

# American Animated WWII Propaganda Films

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Štrukelj, Marsel

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**American Animated WWII Propaganda Films**

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Kandidat: Marsel Štrukelj

Mentor: dr. sc. Jelena Šesnić, red. prof.

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## 1. Introduction

Each person has probably grown up watching animated cartoons. But what did some of those cartoons depict? What we have in mind especially the ones which were produced during World War II. The main goal of this paper is to provide an answer to this and many more questions about American animation during World War II.

In the first chapter the term animation and its countless definitions by animators will be given. The word animation and everything that we relate to animation will be explained.

In the second chapter we will briefly give a historical overview of animation. The precursors and the first animators will be mentioned. To get a full sense of how animation came to America, we will also mention some important persons from Europe – who began with animation. Throughout the history of animation, a lot of production studios were opened and closed due to various reasons. We will start off with the forerunners of animation, then continue explaining who the silent pioneers were and why were they important for American animation. Probably the most famous of all the animators is Walt Disney, who we are going to introduce and demonstrate how he managed to grab the fame and fortune using animation. You will also be introduced to the founders of Warner Brothers and Metro Goldwyn Mayer.

In the following chapter called Propaganda, we will briefly explain the definition and the meaning of propaganda, and what a propaganda film is. As the main topic of this paper is the American animated World War II propaganda film, you will also learn how the production studios worked during wartime and which animated cartoons they produced.

Continuing with the previously mentioned animated film, you will be given an analysis of some of the most important American animated propaganda films that were produced and shown during wartime. The main focus is on the two biggest production studios, Disney and Warner

Brothers. Although there are many more animated propaganda films during World War II, an analysis of the following films will be given (*Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943), *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi* (1943), *Private SNAFU in Spies* (1943) and *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* (1944)).

This paper ends with a conclusion on how and why American animators produced such animated propaganda films and what their main purpose was.

## 2. What is animation?

To begin with, we first need to explain what the term animation means and how animation can be understood. The word animation and all the related words to it stem from the Latin verb *animare* which would be translated as 'to animate' or 'to give life to'. There is no clear definition of the term animation, but there are some explanations that sum up the basic features of animation. In the context of an animated film, animation is a process in which a kind of illusion of movement of lifeless things, drawings or models is created. By photographing sequential drawings or models and showing them in a fast pace, our brain blends these photographs into a single moving image. Therefore, animation can be described as a moving picture made by a person, frame-by-frame, giving an illusion of movement that has not been directly recorded (Wells 10). Basically, animation is a film that shares a story in fluid, moving drawings, is generated on cels and consists of a personality animation with which the main characters are permeated (Piling xiii).

A standard definition of an animated cartoon is given by the Webster dictionary which defines animation as "a motion picture that is made from a series of drawings, computer graphics, or photographs of inanimate objects (such as puppets) and that simulates movement by slight progressive changes in each frame" ("animated cartoon"). Furthermore, Norman McClaren defines animation not as the "art of drawings that move, but rather the art of movements that are drawn.

What happens between each frame is more important than what happen on each frame” (qtd. in Solomon *The Art of the Animated Image* 11). The soul of animation in McClaren’s definition of animation lies in the movement of the drawings and the models before taking a photo of the image.

With the constant rise and development of technology the production of animated films has greatly changed. The animated films have also changed through time. Denslow argues that cartoons have “changed from adult theatrical throw-aways, requiring the constant generation of new product, to children’s home toys requiring only a new generation of viewers” (3).

According to Holloway, the older generation of animators of the Zagreb School stress out the aesthetic and philosophic aspects of animation (9). They argue that to animate you have to create a life, give meaning and life to a character or drawing, not just through reproduction, but through altering the real life (Holloway 9; Denslow 4). The animators of the Zagreb School highlight the aspect of giving life to something inanimate and display the objects or drawings in a new light and under different, new conditions. They tended to reshape the Disney animation, which is closely linked to realism. The Zagreb School understood animation as a non-realist and subversive art form. As the Czech surrealist animator Jan Švankmajer explained that: “Animation enables me to give magical powers to things. In my films, I move many objects, real objects. Suddenly, everyday contact with things which people are used to acquires a new dimension and in this way casts a doubt over reality. In other words, I use animation as a means of subversion” (qtd. in Wells 11)

Švankmajer’s perspective on animation probably best defines the vast majority of opportunities for the creator of an animation to reshape the everyday, to subvert our concept of reality and to call into question the ordinary understanding of our reality. Animation can raise our awareness of time and space, it does not have to follow the laws of gravity, and it gives inanimate

things a soul and a meaning. Pioneer filmmakers like Georges Méliès and early animators like James Stuart Blackton, Emile Cohl and Winsor McCay used animation to create original effects.

### 3. The Beginning of Animation

A precursor is a thing or a person who comes before another of the same kind. Just like every other innovation in the outer world, the animated film also had its precursors. The most significant precursors stem from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but animation has its roots way back in the past. An ancient earthen goblet, which belongs to 5000 years ago, was found in Burnt City in southeastern Iran. A goat jumping towards a tree and eating its leaves is depicted on this ancient goblet, which can be regarded as the first animation in the world. Some earthenware and old paintings which show repetitive images were found, but none of them imply any movement (Bendazzi 7).

Fast forward a few centuries, in the Middle Ages, some images of flora and fauna (like today's animated cartoons) depicted their subjects, were inked, sketched, dyed and arranged so that the public could watch them. This forerunner of animation is similar to the one from the famous animator Walt Disney in a way that common people were educated and entertained via plain and pleasant drawings (Bendazzi 8).

In the nineteenth century, the visual representation was on a very low level limited to statues, paintings, frescoes, drawings, etc. Painters and sculptors of that time aimed to portray motion in their statues and paintings, but they were standing still. People knew that man-made art was motionless. Motion was the main focus of all artists, scientists, inventors and the most important group of people – paying audience. The British physician Peter Mark Roget explained in his book *Persistence of Vision with Regard to Moving Objects* that images were preserved by the human eye for a short period of time before being replaced by the following ones. If the

sequence of images is played rapid enough, an impression of movement is created in the eyes of the spectator even though the images are still on their own (Bendazzi 12; Wells 11-12). This awareness of motion picture led to further explorations.

One of the first inventions which led to further development of the animated film was the thaumatrope by John A. Paris in 1825. An optical toy which consisted of a disc with complementary images on each side attached to two pieces of string. When the disc is spun, the two images appear to blend into one because of the previously mentioned persistence of vision. 7 years later, in 1832, Joseph Plateau invented the phenakistiscope. It is a device made of a handle and a spinning cardboard disc along the edge of which sequential images of an object in motion had been drawn (Bendazzi 13). By spinning the disc and looking through the slits the illusion of motion could be seen. The phenakistiscope would be the equivalent of today's GIF images, as they also only show a short continuous loop. Moreover, the newly improved and developed phenakistiscope was invented and labeled as the zoetrope. It was invented by William Horner and consisted of a cylinder with slits at regular intervals, and successive images on the opposing inside area of the cylinder (Bendazzi 13; Wells 12).

