Chapter 4

No Women! Only Brothers

Propaganda, Studio Politics, Warner Bros., and *The Fighting 69th* (1940)

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In the Warner Bros. movie *The Fighting 69th* directed by William Keighley (1940), men arriving at Camp Mills discover army training akin to the assembly line. A montage sequence shows recruits sequentially receiving inspections, medicals, and uniforms. With a business-like efficiency, officers oversee the martial production line, charging tardy recruits with: "holding up the war!" The film's model for preparing to go to war reflects Warner Bros.' corporate and filmmaking factory identity within the studio system era. The movie's all-male cast demonstrates that the difficulty of preparing women for war was testing the studio's resourcefulness. Warner Bros.' movies throughout the 1930s appropriated corporate philosophy to troubleshoot the widening range of problems America faced: The Great Depression, political turmoil, rising crime, and the growing strength of belligerent nations.[1] Often these social problem films feature male and female characters together negotiating the issues of the day. Presenting women in war pictures though can pose more problems than it solves.[2]

The studio released the First World War (WWI) biopic, *The Fighting 69th,* in January 1940, and pre- to postproduction spanned from March to December 1939. Within this period Germany invaded Poland, and France and Britain declared war on Germany, throwing Europe into its second major conflict of the twentieth century.[3] Film historians have done much to reveal the anti-Nazi stance Warner Bros. maintained throughout the 1930s, and to highlight the studio's significant contribution to the British war effort prior to America's official involvement in 1941.[4] However, *The Fighting 69th* has critics divided over whether the movie's narrative reflected Warner Bros.' interventionist attitude, or rather appeased popular isolationist fears in America.[5]

K. A. Ritzenhoff et al. (eds.), *Heroism and Gender in War Films*
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The following chapter considers the filmmakers' erasure of female characters from the movie's plot in favor of presenting a supportive, all-male community as part of the studio's strategy of readying the nation for war. Additionally, this chapter analyzes specific scenes from the film to demonstrate how *The Fighting 69th* became a vehicle for allegorically addressing and overcoming challenges the American film industry faced after war broke out in Europe. Allegory permitted Warner Bros. to engage in militant rhetoric at a time when influential isolationist pressure groups and politicians opposed any mention of America entering into international affairs.

Filmmakers in the 30s had already become proficient at utilizing and reading allegory as a way of circumventing the stringent production codes established by the industry's self-censorship body, known as the Production Code Association (PCA).[6] This familiarity with allegory enabled the makers of *The Fighting 69th* to surreptitiously and didactically communicate to other studios the role Hollywood had to play in supporting Western democracies to fight the Nazis. By way of allegory *The Fighting 69th* self-reflexively comments upon the nature of propaganda, answering concerns Hollywood's trade papers raised after the outbreak of war in Europe. Allegory is employed to explore how studios might overcome an economic obstacle introduced by the foreign war in the fall of 1939. And, through allegory, the movie presents to other studios a blueprint for following Warner Bros.' censorship-evading marketing campaign. The studio's marketing and showmanship tactics, such as those executed for the movie's "Gentleman Only" previews, saw the studio align itself with New York's heroic 69th Infantry Regiment.[7] Identification with the unit's fraternity, patriotism, and courage allowed Warner Bros. to avoid scrutiny from many powerful bodies that attempted to censor interventionist speech.[8] Using the power of narrative cinema, Warner Bros. was strategizing how to prepare the nation for war, whether the nation realized it or not.

Mobilizing America or What to Do with Women

Based loosely upon WWI experiences of New York's famous Irish unit, familiarly known as the Fighting 69th, the movie's plot follows a classic training camp to war structure, a structure that shows how heroes are made and how they fight.[9] The movie interweaves fictional characters with the biographies of actual soldiers from the unit, such as the unit's chaplain Father Frank Duffy (Pat O'Brien), its leader Major William J. Donovan (George Brent), and celebrated soldier-poet Joyce Kilmer (Jeffrey Lynn). The relationship between Jerry Plunkett (James Cagney), a fictional soldier and social misfit, and Father Duffy provides the movie's central tension: after Plunkett's cowardly actions cause the death of several soldiers from his unit, Duffy perseveres in guiding Plunkett toward performing a final heroic act of redemption. In the following section, I will propose a close reading of two scenes contained within a sequence that occurs temporally at the central point in the movie. Requiring minimal contextualization, the sequence breaks momentarily from this familiar cause and effect narrative of redemption thereby drawing attention to itself. One could even charge these three short scenes with "holding

up the war." Resembling something like vaudeville, the sequence opens with a short comic sketch that Jeanine Basinger (2003) has labeled "funny business."[10] However, given its curious and extraneous nature, this "funny business" warrants further interrogation.

