Working Below Below-the-Line:
Race, Labor, and Resources in World War II Hollywood

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ii

LIST OF FIGURES ix

ABSTRACT x

CHAPTER

Introduction **1**

1. "Made Up and Ready to Work": Race and Onscreen Labor in Studio-era Hollywood **50**

2. Paramount at the Packard Plant: Hollywood and the Auto Industry During World War II **80**

3. Soft Hands and Blistered Feet: Race, Labor, and the Intensified Efficiency of Wartime Production Culture **119**

4. Walkaway Productions: Local Labor and Location Shooting **176**

5. Race, Labor, and Material Resources in Hollywood After Pearl Harbor **231**

Conclusion **278**

FILMOGRAPHY 289

BIBLIOGRAPHY 293

List of Figures

Figure 1.1: "Mexican Laborers" throw the remaining possessions of the late Charles Foster Kane into the fire. From *Citizen Kane* (RKO, 1941). 61

Figure 2.1: Police lines broken by movie fans trying to see Dorothy Lamour at the premiere of Disputed Passage. From *Detroit Free Press*, October 20, 1939, 32. 87

Figure 2.2: Russ (Joel McCrea) and Benny (Eddie Bracken) talk on the job, while Packard employees appear as extras in the background. From *Reaching for the Sun* (Paramount Pictures, 1941). 99

Figure 2.3: Poster advertising the premiere of Reaching for the Sun, from *Detroit Free Press*, April 18, 1941, 16. 101

Figure 3.1: Front cover of *American Cinematographer* 22, no. 8 (August 1941). 146

Figure 3.2: Racialized divisions of dining, sleeping, and toilet areas. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 2, Folder 1: Production notes, undated. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI. 149

Figure 3.3: Jergens lotion commercial, *Modern Screens*, October 1941, 91. 172

Figure 4.1: Felling trees to be taken to the Paramount studio for *North West Mounted Police*. *Photoplay Studies* VI, no. 23 (November 1940), 10. 189

Figure 4.2: "'I Wanted Wings' …Depicted by Filmland Artists." *Form One*, February 1941, 12-3, 22. Manford Kinney Wagnon Papers, box 4Ja13. Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin. 211

Figure 5.1: *Air Force* (Warner Bros, 1943). 250

Figure 5.2: Adobe brick set construction in *Five Graves to Cairo* (Paramount, 1943). 271

Abstract

This dissertation contends that, during the Second World War, the major Hollywood film studios increasingly turned to alternative sources of labor in order to circumvent the problems posed by jurisdictional disputes between unions, the series of strikes that continued throughout the war, and restrictions on filmmaking during wartime. Collaborations with other entities such as the automobile industry and the military incentivized studios to move productions out of Los Angeles to locations across the country, where local labor could be used. As a result, on many occasions studios turned to people of color as a cheaper, ostensibly more compliant workforce, and used the geographical distance from Los Angeles as a way of evading the oversight of craft guilds. After the Pearl Harbor attack, studios became only more dependent on the availability of a malleable workforce. To describe the unique circumstances and treatment of this workforce, and to illustrate its extraneity from the traditional labor categories of 'above-the-line' and 'below-the-line,' I describe such labor as *below* below-the-line.

This dissertation offers a labor history of wartime Hollywood through individual production histories, examining in detail the practices, decision-making, and logistical problem-solving of studio representatives on set and on location during the making of selected films. Drawing from a combination of production records housed in studio archives, local newspapers that reported on the productions, and film industry trade periodicals, this dissertation offers an account of wartime Hollywood in relation to the dichotomous structure of studio labor that had long persisted but which crystallized and intensified with the outbreak of war: specifically, the

division between above- and below-the-line labor. One of the primary contentions of this dissertation is that such a division, both as it was articulated historically and as it has been reproduced in subsequent scholarship, risks eliding or erasing the various contributions to film production by those considered extraneous to those labor categories, and who were often people of color. In turn, this dissertation describes the workforce overlooked by this distinction as *below* below-the-line in order to account for those who did not benefit from the same kinds of contracts or union protection traditionally offered to below-the-line workers.