Another name worth mentioning in the beginning of animation is Eadweard Muybridge, who wanted to analyze the movement of the human and animal figure. He set up twelve cameras with tripwires which captured a horse's motion frame by frame. He then projected these pictures as a short animated movie (Beck 10; Bendazzi 15). Two early experimenters in the scope of animation were the Englishman James Stuart Blackton and the Frenchman Émile Cohl. Blackton's most famous work was *Humorous Phases of Funny Faces* published in 1906. It depicts an unseen hand which draws letters, words and faces (Beck 10; Bendazzi 26; Lenburg 1; Wells 13). Cohl on the other side completed his frame-by-frame work *Fantasmagorie* in 1908. His piece of work



displayed a white stick figure, which had the ability to metamorphose into several other figures, on a black screen. Cohl created in this animated cartoon everything that an animated cartoon should be – well conceptualized, humorous and sophisticated (Beck 11; Bendazzi 31-33; Lenburg 1; Wells 15).

The impact that Émile Cohl had on Europe, Winsor McCay had on America. The self-taught American cartoonist produced more than four thousand pictures for his first fully animated cartoon *Little Nemo* in 1911. He advocated that “animation should be an art, that is how I conceived it. But as I see, what you fellows have done with it is make it into a trade . . . not an art, but a trade . . . bad luck” (Bendazzi 35). His most important work was *Gertie the Dinosaur* (1914) in which he features the performance of an animal trainer and his dinosaur. The film shows McCay as the animal tamer who draws Gertie and brings her to life into the real world. Gertie eats, drinks, plays and dances when ordered to do so. When she is unwilling to listen to McCay’s commands, she is scolded and cries. This was McCay’s greatest film, it featured 5000 drawings and laid the foundations of character animation. *Gertie the Dinosaur* is considered to be one of the greatest animated films ever produced by McCay’s fellow animators (Beck 12; Bendazzi 35-37; Lenburg 1; Wells 15-16). As Leonard Maltin stated in his book *Of Mice and Magic*: “Winsor McCay breathed life into an inanimate character, and this was his greatest achievement. It did not go unnoticed, Gertie was so successful that it made people forget the animated films that preceded it—even McCay’s. For years Gertie has been named in film histories as the first animated cartoon. With all its impact, it might as well have been” (5).

### 3.1. Silent America

In the eyes of the public, an animated film and a comic strip were almost the same thing. The influence one had on the other was extraordinary in the beginning of American animation.

After McCay's launch of animation in 1911, pioneers of American animation started gathering everywhere, with New York City being the heart of animation studios that offered the best opportunities and the most efficient production.

The first one who realized that mass production of animation could be a profitable business at that time was Raoul Barré. He was the first one to create a professional animation studio in 1913, making it possible to generate a large quantity of animation films. Barré introduced standard drawing paper with perforations, which made the animation of the films less irregular in a way that the images and the characters would stay or be animated in the same place (Beck 15; Bendazzi 38-39).

The second American who had a completely different view on animation from Winsor McCay was John Randolph Bray. He is named the Henry Ford of animation as he searched for ways to rationalize production, eliminate needless labor and shorten the production time of animated films. He laid the foundations of American animation industry as he transformed the medium into an assembly-line production. His studio was founded in 1914 and he emphasized technological development with his patents, which gave him an advantage in the animated film industry. In the same year, artist Earl Hurd patented the use of cels which involves the drawing of characters on transparent celluloid sheets and photographing them over a static background scene (Beck 12; Bendazzi 39-40; Lenburg 2). When the United States declared war on the German Empire in World War I, J. R. Bray started producing instructional and training films funded by the government, which was later copied by Walt Disney in the course of World War II (Bendazzi 40). The two animated heroes of Bray Studios were Colonel Heeza Liar and Bobby Bumps. Colonel Heeza Liar was a short, bald, nearsighted man based on the tale-spinning Baron Münchhausen. His first adventure had the title *Colonel Heeza Liar in Africa* and jokingly depicted Theodore

Roosevelt's African hunting exploits which had been a famous theme in the media at that time. On the other side, Bobby Bumps, who was created by Earl Hurd, was a young boy who went on through the everyday life together with his dog Fido (Bendazzi 40; Lenburg 2; Maltin and Beck 7).

In 1915, William Randolph Hearst founded the International Film Service (IFS) which did not last very long as it was closed only three years later in 1918. The main premise of the IFS was to animate many of his newspaper characters onto the big screen. It was not able to withhold the production like its competitors, but it was important in the history of animation because it brought talented animators like Gregory La Cava, Frank Moser and Bill Nolan to the big stage (Bendazzi 40-41; Lenburg 2; Maltin and Beck 12). During his time at the IFS, Bill Nolan introduced the rubber hose style of animation, which transformed characters' limbs into lengths of flexible tubing.

Another name in the history of American animation is Paul Terry who directed several animated shorts for Bray Studios. His most important character is Farmer Al Falfa, a bald, bearded, old farmer who represented the rural part of America. After returning back home from World War I, Terry formed his own studio and introduced *Aesop's Fables* to the public. The series were produced each week and were influential for the new animator Walt Disney, as *Aesop's Fables* were replete with all kinds of animals – some characters were even similar to the early Mickey Mouse (Bendazzi 47; Lenburg 2; Maltin and Beck 129).

During the 1920s most animation studios were based in New York City, with the exception of Walt Disney's studio in California. A number of animators set up their own production companies and closed them quickly. The ones that stood out the most with their unique storytelling were the Fleischer brothers, Walt Disney and Pat Sullivan. Max Fleischer was an American animator and inventor. Around 1915, he invented the rotoscope, a device that enabled the

animators to trace live-action movement of bodies onto the animation paper frame by frame, thus producing realistic animation results (Beck 12; Bendazzi 44; Lenburg 3; Maltin and Beck 84). Max displayed a short film design to producer John Randolph Bray which resulted in hiring him and his brother Dave for the Bray Studio. During wartime, Max had worked on animated military training films, and in 1919 he generated the animated series *Out of the Inkwell* which merged animation and live action featuring Ko-Ko the Clown. Max would create Ko-Ko, who appeared out of an inkwell, each episode, and Ko-Ko would then dupe its creator.

Ko-Ko does not have a clear personality like Gertie the Dinosaur, and he lives in a truly graphic world. Everything can become anything else because everything is just a drawing. At the start of each episode, Ko-Ko would emerge out of his inkwell and at the end of an episode he would return back to it (Bendazzi 44-45; Lenburg 3). Together with his brother Dave Fleischer, who was always second in command, they founded their own production company named Fleischer Studios, which was mainly a family business. Besides producing the *Out of the Inkwell* series, the Fleischer Studios also produced the *Song Car-Tunes*, a series of short films with which they pioneered the use of sound film in an animation. The Fleischers established the 'bouncing ball' which bounced on words of a song projected on the display while the audience was singing along. The style of animation of the Fleischer Studio changed constantly, as they had several animators, who had their own style of animating, but the rubbery animation of characters stayed from the beginning (Bendazzi 45).

The next significant animated character was Felix the Cat, the most important animal hero in American animation before Mickey Mouse. There has been a lot of confusion about who the creator of Felix the Cat is. The original creator of the most popular and best animated character of the silent era was Otto Messmer, who was hired by Patrick Peter Sullivan (Maltin and Beck 24).

Pat Sullivan opened his own production studio in 1915. In 1916 he noticed Messmer's skills in animation and hired him for his studio. In 1919, Messmer created Felix the Cat, which debuted in the cartoon *Feline Follies*. Messmer managed the studio, wrote and directed all the films anonymously, but Sullivan took all the credit for Felix.

Felix was a complex feline character who was at the same time human and magical. He was different from all the previous characters as he was a thinker. He was a greatly animated character of a mime who solved his problems with solutions from his own environment. His magic was the result of the use of every element of his graphic world, he was metamorphosed into several objects like an umbrella or a bag, signs like an exclamation and question mark could be used as baseball bats or fishhooks (Bendazzi 46; Beck 185; Maltin and Beck 24). Sullivan also made a profit on the success of Felix with merchandizing, a move that was later developed and mastered by the Disney Studio. Toys, stuffed animals, and diverse objects that presented Felix maximized Sullivan's profits.