In the sequence, the Fighting 69th recruits, now trained soldiers deployed in 1918 to fight the war in Europe, consort with the local French villagers about how best to mobilize a stubborn donkey. One soldier shouts at the donkey: "Allez! Allez! Avance!" and when the donkey refuses to move, he complains: "Them French donkeys don't even understand their own language." After unsuccessful attempts of bribing the donkey with a carrot and lifting it, the only Jewish soldier in the all-Irish outfit, Mike Murphy, born Mischa Moskowicz (Sammy Cohen), speaks up: "Does not one of you understand the sensitive nature of the poor darling? A donkey is not a gunnery mule. A donkey is sensitive and high strung like a thoroughbred."[11] He kneels before the donkey and begins to sing the Irish folksong: "Kathleen Mavourneen." The donkey slowly rises and obediently begins to pull the cart with soldiers. Onlookers cheer as the troops move on their way. The short scene explores two concerns the nation and the film industry had to confront in the fall of 1939; the first pertains to American intervention in the European war, the second, to the nature of propaganda. The soldiers' efforts to mobilize the donkey allegorize the question President Roosevelt faced in the fall of 1939: How could the president persuade Americans to support another nation's war? Warner Bros. answers: Entertain them (see figure 4.1)!

When war broke out in Europe, Americans "had largely withdrawn from international affairs."[12] The horrors of WWI remained all too vivid within the American population's collective memory,[13] and in 1939, American public opinion still strongly

Figure 4.1 "A donkey is sensitive!" A scene from *The Fighting 69th* (1940).

opposed any involvement in the war in Europe.[14] Nevertheless, by 1939 Roosevelt had become convinced that America's participation in the war was unavoidable.[15] Maintaining publicly the rhetoric of neutrality, Roosevelt clearly did not ignore the public, but he did try to manage public opinion; here the brothers Warner were on hand to help.[16]

In 1939, Warner Bros. was the most political of the major studios. It had become known as "the Roosevelt Studio" due to the brothers' close ties and friendship with the president and his administration.[17] Warner Bros. was "unusual among the studio heads for their willingness to infuse films with their political views."[18] For example, in the 30s the studio made several films supporting Roosevelt's New Deal. Formidable advocates of the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, Warner Bros. took a courageous and costly stance against the Nazis as early as 1934. The studio pulled out of Germany after the Third Reich required American studios in Germany dismiss their Jewish employees.[19] Michael Birdwell (1999), the author of *Celluloid Soldiers*, has demonstrated how Harry Warner, the president of Warner Bros. appealed to his screenwriters to use the power of cinema to fight the Nazi threat.[20] Translating anti-Nazi sentiments into film proved difficult though, as throughout the 30s the Production Code Administration (PCA), the self-censorship arm of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) policed studio output. The PCA censored anything it viewed as violating American neutrality, intending to avoid calls for an independent or government censorship body.[21] When war broke out in Europe, Hollywood trade papers filled with debates over the sort of film content that might breach America's perceived neutrality.[22] Such debates attempted to arrive at some consensus over how to identify propaganda. In these commentaries reporters appear to perceive propaganda and entertainment as separate entities. Papers fail to conceptualize propaganda's potential to be entertaining. In *The Fighting 69th* the allegorical scene with the donkey instructs the spectator that Warner Bros. consider entertainment integral to propaganda. The scene appears as a didactic moment directed toward other industry insiders.[23] In Jerome Christensen's book *America's Corporate Art* (2012), Christensen describes what he terms "studio allegory":

> Studio allegories often address multiple audiences. . . . A studio . . . that thinks in pictures may find certain dramatic situations . . . convenient vehicles for allegorizing its corporate strategy. A studio may use allegory to admonish its employees and punish its stars; it may exhort the president of the United States to alter policy; it may allegorize its formidable institutional power to appease its creditors and dismay its competitors.[24]

Fulfilling the allegory's purpose, Murphy-Moskowicz's song charms the donkey into cooperative action, whether she realizes it or not.