The introduction contextualizes Hollywood's attitude toward labor both preceding and during the war, and considers the historiographical and methodological stakes for studying *below* below-the-line labor. Chapter 1 theorizes the performance of labor onscreen in relation to race through a reading of the final scene in *Citizen Kane* (RKO, 1941). Chapter 2 examines Hollywood's relationship to the automobile industry, using *Reaching for the Sun* (Paramount, 1941)—which was shot on location at the Packard Motor Car Company plant in Detroit—as a case study. Chapter 3 focuses on Walter Wanger's *Sundown* (1941) as an exemplary wartime production, especially for the racialized and exploitative treatment of workers on set. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the shift toward domestic location shooting during the war, taking the aviation genre and *I Wanted Wings* (Paramount, 1941) as an example to argue that studios benefited from military collaboration and local labor to offset the costs of production in ways that set precedents for what would become postwar runaway productions. Chapter 5 turns to the period after Pearl Harbor, and describes how studios responded to the increased restrictions on filmmaking imposed by the federal government.

Introduction

In March 1941, an article appeared in *Labor Action*, the house organ of the Workers Party of the United States, reporting on the economic impact the outbreak of the Second World War had on Hollywood. As its title—"Fact and Myth in Fabulous Hollywood"—suggests, the article pays close attention to the contrasts between the economic realities the industry faced during the early war years, and the narratives espoused by leading industry figures. As the author argues, "ever since the war broke out, Hollywood film producers have been singing a song of misery," yet "in no case, however, was there a noticeable change in the fantastic salaries of the chosen few."[1] The primary contention of the article is that the major studios—Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), 20th Century-Fox, Paramount, Warner Brothers, and RKO Radio Pictures—used the war's impact on their foreign markets and profit margins to justify widespread cuts to the labor force. To frame this argument, the author begins by dispelling the myth of Hollywood as a place of endless wealth and luxury, and instead reminds the reader that the film industry is just that—an industry—like any other:

> Ask the average man in the average town beyond the county limits what he thinks Hollywood is like and he will picture for you a place that combines the best elements of the palaces of Louis XIV, the Fair exhibits of the World of Tomorrow and the biblical Garden of Eden. It is the kind of place where everyone has a girl friend who looks like Hedy Lamarr, nobody's weekly paycheck is written in less than four figures and there is a sinful abundance of lavish homes, palatial yachts, flashy new cars and other such worldly pleasures.
>
> For a very fortunate, very few people in Hollywood this is literally true. But for some 80,000 others, the moving picture business is the place where they work, try to make a living and, by and large, eke out the same kind of existence their fellow workers derive in other industries in other cities.

[1] "Fact and Myth in Fabulous Hollywood," *Labor Action*, March 31, 1941, 2.

> Carpenters, painters, electricians, construction workers, 'prop' men, clerks, accountants, secretaries, bit part actors—laborers, skilled and unskilled—depend on the film factories for their weekly wages and are subject to hardship and exploitation not too different from that of workers in other industries. And their employers, like all employers, use any and every trick to make sure these wages are as low as they can keep them.[2]

The author's Marxist formulation of the wartime film industry as defined by the conflict between Hollywood employees as factory workers and studio heads as capitalists hinges on the division between above- and below-the-line labor. Indeed, it is the kind of craft labor routinely categorized as below-the-line that the author invokes to convey the very metaphor of "film factories." How this distinction was weaponized, exacerbated, and became more pronounced during the war, is the principal concern of this dissertation.

I begin with this *Labor Action* article because it encapsulates these concerns in its positing of Hollywood as fundamentally plagued by the same power dynamics as other industries across the country: dependent on the exploitation and extraction of a large labor force who do not have access to the means of production.[3] The article also touches on one mode of protection and representation that below-the-line workers *did* possess: union contracts, which, among other things, "kept the payrate stabilized."[4] Yet for that reason, it was easier for studio heads to trim the labor force altogether than to continuously squabble with unions over contract renewals, jurisdiction disputes, and work stoppages. As a result, a growing trend throughout the war saw studios turn to alternative sources of labor to keep productions afloat and circumvent the various issues plaguing the industry. The pragmatic, 'bottom line' approach of the studio heads alluded

[2] "Fact and Myth in Fabulous Hollywood."
[3] As David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson straightforwardly put it: "Like the labor-force in any US industry, film workers wanted a greater share of the earnings through increased wages and salaries and more favorable working conditions. And just as in any other industry, the owners sought to avoid this, fearing loss of their profits." David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1985), 311.
[4] "Fact and Myth in Fabulous Hollywood."

to in the *Labor Action* article effected substantial changes to production practices that shaped the industry in the postwar period and the years that followed. In this dissertation, I focus on the production culture of Hollywood in the Second World War in order to trace these important shifts and to consider the implications they posed for labor.