Even though the Fleischer studio made progress in animation technique and plot development, the cartoon as we know it nowadays was developed by the most famous of them all, Walt Disney. In the beginning of his animation history, he met animator Ub Iwerks. Together with Iwerks and other promising young animators Disney established Laugh-O-Grams, which were one-minute topical cartoons. After producing fables like *Cinderella* and *Puss in Boots* in a comic tone, in 1927, Disney created a new character, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, a protagonist in a fully animated film without live actors (Bendazzi 51). As Oswald was owned by Universal Studios, they took him away from Charles Mintz, Disney's distributor and producer, and gave Oswald to Walter Lantz (ibid.). After losing Oswald, Walt had to start over. After a dispute with Charles Mintz, Disney went on to create a mouse character that his wife named Mickey rather than the more

serious name Mortimer which Disney himself suggested. Together with Iwerks, who drew the mouse, Disney, who created Mickey's personality, started making great animated films of that time (ibid.).

### 3.2. The Golden Age of Animation

What is commonly regarded as the Golden Age of animation was actually one of the worst periods in modern history, namely, the 1930s and 1940s. In 1929 the Wall Street crashed, and the Great Depression followed for a period of time. In Europe, the Spanish Civil war started. In Germany, Kristallnacht or the Night of Broken Glass had happened forecasting the nature of Hitler's regime. The Great Purge lasted for a short period of time in Russia. People were being killed out of political dogmatism. World War II led to more than 50 million victims. After World War II had ended, the Cold War started.

These were the years when people sought to escape from the real world into a dream world. Such a world was presented to the audience through animation. Animation influenced people and their feelings and tastes. The figures of Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Donald and Daisy Duck, Bugs Bunny, Tweety and Sylvester, Tom and Jerry, Popeye, Woody Woodpecker, etc. became the representatives of their home country way of life overseas and the legendary legacy of various people. "The majors", as they were called, were the film studios which owned most of the world's movie business (Alford 145). These are Disney, Sony Pictures Entertainment, Paramount, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox, Warner Bros and Universal. Besides Disney and Warner Bros., who are the main topic of this paper, there were also some animation studios and animators that blossomed during the Golden Age like the Fleischer brothers, Walter Lantz, Ub Iwerks, Van Beuren, Paul Terry, Columbia, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), UPA, etc.

### 3.2.1. Walt Disney

Walt Disney was the first one to introduce synchronized sound to an animated short in *Steamboat Willie* in 1928, where the rise of Mickey Mouse started. Synchronized sound gave cartoons a new dimension that was previously not possible in silent cartoons. Although *Steamboat Willie* is not the first Mickey Mouse cartoon, it is probably the most famous one. Finding himself behind the rudder of a steamboat, a mouse dressed in shorts labors as a worker for a large cat. His female partner is a girl mouse who brings some sheet music and a guitar to the steamboat, but the objects get swallowed by a goat. Nonetheless, the couple still manages to have a good time and play some music on various animals. Mickey hits the teeth of a cow which results in the sound of a xylophone, pulls on the tails or chokes other animal characters, and distinct instruments of a band can be heard. This short cartoon was perfectly synchronized, the main focus was on Mickey, and it was a groundbreaking cartoon in animation history. With the success from this animation, other animators found their talent and learned from the pioneers of animation (Bendazzi 96; Beck 13; Lenburg 3; Maltin and Beck 34-35). Mickey's personality and charm came from his voice, and he was voiced by none other than Walt Disney himself until the end of World War II. In one letter, a pioneer at Disney, Ollie Johnston wrote:

“In my opinion, Walt was synonymous with Mickey, and when he lost interest and stopped doing the voice things changed. No one else ever had the ability to project personality into that high falsetto voice that he did. One man [James MacDonald, 1906–1991] did it for many years after Walt stopped and did a great job, but how can you expect anyone to have the same feelings as the creator?” (qtd. in Bendazzi 100).

After the success of the synchronized sound in *Steamboat Willie*, with music dominating over the images, Disney started his series titled Silly Symphonies with the first symphony *The*

*Skeleton Dance*. Continuing with his contribution to animation history Walt produced *Flowers and Trees* in 1932 where he used Technicolor's three-strip color process, with which he brought a completely new view to the screen (Beck 13; Bendazzi 99; Lenburg 5). This cartoon won the first ever Academy Award for an animated short film. *The Three Little Pigs* (1933) was another successful Silly Symphony in which Disney managed to direct something new in animation; it was the first cartoon to have a complete storyboard. It was also special for the character animation. Chuck Jones, one of the animators at Disney stated: "that was the first time that anybody ever brought characters to life. There were three characters who looked alike and acted differently; the way they moved is what made them what they were" (qtd. in Maltin and Beck 40).

Following the accomplishments of Mickey Mouse, it was vital to create some co-stars for the studio, therefore the likes of Donald Duck, Goofy and Pluto were created. In the first color Mickey Mouse short *The Band Concert* (1935) synchronized music and animation were at its peak (Bendazzi 99). It was one of the best early Donald Duck shorts.

Another first in animation history, besides in the shorts *Steamboat Willie* (1928), *Flowers and Trees* (1932) and *The Three Little Pigs* (1933), Disney introduced the multiplane camera in his Silly Symphony *The Old Mill* (1937) (Raffaelli 115). That same year Disney's first feature-length film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was produced. Even though it ended up costing almost six times more than the initial budget, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was loved by the audience and turned a major box-office hit (Bendazzi 102; Lenburg 5; Maltin and Beck 53-58). Three years later, while World War II was already happening in Europe, Disney produced *Pinocchio* (1940) and *Fantasia* (1940). *Pinocchio* was Disney's one of the best feature-length films as it was different from *Snow White* in a way that *Snow White* depicted a fairy tale with



some moments of terror. *Pinocchio*, on the other side, could be described as an “extended nightmare with occasional humorous interludes” (qtd. in Maltin and Beck 59).

Disney set the standards for animation. He gained monopoly over the public, which had accepted his animation as a defining example of an animated film, as well as elaborated on the theory of animation in public (Bendazzi 106). His success was not an overnight success. This accomplishment came all thanks to his animators, especially his nine old men. These ‘Nine Old Men’ were Eric Larson, Les Clark, Milton Kahl, Wolfgang Reitherman, John Lounsbery, Frank Thomas, Ollie Johnston, Marc Davis and Ward Kimball (Bendazzi 107).

With the attack on Pearl Harbor, on 7<sup>th</sup> December 1941, the United States entered World War II. This was a period in which animation had gotten a new task, to help the army and produce training films. The production of animated shorts during wartime will further be explained in the chapter *War Propaganda and Animation*.

### 3.2.2. Warner Brothers

During the 1930s, when sound was at the apex of American animation and Walt Disney was dominant in the scene of animation, the Warner Brothers studio was founded by Hugh Harman and Rudolf Ising (Bendazzi 118; Maltin and Beck 223). Harman and Ising started by mimicking Disney’s Mickey Mouse, and thus created Bosko, an African American boy. In 1930, they started with their Looney Tunes series with *Sinkin’ in the Bathtub* featuring Bosko (Bendazzi 118). Alongside the Looney Tunes, Warner Bros. added the series Merrie Melodies, which were similar to Disney’s series the Silly Symphonies. With their sense of humor, Warner Bros. went beyond the normal tricks of animation. Filled with ex-Disney staff, the Warner Bros. stepped out in the field of animation shorts. Their cartoons were daring, groundbreaking and comical in a way that Disney could never make (Maltin and Beck 223). The most important cartoon creators at Warner

Bros. were Charles Martin Jones, Isadore Freleng, Robert Emerson Clampett, Frederick Bean Avery and Frank Tashlin, considered to be the giants in the history of animation.