The character of Murphy-Moskowicz demands more attention. While Murphy-Moskowicz may well be a generous vision of Catholics and Jews fighting alongside one another under an American banner, Murphy-Moskowicz's choice of song adds a further layer of complexity to any reading of the scene. An old Irish song, "Kathleen Mauvorneen" tells the story of a soldier trying to wake his slumbering beloved before he must leave for battle. The tale of "Kathleen Mauvorneen" was turned into a movie several times, but perhaps most notably in 1919 when Theda Bara played the

title role. Fox Film Corporation famously pulled the movie after Irish and Catholic groups violently protested at the casting of the Jewish actress Bara.[25] Therefore, on the one hand the filmmakers' choice of song may be read as an effort to heal past grievances between Catholics and Jews in favor of promoting a united front. On the other hand, the decision to use the song may suggest that while a show of unity proves necessary, past differences have neither been forgotten nor forgiven.[26] The Jewish Murphy-Moskowicz appears to be the only character who knows how to manipulate the donkey and he does so by employing an old Irish song. By extension of allegory, Warner Bros. presents itself as the studio that knows how to mobilize the public, and to do so will readily celebrate some Irish myth and pathos; the cynical reader can substitute "exploit" for "celebrate."

We might briefly think about the use of a donkey in this scene—why not a horse? It seems that in addition to the unusual placement of the sequence, allegory announces itself through iconography.[27] As the mascot of the American Democratic Party, a donkey can illustrate Harry Warner's frustration with politicians for not taking a stronger position on the European conflict. Additionally, as commentators at the time observed, the stubborn donkey, Angelique, is the only female character to feature in the picture.[28] Several film actresses were linked to the movie, including, most frequently, Priscilla Lane. The press reported Lane's ever-diminishing role between July 29 and September 23, 1939, until it was announced on the same day that filming began, Lane, "the only woman in the scenario" had been written out.[29]

After the movie previewed, many film reviewers made a point of noting the film's uniqueness for having an all-male cast. The following review appeared in *Variety*:

> With an all-male cast, picture carries no semblance of romantic interest. Not only are wives and sweethearts missing from farewells at Camp Mills, but scripters side-stepped the inclusion of French maids to provide diversion for the American dough-boys. Although this line is unusual for a war picture, it's also a handicap in interesting the distaff side of film patrons, important at the box office.[30]

The two treatments for the movie extant in the Warner Bros. Archive reveal that the original concept for the film required women, and lots of them.[31] For example, there was to be a love interest for Plunkett, in the form of a character named Noreen Burke, described as "a singer and dancer of rare talent, who takes time off from her current show to participate in Camp entertainment. She is a lovely Irish-American girl, who is the pride of the 69th."[32] In addition to Burke, several other girlfriends and mothers feature in the movie's outlines. An elderly mother, Mrs. Wynn, makes an early appearance when she visits her three sons at Camp Mills. Duffy later mentions that Mrs. Wynn is close to death upon learning that one of her sons has been killed at the front; "Further bad news" Duffy announces ominously, "will prove fatal." Fatally, none of the female characters make it into the final script.[33]

Examining the evolution of a scene that originates from the film's two treatments allows us to trace more acutely the filmmakers' decision to transplant normative representations of male-female relationships into an all-male environment. The treatments outline a scene that takes place on the eve before the troops leave Camp

Mills and ship out to Europe. In the scene, Father Duffy officiates over a mass wedding ceremony, marrying several soldiers to their sweethearts. A note in one treatment reads: "Many of the men being married we shall see on the battle line later on."[34] This mass wedding scene disappears from the shooting script, along with the female characters. However, a remnant from the mass marriage scene remains in the final movie's depiction of the first meeting between soldier-poet Joyce Kilmer and Lieutenant Ames (Dennis Morgan). The bond that develops between these two men exemplifies how the movie displaces heterosexual relationships in favor of presenting all-male relationships.[35]

Ames and Kilmer first meet at Camp Mills. When Duffy spots Ames wandering around the camp and reading Kilmer's poetry, he introduces the poet to Ames. Ames asks Kilmer to autograph his poetry book and Duffy supplies Kilmer with a pen. Kilmer signs: "Yours in a Common Cause." Kilmer and Ames then solidify their new friendship by shaking hands. I want to draw attention to the mise-en-scène in these shots. With the exception of the cut to Kilmer signing the book, the camera retains a mid-shot focused on Kilmer and Ames, with Father Duffy standing between the two men. The overprevailing imagery in this scene evokes the traditional wedding ceremony. Kilmer and Ames remain close, and die together in the same battle. They are buried side by side: Kilmer's grave on the left, Ames's on the right, reminiscent of their first union at Camp Mills and recalling the marriage vow: "Till death do us part."[36] Tracing the development of the film's production, from treatment to final movie, demonstrates how the filmmakers aimed after August 1939 to present a male homosocial community as fostering a self-sufficient, supportive, and loving environment; this move eliminated the need for traditional representations of female domesticity, companionship, and sexuality (see figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 "Sign the book." A scene from *The Fighting 69th* (1940).