This introduction is divided into four sections. The first, "World War II Hollywood and the Crisis of Labor," provides the historical and industrial context of the studio system's response to the outbreak of war. Focusing on the conflicts between unions and studios, as well as the numerous jurisdictional disputes that characterize the period, I frame attitudes towards labor in the industry in relation to the above- and below-the-line distinction, arguing that the negative reputation unions such as the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees (IATSE) amassed during the 1930s, coupled with the wage and labor cuts imposed by the loss of foreign markets, exacerbated the labor divide, while simultaneously creating the conditions for a separate labor category—*below* below-the-line—to emerge. The second section of this introduction reviews scholarly literature on the Hollywood studio system, particularly the recent strand that focuses on labor, arguing that scholars should be wary of reproducing the above- and below-the-line binary so as not to elide and erase the contributions of those working *below-the-line*, especially given that these workers were often from marginalized communities. Indeed, the second half of the literature review integrates writing on racialization as a process through which labor is sourced and treated in order to supplement my analysis of working conditions in wartime production culture. The third section describes my methodology and the scholarly traditions it pulls from, and provides a rationale for the primary sources I consult. The fourth section offers an overview of how the dissertation is structured and what each individual chapter contributes.

World War II Hollywood and the Crisis of Labor

When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, many in Hollywood immediately braced for impact. In fact, once it became clear that France, England, and the Allied nations would inevitably become involved in the conflict, the United States War Department sped up plans to enlist the vast resources in Hollywood for propaganda purposes; in doing so, however, it was revealed that the Department of Commerce's Motion Picture division had already conducted a survey months prior in order to determine the level of cooperation Hollywood could be relied on to provide.[5] In other words, regardless of the United States's decision to intervene, the film industry in its own right was prepared, from the outset, to do its part as soon as the conflict broke out. Of course, such an event would have massive implications for the structure and division of labor across the major and minor studios, and this was very much on the mind of rank-and-file workers in below-the-line roles. Yet the entrenchment of a separation between above- and below-the-line labor was only exacerbated by the crisis, with the industry forced to reconsider its priorities.

This was made abundantly clear in a letter written by Samuel Goldwyn shortly after Germany's invasion of Poland. The letter, dated September 19, 1939, was addressed to the presidents of the Screen Actors Guild (SAG), the Directors Guild of America (DGA), the Writers Guild of America (WGA), the Producers Association, and of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA), but not to any representatives of the craft guilds or below-the-line unions in Hollywood. In the letter itself, Goldwyn calls for unity and togetherness to ensure the economic survival of the industry amidst such geopolitical uncertainty. Just as the *Labor Action* article points out, Goldwyn expresses particular concern for the dwindling foreign

[5] "U.S. War Dep't Studies Pic Survey For Wartime," *The Hollywood Reporter*, September 2, 1939, 1.

markets and their potentially devastating impact on Hollywood's profits; however, he also takes pains to emphasize that "wholesale firing of wage-earners is not the answer," citing the maintenance of filmmaking quality as a reason to avoid such drastic measures.[6] Instead, Goldwyn suggests that "craftsmen and guildsmen, producers and workers, create in the spirit of harmony and co-operation a joint fact-finding committee to examine all angles and phases of the situation."[7] Goldwyn here creates a dichotomy between creative talent and craft labor—"producers and workers"—which the letter only concretizes in its calling for such unity yet only being addressed to representatives from above-the-line categories.

One of the great ironies of Goldwyn's rhetoric of togetherness (which somehow excluded more than half the industry's working population) was that the idea of such a sub-committee to discuss financial concerns and to strategize a war response was itself not something new. In fact, the day before Goldwyn's letter was published in *The Hollywood Reporter*, the magazine's founder and editor, William Richard "Billy" Wilkerson penned a "Trade Views" column also calling for unity in Hollywood. Yet Wilkerson, who often sided with studio employees over studios themselves, explicitly suggested that this unity should include representatives from *all* labor levels within the industry.[8] In his column, Wilkerson begins by lamenting the death of the

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[6] "Hollywood Challenged: Let's Face It – Goldwyn," *The Hollywood Reporter,* September 21, 1939, 19. Goldwyn's concern for sustaining Hollywood's high standards would remain a constant theme throughout the war, and in order to feed the wartime sellers' market, those standards were increasingly sacrificed for short term box office success, leading Goldwyn to bemoan that studios "came closer to producing movies by assembly-line methods than at any other time in its history." Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1987), 141.

[7] Hollywood Challenged: Let's Face It – Goldwyn," 19.