While Disney enjoyed the fame of Mickey, Donald, Goofy and Pluto, at the Warner Brothers studio more long-lasting stars were born. The likes of Porky Pig, Daffy Duck, Bugs Bunny, Elmer Fudd, The Road Runner, Wile E. Coyote, Tweety, Sylvester, Yosemite Sam, etc. (Bendazzi 119; Maltin and Beck 223). Porky Pig was introduced in 1935 in *I Haven't Got a Hat* by Friz Freleng and was Warner Bros.' first successful character. He is a stuttering, innocent pig, who had the bad luck of being a victim of other protagonists (Bendazzi 119; Maltin and Beck 230). After Porky Pig, Daffy Duck, the creation of Tex Avery and Bob Clampett, emerged. He is a humanlike black duck whose lack of cruelty gained the audience's trust. Together with Daffy Duck, Eggman, who later transformed into Elmer Fudd, the bald human hunter who is trying to catch Bugs Bunny was made (Bendazzi 119; Maltin and Beck 240). The character that starred in the most animated shorts was Bugs Bunny, an anthropomorphic gray and white rabbit characterized by his smooth speech, especially his catch phrase "Eh... What's up, doc?", reckless personality and his cunning actions with which he always manages to get away (Bendazzi 119).

Isadore Freleng, better known as "Friz" Freleng started his animating career at Disney in the years of silent cinema. Later, he joined Harman and Ising at Warner Brothers and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (Bendazzi 124). He is regarded as one of the best cartoon directors at Warner Bros. Freleng had great sense of humor, extraordinary sense of timing, experience and a sense for character personalities (Maltin and Beck 228-231). His best years were after the war had ended with exclusive use of Speedy Gonzales, Yosemite Sam and Tweety and Sylvester. He was awarded four Oscars during his time at Warner Brothers.

Frederick Bean “Tex” Avery’s most significant work was at the studios Warner Bros. and later Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. At Warner Brothers, he developed his recognizable style of animation. Using a wilder and faster-paced style of comedy, he is famous for his sarcasm, irony, surrealist and violent humor and characters breaking the fourth wall. Tex Avery directed *Porky’s Duck Hunt* (1937) which was the first appearance of Daffy Duck. Walter Lantz said that: “He was naturally talented and had a deep sense of humour. He was a cruel joker. Everyone created the gags, but Tex was the best and funniest of all” (qtd. in Bendazzi 119). While being at Warner Bros., Avery refined his craft and later, at MGM, he produced his best cartoons.

The third important animator at Warner Brothers was Francis Frederick von Taschlein, a.k.a. Frank Tashlin. Tashlin had a pretty full resume in the spectrum of animation. He had worked for several production studios like the Fleischer Studio, Van Beuren studio, Ub Iwerks’ studio, Warner Brothers, Disney and Screen Gems (Bendazzi 127; Maltin and Beck 231). During his career, he came back to Warner Bros. three times where he mostly worked on the Looney Tunes and Merrie Melodies series. His style of animation is characterized by the usage of all different kinds of camera angles, montages and pan shots. Besides being an extraordinary animator, he created his own comic strip called *Van Boring*, inspired by his previous boss Van Beuren, and later became a film director (Bendazzi 127; Maltin and Beck 231). During his last stay at Warner Brothers, Tashlin worked on educational wartime cartoons, including the *Private Snafu* series.

Together with Tex Avery, Bob Clampett was responsible for the looniness of the Looney Tunes (Bendazzi 123; Maltin and Beck 237). He practiced everything animation might contain, from drawing, directing and writing to voice acting and creating gags. His style is characterized, similarly to Tex Avery’s style, by using wild gags and jokes with the most extreme distortions, with characters breaking the fourth wall (Bendazzi 123). He did not hold back from using dirty

jokes or sexual desire in his animation. Clampett's most famous cartoon is *Porky in Wackyland* (1938) in which he showed what you could do in animation with a little imagination and a great deal of talent (ibid.).

Charles Martin Jones, or simply Chuck Jones, was the last memorable animator at Warner Bros. He was strongly influenced by Disney animation. Jones collaborated with other animators (Avery, Freleng, Clampett and Tashlin) and thus Bugs Bunny was created. One of the funniest cartoons in the industry was Jones' *A Wild Hare* (1940) in which Bugs Bunny officially appeared for the first time and coined his famous catch phrase "What's up, Doc?" (Maltin and Beck 247). After World War II had ended, Jones created new characters, styles of humor and graphic looks, thus creating some of the best Warner Brothers' cartoons ever.

Having provided the history of animation up to World War II, in the following chapter we shall consider the meaning of the word propaganda, as well as some types of propaganda. The tentative answer to the question, what a propaganda film is, will be given, as well as an overview of the production of animation studios during wartime.

#### 4. Propaganda

The word "propaganda" is a frequently used term in modern society. It is information that is convincingly and amply offered to the public as the truth (Axelrod 37). It is often used to give meaning to something that is considered inferior and worthy of contempt (Cull et al. xv). The modern understanding of propaganda says that it is a means by which the government, the state, the head of the state, even large corporations try to brainwash a certain population, i.e., instill certain attitudes, beliefs and loyalty in them despite their individual intelligence, desire and even consciousness. The term "brainwashing" correlated with propaganda appeared in the English language in the 1950s, describing what most people consider as propaganda (Axelrod 82). Besides

brainwashing, some of the modern terms considered to be synonymous with propaganda are lies and deception (Cull et al. 317).

One of the fundamental divisions of propaganda divides it into white, gray and black propaganda. Black propaganda is based on manipulation of facts, lies and deliberate deception of the audience. Examples of the same were registered during the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, when disinformation about the discovery of a chemical warfare factory and the like was spread (Miller 2). White propaganda is the opposite of black propaganda and refers to the attempt to influence the public by identifying the goals and purposes of it, and by making the source of the propaganda message known (Ellul 15). Gray propaganda is situated between the two extremes. It describes a propaganda message that goes through the selection of information and its presentation in accordance with the way the author imagined the message, at the same time excluding information that the author considers unacceptable (ibid.).

A widespread opinion on propaganda implies that it is a cancer on the body politic which manipulates our minds and that it needs to be avoided at all costs (Cull et al. xv). On the other hand, in ancient Greece it was a respected opinion that persuasion was a form of rhetoric, and logic and reason were considered necessary for the successful transmission of ideas (ibid.). Although the scale of usage of the word propaganda increased in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the very roots can be traced to the Reformation process, when the Catholic Church lost control over the northern countries and the ecclesiastical and spiritual unity of Europe was broken (Cull et al. xvi). More serious scientific research on propaganda began in 1915, while the first Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) was founded in 1937 in the USA. Furthermore, they seek to understand the internal factors of propaganda that influence people's functioning (Connely et al. 18). The IPA has published several

books, the most famous of which being *The fine art of propaganda* (1939) which talks about seven techniques of using propaganda (Aditya and Sukendro 966; Connely et al. 272).