Reasoning behind the late decision to write out the female characters from the movie seemingly appears twofold. First, as John Belton (2012) explains: "Women pose a variety of threats to men in war films. The mere appearance of a wife onscreen introduces an emotional element that is often realized in terms of the man's vulnerability."[37] Lines in the treatment that pertain to female characters such as Duffy's mention of Mrs. Wynn's critical condition or references to war widows add an overtly sentimental and tragic dimension to the script that after August 1939 the filmmakers eliminate. If the filmmakers had wished to appease isolationist groups, it would have made sense to retain the audience's sympathy for the female characters. Second, the removal of all of the female characters from the film may relate to a widely held opinion that women maintained predominantly antiwar views, ranging from pacifism to a militant isolationism. In an article that briefly mentions *The Fighting 69th,* Hedda Hopper (1939), an influential Hollywood gossip columnist, wrote:

> With everyone thinking, fearing and writing about war, I might as well let off steam…I'm firmly convinced that the only way we'll keep America out of the war is through women…Let our sons know we don't believe they're cowards when they refuse to fight another's battle.[38]

Hopper's rhetoric chimes with the newly formed National Legion of Mothers of America movement, originating out of California and starting to gain momentum.[39] Two days after Hopper's column ran, on September 23, 1939, Warner Bros. made the announcement: "'No women!' That's the ultimate dictum for the *Fighting 69th*."[40] In the final movie, characters' references to females often provoke annoyance or resentment. For example, at Camp Mills, Father Duffy asks a soldier: "How's Mrs. O'Keefe?" The answer is tinged with irritation: "Expecting again!" Promoting the virtues of a male homosocial community, the filmmakers eschew traditional representations of females who threaten to obstruct the war effort. Courting the stubborn donkey Angelique is the closest the filmmakers permit their army to get to a female.

Warner Bros.' Economics

I return to the sequence discussed earlier to examine how the episode following the donkey scene playfully engages with allegory to muse over the pressing economic issues the US film industry faced in the fall of 1939. Jovial soldiers traveling in a cart drawn by the newly obliging donkey, cheer as they pass troublemaker Plunkett, who upon spotting a café close by takes a seat on the café's veranda to enjoy a beer. When Plunkett pays the French waiter with an American cigar coupon, a still shot of the "Certificate" fills the frame. The waiter looks at the coupon and exclaims with exaggerated delight: "American money!" The waiter's excitement exemplifies the power of the American dollar during wartime and the scene is a comment on the film industry's financial situation. In WWII, as in WWI, the

value of warring nations' currencies plummeted and the dollar gained supremacy on foreign markets. The strength of the dollar affected the movie industry in several ways, but perhaps the most pressing problem it created for American studios in the fall of 1939 was over the question of how the studios could extract their profits from rentals in Britain—their best foreign market. In 1939 the studios expected to earn $35 million from the United Kingdom. As Todd M. Bennett (2012) describes in *One World, Big Screen*: "In the eyes of the British Treasury and Board of Trade officials, $35 million represented an extravagant drain on the United Kingdom's extremely limited dollar reserves, which had been set aside to purchase war materials from the United States."[41] On September 16, 1939, *Daily Variety* reported that while currency exchange with France had come to a standstill, the studios had, at least that week, received remittances from London; however, the "exchange situation in the foreign field is being watched closely because industry believes any considerable freezing of coin abroad represents biggest threat to foreign market."[42] By October, studios were no longer receiving remittances from English exhibitors on new contracts and were waiting on a decision from the British Board of Trade over whether it would freeze their profits. The indication was that the board would allow only 25 percent of the studios' money to leave the country.[43] As profits commonly went back into American film production, commentators predicted that projects would be dropped, budgets slashed, staff reduced, and salaries cut. Anyone with a vested interest in American filmmaking would have been sensible to keep abreast of the negotiations taking place between the British government and Hollywood studios.

