaganda confirms the media's importance at the time. This symbiotic relationship between the animation industry and the governments financing of it also encouraged the continuation of war. Raiti argues "If it wasn't for the US Military, The Walt Disney Company may not exist today; and, if it wasn't for the Disney Studios, there may never have been an air strike on Japan." (2007, p157.)

Which is why the animation industry, specifically Disney and the Warner Bros. survived the 'Dark Age of Animation' as described in chapter one. Through being financed by the government to fuel propaganda in order to win the public opinion on the Second World War during the 20th century.

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