The generally accepted understanding of propaganda defines it as a message, that is, a picture of reality that the state wants citizens to see and believe in but has little to do with people's personal opinion (Axelrod 49). Consequently, nowadays public opinion can be formed much faster, which is largely due to the development of the speed and scope of the use of the means of mass communication (Aditya and Sukendro 965). David Welch was among the first historians to point out the changing dynamics of communication caused by the pluralism of information circulating in cyberspace, and accordingly the question was raised whether we are all now in a way a kind of propagandists considering the environment in which we live (Connely et al. 3). The main principle of any effective propaganda is combining personal interest with social purpose (Axelrod 30).

#### 4.1. What is a Propaganda Film?

When we talk about the means of mass communication through which propaganda is spread, it is important to highlight the film, which, from its beginnings and the creation of the first film by the Lumière brothers, soon began to be used as a means of spreading propaganda. The oldest such film was a silent film depicting the Spanish-American War of 1898.

The film is a frequently used tool in the hands of propaganda, and there are numerous examples of films, especially from the era of the Third Reich, in the function of propaganda. The Ministry of Propaganda in Nazi Germany produced a number of feature films. The exact number is unknown, but scholars argue which percentage of them are propagandistic. David Stewart Hull argues in his book *Film in the Third Reich* that no more than a quarter of the produced films were propagandistic (8). Erwin Leiser, on the other side, states that all films produced by the Third

Reich incorporated some elements of propaganda (Weinberg 112). Nazi Germany used propaganda through film at the 1936 Olympic Games, where they presented the superiority of the Aryan race, while the Soviet Union used propaganda through the use of film since the October Revolution (Aditya and Sukendro 966). The importance of film as one of the means through which propaganda is spread is also indicated by Goebels' point of view, which says that all media must act simultaneously because you never know which hook the fish we want to catch will bite (Šiber 101). Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, film became a part of everyday life, so countries such as the United States of America and the Soviet Union began to use it more and more as a means of propaganda (Aditya and Sukendro 965).

#### 4.2. War Propaganda and Animation

Given the wide popularity of animated films throughout the last century, this paper focuses on propaganda in animated films. Goebbels implemented 19 rules of propaganda in the practices of German war propaganda (Šiber 99-105). One of the rules emphasizes the role of media, that is, film. In order to be noticed, propaganda must arouse the interest of the audience by spreading the information through the most popular media (Šiber 101). The medium of film has a particularly significant role here because it deals with images, music and words, which at the same time represent propaganda and entertainment (*ibid.*).

Looking throughout history, those who rule have always tried to influence the view on the world of the subordinated ones (Cull et al. xv). There are two basic goals of war propaganda. The first refers to the greatest possible participation of people in the activities of their own group, that is, the creation of a group identity, a sense of belonging, and the strengthening of an emotional relationship with one's own country, while creating self-confidence and trust that the set goals will be achieved (Šiber 89). Another goal of war propaganda is to minimize the participation of the

enemy in activities carried out by one's own group. This means creating divisions within the group, creating distrust towards the leadership and acting on the loss of self-confidence and questioning of the enemy's values and goals (ibid.). In the context of war, propaganda can be divided into outward propaganda, i.e., propaganda directed towards the enemy, and inward propaganda, i.e., the type of propaganda directed towards one's own people (ibid.). The importance of propaganda in Nazi Germany is indicated by Hitler's speech at the congress in Nuremberg in 1936 where he stated that propaganda brought them to power, it enabled them to stay in power and it had given them the means to conquer the world (Šiber 93). Considering the increasing role of the media in this period, and the wide distribution of films, especially animated ones that gained great popularity throughout the last century, this paper tries to understand the role of war propaganda through animated films.

After the United States entered the war, they got support from the Hollywood animators and their characters. Donald Duck was paying his taxes to support the military in an exemplary manner and joined the army; the Seven Dwarfs taught the soldiers how to desiccate quagmire to hinder malaria (Solomon, *Enchanted* 113). The animated military training films, developed by Max Fleischer in the course of World War I, had an important function in educating branches of the armed forces, as they were a more efficient way of instruction than other types of lectures (ibid.). Thus, the First Motion Picture Unit (FMPU), which was made up of talented animators from Disney, Warner Brothers, MGM and the Fleischer Studio, was created in 1942. The FMPU created more animated shorts than any Hollywood studio during wartime. The best-known cartoon created by the FMPU was *Position Firing* (1944), which explained to the gunners that in order to hit a plane, they must not fire the bullets at where they currently see the plane, but where it will be when the bullet hits it (Solomon, *Enchanted* 114). The usual storyteller at the FMPU “was a young



lieutenant from the live-action branch of the FMPU: Ronald Reagan” (qtd. in Solomon *Enchanted* 115), the later president of the United States. The FMPU was producing briefing films for the bombing of Japan. Thus, they had a profound effect on the animation history.

With the outbreak of World War II, the Disney studio had lowered their income as a great part of the overseas revenues was cut off. Therefore, with the United States entering the war, Disney created lots of instructional cartoons for the military, which were designed to train soldiers and civilians on various topics, from riveting techniques and how to use an antitank rifle to personal hygiene and the importance of American crops (Bendazzi 104; Leskosky 40; Solomon *Enchanted* 117-119; Van Riper 5). According to Leskosky, Disney’s wartime animated films can be divided into three categories: agricultural films, home front needs help, and psychological films (41). Agricultural films explained how American crops can help the military both at home and around the world. “Home front needs help” films clarified to the audience that by paying taxes and saving resources they also help fight the war. And lastly, psychological films investigated the German brain and contrasted them with the Americans (ibid.). Disney’s most important animated propaganda films from these three categories are: *Food Will Win the War* (1942), *The Grain That Built a Hemisphere* (1943); *Out of the Frying Pan and into the Firing Line* (1942), *The New Spirit* (1942), *The Spirit of '43* (1943); *Der Fuehrer’s Face* (1943), *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi* (1943), *Reason and Emotion* (1943) and *Chicken Little* (1943). Some of the mentioned cartoons will be further analyzed in the following chapter.

In addition to Disney, Warner Brothers also aimed at helping the country with production of educational and animated propaganda films. The animators at Warner Bros. produced a series of short, animated cartoons featuring Private Snafu, a short, daft, physically unattractive soldier who always does the wrong things (Barrier 502; Shull and Wilt 84). Private Snafu got his name

from the, at that time, famous acronym SNAFU, which meant “Situation Normal – All Fouled/Fucked Up” (Solomon *Enchanted* 122). With the educational military films, Warner Brothers also produced some political cartoons in which they derided the Nazis (*Daffy the Commando* (1943), *Scrap Happy Daffy* (1943), *Herr Meets Hare* (1944), *Plane Daffy* (1944), *Russian Rhapsody* (1944)) and some which were strongly anti-Japanese (*Tokio Jokio* (1943), *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* (1944)) (Bendazzi 125; Maltin and Beck 254; Solomon *Enchanted* 131-132).

There is a clear distinction in American animation between Good and Evil. The Evil’s plan is to control the world and to impose their own desires, while the Good battles the Evil and tries to eradicate it (Raffaelli 117). When the US entered the war, the malicious depictions of evil others intensified. By exaggerating in the creation of physical and cultural stereotypes against each other, both the Allied and the Axis united in their nation’s war effort (Zheng 267). Both Japan and the US demonized and depicted each other as evil (Zheng 269). Depicting caricatures of the Nazis or Fascists, the animators usually caricatured specific figures, like Hitler, Göring, Goebbels, Mussolini, or Admiral Tojo (Solomon *Enchanted* 146). This demonization and stereotypical depiction of the Germans, Italians and Japanese will be further analyzed in the following chapter.