In this interim period, speculation in the trade papers over how to employ frozen US profits appears rife. A popular supposition proposed that studios would put their frozen assets into making movies in Britain, thereby recouping their money through exhibiting the movies in America.[44] As reported in the pages of *Daily Variety* on October 2, 1939, one studio had found an ingenious solution:

> Due to European impoundage of coin one of the major indie studios made a contingency deal with an actor getting $50,000 a picture. Deal provides he be paid for five weeks work $35,000, in American currency and $15,000 to be placed in his credit in London, or, should the actor choose, the company agreed to invest the coin in British war bonds.[45]

The article goes on to reveal that the actor, described as a "former Britisher," patriotically chose to be paid for his work in war bonds. And this type of transaction does not differ considerably from the means of exchange explored in the short skit involving Jerry paying for his beer with the "Certificate." Jerry has an American cigar certificate that he cannot redeem. He therefore exchanges his certificate for a beer and in trading it offloads his own exchange problem onto the waiter, just as the studio offloads its exchange problem onto the actor in the *Daily Variety* article. While the skit remains a comic moment, it is also indicative of how in the fall of 1939, the film industry considered various methods to repatriate studio money. In response to trade papers forecasting that Britain's economic sanctions would cause Hollywood output to drop, Jack Warner, head of production at Warner Bros., continued to send out the message that it was business as usual.[46]

I wish to linger for a moment, as the camera does, upon the close up shot of the cigar coupon. The certificate's ornate framing lends the paper its perceived value; the framing on the certificate—just as on a US war bond—mimics the borders of a dollar bill. Unable to read the English writing on the certificate, the French waiter's valuation of the piece of paper depends upon his interpretation of the certificate's frame, rather than what appears inside the frame. Shots of frames often translate into self-reflexive statements on the cinematic frame and the medium of cinema as an art form. This idea that the artistry of framing is equal to, or even of greater importance than, the content the frame borders seems key to Warner Bros.' philosophy regarding the art of showmanship and the emphasis the studio placed on exhibition. Warner Bros. would demonstrate this conviction in showmanship when marketing *The Fighting 69th*. The studio shielded the film with so much pomp and pageantry that despite the film's interventionist message, nobody could possibly object to it without appearing un-American (see figure 4.3).

In conclusion, *The Fighting 69th* provided Warner Bros. with an ideal vehicle to communicate their interventionist position. The outbreak of war in Europe escalated the studio's sense of urgency to make pro-interventionist films that would mobilize the American public. Identifying women as an obstacle to readying the country for war, female characters became the first casualties of the movie: cut from the film's plot before shooting began. Warner Bros.' exploitation of the movie's premiere created a patriotic storm that swept across the nation and got the whole country talking about war. Through the power of talking pictures, Warner Bros. showed Hollywood studios the important role they had to play in uniting and preparing the nation for war.

Figure 4.3 "American money!" A scene from *The Fighting 69th* (1940).

Notes

1. For an analysis of how the movies made by MGM and Warner Bros. in the 1930s reflect the studios' diverging corporate philosophies as they take on the issues of the day, see Jerome Christensen, "Introduction" and "The Rackets: Entertainment Inc. and the Warners Gang (1928–1939)," in *America's Corporate Art: The Studio Authorship of Hollywood Motion Pictures* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 1–104.
2. For example, see Dana Polan's essay for an account of how presenting heterosexual romantic love proves problematic in the Hollywood war films made between 1941 and 1945: Dana Polan, "Stylistic Regularities (and Peculiarities) of the Hollywood World War II Propaganda Film," in *Warner's War: Politics, Pop Culture & Propaganda in Wartime Hollywood,* ed. Martin Kaplan and Johanna Blakley (Los Angeles: The Norman Lear Center Press, 2004), 38–47.
3. Germany's invasion of Poland began on September 1, 1939. England and France declared war on Germany on September 3, 1939.
4. Film historians Michael Birdwell (1999), Thomas Patrick Doherty (1999, 2007, 2013), Todd Bennett (2012), John Whiteclay Chambers (2006), and additionally, the editors of *Warners' War,* Martin Kaplan and Johanna Blakley (2004), along with the anthology's contributors. America entered the war on December 7, 1941, after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.
5. In an endnote to "The Movies and the Antiwar Debate in America 1930–1941" by John Whiteclay Chambers, the author rejects Daniel J. Leab's (1997) assertion that *The Fighting 69th* "presents an ambiguous portrait of isolationism/interventionism." See Daniel J. Leab, "*The Fighting 69th*: An Ambiguous Portrait of Isolationism/Interventionism," in *Hollywood's World War I: Motion Picture Images*, ed. Peter C. Rollins and John E. O'Connor (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997), 101–120. Chambers argues rather that the film "emphasized the need for a patriotic willingness to do one's duty for the nation and a view of combat that highlighted bravery, courage, camaraderie and even redemptive glory…preparing the country to fight the Nazis was another important motive." See John Whiteclay Chambers, "The Movies and the Antiwar Debate in America, 1930–1941," *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies* 36, no. 1 (Fall 2006): 54, note 30. My analysis leads me to discuss the film in accordance with and expand upon Chambers's footnote.
6. In *Hollywood's Censor,* Thomas Doherty (2007) describes how the introduction of the code meant that by "the middle of the 1930s, filmmakers and audiences alike had mastered the grammar of unique film language, a sophisticated dialect built on gentle implication, unspoken meanings, elaborate conceits, and winked signals. Always an act of imagination and interpretation, going to the movies became an exercise in deciphering and decoding allusions, nuances and ellipses." Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen & the Production Code Administration (*New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 97.
7. As related in the movie: New York's Infantry Regiment The Fighting 69th, sometimes referred to as the "Fighting Irish," and officially during WWI known as the 165th Infantry Regiment dates back to the American Civil War. During WWI the unit suffered considerable losses and saw much combat. It was generally recognized upon the unit's return, and thanks to the praise of the highly decorated Colonel Donovan and unit's chaplain Father Frank Duffy, that the unit fought with great bravery for its country.

8. Influential antiwar and isolationist groups included: National Council for the Prevention of War (NCPW), Women's International League for Peace (WILPF), National Legion of Mothers of America, Blue Star Mothers, and between 1940 and 1941 America First Committee (AFC). For further discussion and a taxonomy of antiwar movements, see Chambers "The Movies and the Antiwar Debate in America, 1930–1941," 44–57; and Glen Jeansonne, *Women of the Far Right: The Mothers' Movement and World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
9. See Jeanine Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), 82.
10. Ibid., 94.
11. The reference to thoroughbreds proves interesting if we consider the scene directed toward other industry insiders. Louis B. Mayer, the film producer and creator of the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studio (MGM), was famed for his interest in horses. The raising of thoroughbreds became the subject of MGM's picture: *Thoroughbreds Don't Cry* by Alfred E. Green (1937). In June of 1939, before filming started on *The Fighting 69th*, Harry Warner, one of the founders of Warner Bros. studio, became furious with Mayer for showing ten Nazi reporters around the MGM lot. In a letter to Sam Katz at MGM, Warner wrote that he now considered speaking to Mayer "a waste of time." See Michael E. Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers: The Warner Bros.'s Campaign against Nazism* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 32. Talking pictures possibly provided the two moguls with an alternative channel of communication.
12. M. Todd Bennett, *One World, Big Screen: Hollywood, the Allies, and World War II* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 55.
13. America's involvement in WWI had become a hotly debated topic in the mid-1930s. From 1934 to 1936, Congress conducted an investigation into America's participation in it. A committee led by Rep. Senator Gerald P. Nye alleged that arms manufacturers and international financiers had misleadingly drawn America into the conflict. The investigation saw the passage of a series of Neutrality Acts designed to prevent the United States from ever entering into future foreign wars. For a description of the various Neutrality Acts passed between 1935 and 1939 aimed at "restricting American economic and social involvements abroad" to ensure America retained neutrality concerning foreign wars, see Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers*, 35.
14. The majority of Americans opposed US intervention: "as late as July 1941, the final Gallup poll on the question revealed 79 percent still advocated U.S. neutrality." See Chambers, "The Movies and the Antiwar Debate in America," 44.
15. See Leab, "*The Fighting 69th*," 104–105.
16. See Todd Bennett, "The Celluloid War: State and Studio in Anglo-American Propaganda Film-Making, 1939–1941," *The International History Review* 24, no. 1 (March 2002): 65–67.
17. Michael Birdwell has written of a rift that occurred between the studio and the president in 1938. Harry Warner and Roosevelt fell out over the anti-trust suit filed in 1938. Harry Warner wrote to Roosevelt in September 1939 requesting Roosevelt suppress investigations due to the movie studios' loss of overseas revenue. Investigations were suspended in June 1940. See Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers*, 71.
18. Bennett, "The Celluloid War," 75.
19. Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers*, 19.
20. Ibid., 27.
21. Thomas Patrick Doherty in *Hollywood and Hitler* (2013) writes that between 1933 and 1939, Will H. Hays (president of the MPPDA) and Joseph Breen (head of the PCA) appear unified in their desire to keep Hollywood away from political conflict. The