## 5. Analysis of Films

The animation industry grew during World War II, producing everything from political commentary to cartoons raising morale of the people. During that time, animation simply had a different role than just entertaining children; it was used to educate adults. In this part of the thesis, we shall analyze some of Disney and Warner Brothers animated propaganda films. The plot of each animated short will be provided as well as the characteristics of why these shorts are propagandistic.

### 5.1. Der Fuehrer's Face (1943)

Probably the most popular American animated World War II propaganda film is Disney's *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943). The story was written by Joe Grant and Dick Huemer, while it was directed by Jack Kinney. It was originally supposed to be titled *Donald Duck in Nutziland* before Oliver Wallace's catchy song became the film's title (Beck 107; Welch 143; Van Riper 52). *Der Fuehrer's Face* ended up winning the Oscar for Best Animated Short Film in 1943 (Beck 107; Solomon *Enchanted* 125; Welch 143; Shull and Wilt 139).

It starts off with a Nazi marching band, which sings the title song and marches across the street replete with swastikas. Trees, clouds, hedges, hydrants, fences, telephone poles and windmills are all shaped into a swastika. The marching band consisting of five members, among them a Japanese soldier playing the tuba, an effeminate Hermann Göring playing the flute, and with a short appearance of Mussolini, awaken Donald who salutes in his sleep. The outside of Donald's house caricatures Hitler's face, while the inside is again filled with swastika shaped objects. Donald's bed, clocks, wallpapers are all swastika shaped.

As Donald is woken up, he heils to the pictures of Hitler, Mussolini and Hirohito on his wall. He prepares his breakfast by making coffee from only one bean, spraying an aroma of bacon and eggs and sawing a loaf of bread which resembles to wood. Donald is then given a copy of *Mein Kampf* to improve his mind. The marching band gets into his house and then out again, while Donald is holding the bass drum and is getting kicked in the behind.

Upon his arrival at work, the factory whistle, dressed in a helmet and a swastika band, whistles "Heil Hitler", and Donald gets to work as an assembly line worker for a weapons factory. By screwing weapon shells and heiling to each picture of Hitler, Donald then gets a one-minute paid vacation through the kindness of der Führer. This vacation comprises a canvas of the Alps

and forced exercise to work harder for der Führer. After his vacation has ended, Donald has to work overtime faster and faster, which results in having a mental breakdown. Donald hallucinates the marching band as shells, appears as Hitler, and is beaten by a giant shell before an explosion happens which starts raining Donalds. To his luck, it was all just a nightmare and upon waking up, a shadow depicting the Nazi salute is seen on his wall, and the second he sees it, he starts heiling again. But upon the realization that the shadow came from the model of the Statue of Liberty, he kisses Lady Liberty glad to be a citizen of the United States of America. The cartoon ends with the title song and a caricature of Hitler who gets hit by a rotten tomato.

*Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943) displays how bad the citizens of Germany had it compared to the blessings and freedoms of the American people. Donald in his dream is led by fear of the regime, and by showing any resistance, he is immediately threatened by violence. The animated film portrays the everyday life of the Germans who lived in fear of the Nazi party. In the beginning sequence, during Donald's breakfast, the shortage of food and nutrients is also present. Fear from the Nazi regime is shown across the whole cartoon as Donald had to listen to all the commands, work all day for the country, and if showing disobedience, he was threatened by bayonets. At the end, he wakes up from his nightmare, and finds himself in his patriotically decorated bedroom contrasting the horrible life of the Germans to the great freedom of the Americans.

## 5.2. Education for Death - The Making of the Nazi (1943)

*Education for Death* is a chilling film about the life of a German citizen from birth to death produced by Walt Disney. It is based on a book of the same title by Gregor Ziemer, an American teacher who worked in Germany in the early days of the Third Reich and thus witnessed up close how the Nazi regime operated to indoctrinate children (Shull and Wilt 140; Solomon *Enchanted* 125; Van Riper 54).

The animated short tells the story of Hans, a young German boy, who has no other worth to society than to be brainwashed and to die. Rather than just being a silly cartoon, *Education for Death* has a mix of serious and goofy parts which shows animation's full range as a medium. The serious parts also provide a clear window into how the Americans of that time would have understood the evil of the Nazi regime and why they believed it had to be destroyed before it could conquer the world. This cartoon also provides an insight into why the Americans of the 1940s were so repulsed by German fascism, which was a unique evil that they had never seen before.

*Education for Death* begins before little Hans is even born with his parents having to register his birth with the party. They have to provide documentation proving that they are from a pure Aryan bloodline and give him a name keeping an eye on the list of unacceptable names, which contains the names Franklin, Winston, and also Elias, Walt's own middle name. The couple is given a hereditary passport containing space for twelve future children, which indicated that Germany needs soldiers and a present from the Führer, a copy of *Mein Kampf*.

Hitler's book transforms itself into fairy tales of the new order which little Hans learned in kindergarten. The style of animation changes from a realistic style to a goofy style. The passage of *Sleeping Beauty* is presented as the witch, presenting democracy, threatens the sleeping beauty. A knight arrives and sends the witch flying through a glass window. The knight awakens the sleeping beauty, who is in fact a drunken and obese Germany. The prince is depicted as a caricature of Hitler who keeps on jabbering. They both start heiling and Hitler picks up Germany on his horse as they ride away with rows of trees saluting them.

When Hans gets ill, a man in a uniform bursts into Hans' bedroom menacing the mother that the state will have to step in and take over if Hans will continue to be so weak. He also threatens the mother to stop pampering little Hans.

Back in school, the children salute to a picture of Hitler. At the same time, pictures of Göring and Goebbels are shown to be pleased by the children's daily pledge to fight, obey and die for their Führer. Hans's teacher draws a rabbit and a fox during his natural history lesson. The fox corners the rabbit and eats it. Hans expresses sympathy for the rabbit and is immediately sent to sit in the corner and is called a "dummkopf". The other students give the correct answers that the world belongs to the strong and the brutal. Hans eventually learns his lesson, expresses disapproval of the weak and declares that he hates the rabbit. As the narrator states that Hans has finally learned the correct way of Nazi thinking, the picture of Hitler winks to the camera.

The scene then changes into a nighttime assembly where books by Voltaire, Einstein, Spinoza, and others as well as paintings are being burned. The *Holy Bible* transforms into *Mein Kampf*, a crucifix changes into a sword with a swastika, a church window is being destroyed.

Hans and his companions are then shown heiling and marching as they grow up becoming soldiers holding bayonets. Blinkers appear on Hans's head as the narrator says that he sees only what the party wants him to see. A muzzle appears as the narrator says that he says nothing but what the party wants him to say. Chains around the neck appear as the narrator says that he does nothing but what the party wants him to do. The whole army is shown marching into the horizon with a slow fade off by turning the marching soldiers into rows of graves as their education for death is complete.

Everything about the beginning scene is set up to feel wrong and unnatural. We sympathize with the meek couple, who are being forced to endure such invasive intrusion of their intimate lives. The following scene shows the German version of the tale *The Sleeping Beauty*. It is supposed to depict the Nazi government's story justifying itself. Germany is a sleeping beauty, menaced by an evil witch representing Weimar democracy, who is then saved by the heroic knight

of National Socialism. We are then presented with the goofy part of this scene in which Germany is actually no great prize, just a fat, drunk girl and her prince is just a ranting madman portrayed as Hitler. This scene argues that the whole narrative underpinning the grim totalitarian society we are learning about is basically just a ludicrous fraud. Neither Germany, nor Hitler have much in the way of redeeming qualities and the two basically deserve each other.