two shared an "acute aversion to ideological controversies." Using the proviso in the Production Code titled: "National Feelings" that reads "the history, institutions, prominent people and citizenry of all nations shall be represented fairly," the PCA "deflected pitches, discouraged projects, and relegated anti-Nazi sentiments to the margins of American cinema." See Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Hollywood and Hitler, 1933–1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 43–44.

22. The film periodicals *Variety* and *Motion Picture Herald* ran several articles at this time debating the components of entertainment versus propaganda. See Leo Braudy, "Entertainment or Propaganda," in *Warner's War: Politics, Pop Culture & Propaganda in Wartime Hollywood,* ed. Martin Kaplan and Johanna Blakley (Los Angeles: The Norman Lear Center Press, 2004), 27–37.
23. By "insiders" I refer to studio heads and employees, trade paper journalists, and anyone with a vested interest in the debate over the course the industry should take with regards to Hollywood's output at this time.
24. Jerome Christensen, *America's Corporate Art: The Studio Authorship of Hollywood Motion Pictures* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012), 7.
25. In Eve Golden's biography of Theda Bara (1996), the author writes: "The Friends of Irish Freedom and the Central Council of Irish Associations violently objected to the depiction of poverty in Ireland (although castles and middle-class towns were also shown). Other groups... objected to a 'Jewess' portraying a beloved Irish heroine. Stink bombs were rolled down the aisles." See Eve Golden, *Vamp: The Rise and Fall of Theda Bara* (Lanham, MD: Vestal Press, 1996), 195.
26. One might take into consideration here the array of racial slurs that Jerry directs toward Irish characters throughout the movie. This language and behavior was unprecedented in a movie, but somehow deemed acceptable because it comes from Cagney. It's curious that Breen allowed so much of this language to pass through the PCA. In contradistinction to the treatment of Irish individuals, Murphy-Moskowicz receives respect from other characters throughout the picture.
27. Given the strong Christian religious overtones in the movie, the donkey may recall how Jesus taught in parables. Parables don't differ significantly from allegories.
28. For example, *The Port Arthur News* reported: "Third annual award for the best animal acting of the year, went today to a white donkey named Charmaine. Charmaine was the only actress in the picture, *The Fighting 69th*... [Humphrey] Bogart made the year's award a bale of hay." See "Animal Award Goes to White Donkey," *The Port Arthur News,* January 21, 1940: 12. *The San Antonio Light* also reported, beneath a photograph of Humphrey Bogart standing next to a donkey wearing a floral gala, that Charmaine was the "only female player in *Fighting 69th*." See "Award to Best Actor," *The San Antonio Light,* January 27, 1940: 5.
29. For example, in the *Los Angeles Times*, on July 29, 1939, Edwin Schallert reports that the film's cast includes Priscilla Lane and Lya Lyas. See Edwin Schallert, "Drama," *Los Angeles Times,* July 29, 1939: A9. And on September 7, 1939, he states that Lane "will continue to receive secondary, or feature prominence" in the picture. See Edwin Schallert, "Drama," *Los Angeles Times,* September 7, 1939: 13. On September 16, 1939, Douglas Churchill of the *New York Times* reports that the movie is "being written without love interest" and the role of Priscilla Lane will either be reduced to a minimum or eliminated. See Douglas W. Churchill, "Screen News Here and in Hollywood," *New York Times,* September 16, 1939: 24. A week later, Churchill reports: "Priscilla Lane, the only woman scheduled for the film has been written out of the scenario." See Douglas W. Churchill, "Screen News Here and in Hollywood," *New York Times,* September 23, 1939: 26. Other papers follow this trajectory. Archival evidence suggests

that the filmmakers took the decision to write women out some time between August 31 and 16, 1939. See note 33.

30. "*The Fighting 69th,*" *Variety*, January 10, 1940: 14.
31. One treatment is written by Norman Reilly Raine and titled: "Father Duffy of the Fighting Sixty-Ninth" (7/27/39). It was this treatment that Raine showed to Colonel Donovan when he met with him in early August. Donovan granted Warner Bros. permission to use his name in the feature, signing a release based upon the treatment in lieu of a final script (letter in Warner Bros. Archives to Warner Bros. from Donovan dated August 7, 1939). The second treatment is penned by Fred Niblo Jr. and Dean Franklin and is undated. See *The Fighting 69th* Production Files, Warner Bros. Archive, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA.
32. See *The Fighting 69th* Production Files, Warner Bros. Archive.
33. Both treatments contain the love interest of Plunkett and the mass wedding scene I go on to discuss. The female parts and scenes are reduced in the Niblo-Franklin treatment. These treatments seem to have been circulated to several people for their approval. For example, Father John McClafferty, the director of the Legion of Decency, sent a letter dated August 21, 1939, to Warner Bros. responding to the treatment and offering his technical advice on how to improve the mass wedding scene (*The Fighting 69th* Production Files, Warner Bros. Archive). On August 30, 1939, at a dinner held in New York, Raine presented veterans of the 165th Infantry with one of these treatments securing some 50 releases (Raine to Hall. B. Wallis, 08/30/39, *The Fighting 69th* Production Files, Warner Bros. Archive). The final cast list dated September 16, 1939, features no actresses, and the movie script dated September 18, 1939, contains no female characters. Evidence suggests the decision to remove women seems to have occurred at some point between August 31 and September 16, 1939; I could not find any correspondences within the archive explaining this late decision.
34. Raine's treatment. See *The Fighting 69th* Production Files, Warner Brothers Archive.
35. Both soldiers appear in Duffy's autobiography. See Francis P. Duffy, *Father Duffy's Story: A Tale of Humor and Heroism, of Life and Death with the Fighting Sixty-Ninth* (New York: Doran, 1919).
36. Father Duffy's autobiography records the side-by-side burial of Ames and Kilmer. See Duffy, *Father Duffy's Story*, 192–193.
37. John Belton, *American Cinema/American Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2012), 200.
38. Hedda Hopper, "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood," *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 1939: A8. Jennifer Frost discusses "the power of Hopper's 'agenda-setting' function in the industry. The content of Hopper's column told her readers 'what to think about,' and in this way she helped to establish the terms of discussion and debate about Hollywood, films, and stars." Jennifer Frost, *Hedda Hopper's Hollywood: Celebrity Gossip and American Conservatism* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 30. Frost also notes the strong similarities between Hopper's rhetoric and the Mother's Movement at this time (ibid., 71).
39. Glen Jeansonne's book, *Women of the Far Right* (1996), traces the emergence of the Mother's Movement and its key leaders. The movement comprised up to 100 organizations with 5–6 million members in the United States. The leaders covered by Jeasonne's book were extremely racist and anti-Semitic using the title of "mother" to justify their position. Many of these organizations misappropriated the language of "motherhood" and "peace" to spread racism and fascism.
40. Edwin Schallert, "Drama: *Fighting 69th* to Have All Male Cast," *Los Angeles Times,* September 23, 1939: A7.

41. Bennett, *One World, Big Screen,* 62.
42. "France Keeping Coin; Britain Pays for Pix," *Daily Variety*, September 16, 1939: 1.
43. For a discussion on how in November 1939 the studios finally brokered a deal with the British Government that allowed them to remit all of their accumulated profit for 1939 and 50 percent of their 1940 receipts, see Bennett, *One World, Big Screen,* 62–63.
44. See "Film-Making in Britain: French Example What the US May Do," *The Observer,* October 22, 1939: 14.
45. See "Hollywood Inside," *Daily Variety*, October 2, 1939: 2.
46. With his usual bluster, Jack Warner appeared on the pages of *Daily Variety* on September 9, 1939, unfazed by economic forecasts and announced that rather than cut production Warner Bros. would in fact make five to eight additional features than had been planned in May 1939. See "Warner Denies Any Product or Wage Cuts," *Daily Variety* 25, no. 4 (September 9, 1939): 1–3.

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Films

The Fighting 69th. Directed by William Keighley. USA, 1940.
Kathleen Mavourneen. Directed by Charles Brabin. Perf. Theda Bara. USA, 1919.
Thoroughbreds Don’t Cry. Directed by Alfred E. Green. USA, 1937.