The film's central scene depicts little Hans in school receiving his literal education for death. Hans is a naïve child being raised under the rules of the Nazi society – a society that only exists to serve the mad dreams of their dictator. And what the dictator believes is that anyone who is weak must be destroyed. Hans's teacher literally illustrates this concept by drawing a fox eating a rabbit. Hans at first sympathizes with the bunny, which is completely the wrong lesson to learn, so he gets punished. The other school kids understand how they are supposed to think and yell and scream about how much they hate the rabbit. Eventually, so does Hans as well.

The penultimate scene shows to what the brainwashing eventually leads and what kind of men are produced by a system that cares only about loyalty to the dictatorship and the destruction of anything perceived as being meek or independent. This all leads to men who are obsessed with violence, men who have no hesitations about burning great works of art, science and literature, and think nothing of defiling churches, replacing the *Holy Bible* with *Mein Kampf*. This scene conveys that the Nazis worshipped nothing but violence and themselves.

Having served the only purpose his society ever had for him, which was to obediently die for the dictator, Hans ended up being dead. It is an example of white propaganda, as the Third Reich was a suppressive totalitarian dictatorship run by a madman, a government that worshiped death over life and demanded total subservience from all its subjects, from the cradle to the grave.

### 5.3. Private SNAFU in “Spies” (1943)

During World War II, a lot of American men were drafted into battle. Some of these men did not know how to read, and it was a challenge to educate them on proper military protocol. Warner Brothers therefore created an educational series of cartoons for the soldiers and, in 1943, Private Snafu was born (Barrier 502). After Warner Brothers underbid Disney for the contract, they got to work and produced 27 training films for the armed forces. This series was at first not for public eyes, but for the *Army-Navy Screen Magazine*, and the government took extreme measures to ensure that no one leaked the storyboards or the animation frames (Maltin and Beck 254; Shull and Wilt 81; Solomon *Enchanted* 122).

There were quite a few legends of animation who worked on this project, with Chuck Jones, Friz Freleng, Bob Clampett, Frank Tashlin, Mel Blanc and Theodor Seuss Geisel (better known as Dr. Seuss), who was one of the writers for the series. Dr. Seuss’ influence is seen in the early Snafu shorts, from his rhyming scheme to characters and the gear that appear in them (Barrier 503; Shull and Wilt 82). From censorship and weapon care to booby traps, Private Snafu served as an example of what would happen if a soldier did not do his part. Since this series was just for the military, Warner Brothers did not have to answer to the motion picture production code, which is why a lot of alluring females and bad language appear in the cartoons (Shull and Wilt 82). As this series was for soldiers, the usual restrictions of decency did not apply.

*Spies* begins with a drawing of an ear in front of which the title is shown, a reference to the well-known propaganda fact that the enemy might be listening. Private Snafu is shown walking out of his army base ostentatiously saying that he learned a secret, which he will not let slip as the enemy is listening. Snafu literally zips his mouth shut and we can see the secret in safe deposit with a pad-a-lock and chain inside his head. Though spies are hidden everywhere, Snafu talks to



his mother about going on a trip. Inside the telephone box, a little Japanese spy is squeezed and listens to Snafu's conversation. Other phone boxes with spies are tilted to Snafu's phone box and are also listening to his conversation.

Snafu stops at a newsstand requesting a magazine to read on the ship, while next to the newsstand three men are standing, reading magazines. As the men lower their magazines they are displayed as Mussolini, Göring, and a Japanese officer. Snafu enters a bar and above the bar there are two moose heads. As Snafu gets drunk, the moose heads talk to each other, with their antlers forming a swastika. The alcohol dissolves Snafu's pad-a-lock and his mouth unzips. As he approaches a lovely blonde, he unveils that he is sailing to Africa at half past four. The pretty blonde spy carries a typewriter on her garter, has a messenger pigeon on her hat, and wears two microphones adorned with swastikas in her brassiere. She sends the letter straight to Hitler, who transmits the information to his U-boat wolfpack. The wolf pack, organized in a swastika formation, salutes to Hitler's command and follows Snafu's troop ship.

Upon spotting the U-boats, Snafu shouts to the captain to accelerate promptly and is thrown off the ship. The U-boats blast torpedoes Snafu, who is seen falling down into a kettle to Hell. Snafu wonders who let his secret out, when the devil (Hitler with a swastika on his chest) and his demons appear and devil Hitler shows Snafu a mirror, which shows a horse's rear end, to answer his question.

From the beginning of this Snafu short, there is a strong depiction of the Axis spies which is present during the whole short. All of the Axis powers were depicted in this Snafu cartoon. As Snafu tells us that he has a secret, a buck-toothed Japanese spy with slanting eyes and thick glasses appears from a baby stroller. Also, a buck-toothed cat shows up from a drainpipe, another Japanese officer from a lantern, and other spies are hidden everywhere. When Snafu goes to the newsstand,

the Axis caricatures are the men listening next to the newsstand. Mussolini on the cover of *Lyfe* magazine, Göring on the cover of *Gollier's* magazine, and a buck-toothed Japanese officer on the *Fiberty* magazine.

Most of the dialogue is presented in rhyme which is a clear indicator of Dr. Seuss' writing style. Apart from the message that loose lips can sink ships, another message concerning the danger of bar girls is presented in this short. When Snafu meets a beautiful woman in a bar, under the influence of alcohol, he blabbers out vital military secrets. The reality is that the bar girl was actually a Nazi spy, who sent this information straight to Hitler, who then instructed his U-boats about the troopship's departure.

Snafu's behavior, regarding the consumption of alcohol, ended in not only going to Hell, but also bringing danger to other American soldiers who were on the same ship. This, and other Snafu shorts are a great teaching tool for young soldiers, some of which did not finish school, as they could see what would happen if they behaved like Snafu. It was a more interesting teaching style than the standardized lessons in which the troops were given instructions on how to do certain things. Young soldiers learned from Snafu's mistakes, and if they did not, they were surely ridiculed and compared to the foul up Snafu by their fellow soldiers.

#### 5.4. Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips (1944)

During World War II, the United States did not just make fun of the Germans. They had also something to say about the Japanese, regarded as their enemy for bombing Pearl Harbor. *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* was released in 1944 by Warner Brothers.

Floating inside a crate somewhere in the Pacific, Bugs Bunny is just killing his time before the inevitable island that turns up in this kind of picture appears. Bugs swims to the island describing it as a beautiful Garden of Eden and a peaceful and quiet "Shangri-la", when all of a

sudden artillery fire with black smoke appears. Bugs jumps for cover into a haystack in which a barefooted, buck-toothed, gibberish-speaking Japanese soldier with thick glasses and slanting eyes also hides. Bugs flees from the soldier who tries to kill him with a machete into a hole, when the soldier throws a bomb down the rabbit hole. Bugs returns the bomb to the soldier and covers his hole with dirt as the bomb explodes in the Japanese soldier's hands.

The soldier survives the blast, takes his machete and tries to slice Bugs's ears, which peep out of the ground. Then Bugs, dressed as the Japanese officer Hideki Tojo, fools the soldier who immediately starts bowing down in front of him. When Bugs starts nibbling on his carrot, the soldier recognizes him as Bugs Bunny from the Warner Brothers cartoon pictures. Bugs again manages to escape, this time into an aircraft. The Japanese soldier follows him into another aircraft, but Bugs ties the Japanese aircraft to a tree, which results in being ripped out from underneath, leaving only the cockpit. As the soldier parachutes down, Bugs flies along in a plane and presents the soldier an anvil which pulls the Japanese down to a hard fall.

Next up, Bugs draws the Rising Sun Flag on a tree and encounters a buck-toothed sumo wrestler with slanting eyes. Bugs draws another flag, but as he gets defeated by the sumo wrestler, the wrestler wipes off the score. Bugs, known for his slyness, dresses up as a geisha and lures the sumo wrestler into a kiss behind a fan. It was a lethal attempt for a kiss, as Bugs hits the sumo wrestler with a hammer on the head. Before falling down on the ground, the sumo wrestler draws another flag on the tree.

Next up comes a fleet of Japanese ships, which urges Bugs to devise a strategy. He puts on his thinking cap and gets an idea. Driving in a "Good Rumor" truck, Bugs sells ice cream filled with hand grenades to the Japanese troops. Following the series of explosions, one Japanese soldier runs back to Bugs's ice cream truck requesting another ice cream as he got one for free.

Bugs marks all the trees with the Rising Sun Flag and is now bored as he wiped out the whole Japanese army. He sees an American ship and wants to be saved by it, but he suddenly changes his mind as he spots a female rabbit on the island.

In *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* there is a lot of propagandistic features. First up, the title has a pun, as the word *nip* refers to the verb “to bite” as well as the word *Nippon*, which is Japanese for Japan. The word *nip* may be understood as an ethnic slur. Upon Bugs’s arrival at the beautiful island the peace is disturbed by a sudden bombing. This refers to the sudden attack on Pearl Harbor, when the United States officially entered the war. Furthermore, the Japanese on the island try to kill Bugs for no reason. The soldiers are depicted with buck teeth and slanted eyes speaking gibberish, which was a constant caricature of the Japanese in American World War II propaganda.

With his disguise as General Tojo, the soldier immediately starts bowing, which shows that ranks and authority are important in Japan’s army. Moreover, when the plane lost the tug of war battle against the tree, it represents the low quality of Japanese aircraft during World War II.

The painted flags on trees represent the victories Bugs had over the Japanese, or in other words, the number of Japanese casualties. Respecting the sumo wrestler, he paints a bigger flag than the others. Upon defeating the sumo wrestler, Bugs compares him to a tree as he starts yelling timber, which is a warning word for lumberjacks when the tree is about to fall down, alarming anyone in a nearby radius so they do not get crushed.

Finally, the battle against the whole Japanese army depicts that a single rabbit can outsmart the whole Japanese army, which shows them as not very intelligent. Handing the ice cream bars over to the Japanese, Bugs uses racially offensive language addressing the Japanese as bowlegs, monkey face and slant eyes. In the end, Bugs defeats the whole army single handedly by using his wits.

## 6. Conclusion

To sum up, these animated shorts from World War II give us an insight into the American condition and culture from the 1930s and 1940s. It was a completely different time, alien to us today. There was so much that was socially acceptable from that era but is now considered offensive. It was war, and war brings out the absolute worst in people as each side tries to villainize the other. That is what happened to many animated characters around that time. It is as if they were pulled aside from their cartoony shenanigans and drafted into the front lines. All in all, it is very important for these cartoons to exist and to be accessible for audiences to watch for educational purposes. Erasing the past only hurts our future and it does not allow us to learn from the lives of our ancestors. This was truly one of the most unique eras of animation which should be preserved. The modern cartoon characters will not be utilized in such a way ever again.

Although propaganda has a negative connotation, it is simply information used to promote or publicize a particular political cause or point of view. While Hitler and the Nazi regime used propaganda as a way to deceive, Allied propaganda claims that they were just holding up a mirror to the enemy and reciting his resume in an exaggerated manner. Propaganda was not all about making fun of the enemy either. It was used to stir up patriotism and the will to contribute to the war effort.

When it came to Walt Disney and his involvement in the war, Disney himself was not in it for the profit. He genuinely cared for his country and wanted to see it succeed. The first animated short that the Walt Disney Company created for the US was *The New Spirit* (1941). It featured Donald Duck and it encouraged US citizens to return their taxes on time and coined the slogan "Taxes to beat the Axis". Furthermore, *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943) and *Education for Death* (1943) are the most remembered propaganda cartoons created by Walt Disney. While they did

highlight the faults of the enemy, these two films portray the reason why the United States were fighting against Germany and why such a dictatorship had to be stopped.

In addition to Disney, Warner Brothers also did its part in raising the home front spirit and ridiculing the Axis powers. With several shorts, including *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* (1944), they emphasized the Japanese physical and mental racial inferiority to the Americans. Furthermore, *Private Snafu* became a fun and interesting teaching tool for young and uneducated soldiers to learn their lesson. By not following Snafu's actions and doing practically the exact opposite, the young soldiers were ready to step into the battle.

This period of animation is full of propagandistic animated films which are yet to be analyzed. Not only did Disney and Warner Bros. participate in the war effort, but other famous studios, like the FMPU, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Paramount Pictures did their part as well. The cartoons during the golden age of animation are a reflection of that era and should be regarded as such. There were a lot of ethnic stereotypes which were depicted in the animated pictures, therefore, when analyzing these movies, it is important to take the background into consideration.

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## 8. Filmography

*Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips*. Directed by Isadore Freleng, produced by Leon Schlesinger, Warner

Bros., 1944.

*Der Fuehrer's Face*. Directed by Jack Kinney, written by Joe Grant and Dick Huemer, Walt

Disney Productions, 1943.

*Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi*. Directed by Clyde Geronimi, produced by Walt

Disney, written by Joe Grant, Walt Disney Productions, 1943.

"Spies." *Private Snafu*. Directed by Chuck Jones, written by Theodor Seuss Geisel, Warner

Bros., 1943.

## 9. Abstract

Animated shorts have always been part of our childhood, whether their goal was to entertain children or educate them. A brief historical summary of how animation started and how it came to the United States is presented. Propaganda and some of its features are also briefly explained and further analyzed in the selected animated cartoons. This paper further examines the intended propagandistic messages and features of American animated films produced in the 1940s, the years of World War II. At that time, when the whole world was at war, it was crucial to reach the masses and to raise their spirit. American animators therefore got together and produced animated shorts to raise the national spirit and to present the bad side of the Axis powers. In order to help the soldiers who fought in the front lines, the most talented American animators did their part in producing animated propaganda films for the public. By using certain ideas and caricatures, they shaped the public opinion regarding the Axis powers. Two of the most famous animation studios, Walt Disney and Warner Brothers, produced several animated propaganda shorts at that time, a few of which are analyzed in this paper. Disney's *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943) and *Education for Death: The Making of the Nazi* (1943) and Warner Bros.' *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* (1944) and *Private Snafu in Spies* (1943) are presented and analyzed. Both of Disney's animated shorts represent purely propagandistic anti-German cartoons. Warner Bros. on the other side mocked the Japanese in *Bugs Bunny Nips the Nips* (1944), while in *Private Snafu in Spies* (1943) all of the Axis powers (Germany, Italy and Japan) were caricatured. *Private Snafu* provided an interesting teaching method for young soldiers who were drafted into the army. For these animated propaganda films to be understood, it is of great importance to take into account the historical background and the relations between the countries. Additionally, the idea of propaganda and its use of the powerful medium of film were highlighted.

## 10. Key Words

the American animated film, World War II, Propaganda, Walt Disney, Warner Bros.