[8] As Mary Desjardins demonstrates, throughout most of the 1930s Wilkerson was a largely independent voice, and actually had a contentious relationship with Louis B. Mayer—Goldwyn's business partner at MGM. Yet despite Wilkerson's opposition to certain studio decisions, Desjardins reminds us, publications like *The Hollywood Reporter* depended on studio advertising for revenue, and Wilkerson personally benefited from using stars to promote his restaurant businesses. See Mary Desjardins, "Gross 'Inaccuracies, Misrepresentations, and Exaggerations': The Motion Picture Industry's Clean-up of Movie Fan Magazines in 1934," in *Mapping Movie Magazines: Digitization, Periodicals and Cinema History*, edited by Daniël Biltereyst and Lies Van den Vijver (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 98. Wilkerson's views on many topics, including studios, and the importance of fan magazines, changed

Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and its provision of a common meeting ground for the industry as a whole. Of course, the Academy had not actually died, but had rather transformed: from a labor organization to an awards ceremony. From 1927-1933, labor was its primary focus, and a Conciliations Committee was created to coordinate various forces within the industry.[9] However, the compartmentalization of production labor in the 1930s and the unionization of Hollywood writ large saw the Academy in its previous iteration dissolve; in Wilkerson's words, studio control over the Academy "broke the back of that institution, causing the creation of the Guilds."[10] Wilkerson's position is that the Academy's devolution into an awards ceremony left a lacuna in the industry and essentially burned the bridge between the studios and "the men and women in their employ," leaving the system scattered and ill-equipped to deal with a crisis—like a world war, for instance.[11]

To safeguard against such an event, Wilkerson proposes a "Supreme Council" that would meet regularly to provide a forum for concerns of all shapes and sizes that workers in Hollywood could discuss, and explicates that this would be a democratic, horizontalized entity: "Such a Supreme Council could not and would not be producer-controlled, and every craft, through its representatives, would have a voice—one dictated by the craft."[12] The column continues with the contention that a Supreme Council would foster mature dialogue throughout the industry about how to handle the war as it develops, suggesting that those in craft positions might actually help studios evade the crisis, "rather than, as in the case of the present trouble, have the producers hint

drastically during this period. For more on his reversal of support for fan magazines, for instance, see Tamar Jeffers McDonald, "Reviewing Reviewing the Fan Mags," *Film History* 28, no. 4 (2016): 29-57.

[9] Monica Sandler, "PR and Politics at Hollywood's Biggest Night: The Academy Awards and Unionization (1929-1939)," *Media Industries* 2, no. 2 (2015). DOI: https://doi.org/10.3998/mij.15031809.0002.201. For an overview of Hollywood's unionization in the 1930s, Murray Ross's contemporaneous account remains comprehensive. See Murray Ross, *Stars and Strikes: Unionization of Hollywood* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941).

[10] W.R. Wilkerson, "Trade Views," *The Hollywood Reporter,* September 20, 1939, 1.

[11] Wilkerson, "Trade Views," 1.

[12] Wilkerson, "Trade Views," 19.

at pay cuts and the crafts rise up in various forms of reprisals, costing actually more money than the cuts."[13] Yet Wilkerson closes on the pessimistic note that such change is unlikely to come from the impetus of the studios, who are more likely to be concerned about their wealth and affluence than with studio morale. The timing of the column's publication in relation to Goldwyn's letter is tellingly representative of the different sentiments shared within the industry about both the need for unity, the extent of that unity and who it would include, and—perhaps more pressingly—the willingness to do anything about it.

Wilkerson's vision of a Supreme Council that represented extras and carpenters as equally as it did actors and producers, in retrospect, seems radical compared to Goldwyn's address to Hollywood's creative class. And response to Goldwyn's call for immediate action was itself mixed. While Ralph Morgan, president of the Screen Actors Guild, responded in enthusiastic agreement to the letter, Joseph Schenck of the Producers Association felt that Goldwyn's call for a fact-finding committee to unify the industry was premature. For Schenck, the data suggesting that the loss of foreign markets would be catastrophic were potentially misleading, and that it would be more prudent to wait for more information to develop. Schenck also expressed weariness toward imposing restrictive measures on production until it was absolutely necessary.[14] Meanwhile, within a matter of weeks, a number of studios had reportedly began interviewing actors about potential reductions on their salaries, exclusively targeting "Class A" members of the SAG, since extras and bit players ("Class B" members) had fixed salary figures as per the contract between SAG and the studios.[15] Ken Thomson, executive

[13] Wilkerson, "Trade Views," 19.
[14] "Morgan Agrees with Goldwyn," *The Hollywood Reporter,* September 22, 1939, 1, 4.
[15] The protection this offered bit players and extras was short-lived, however. A report on the war's impact on labor from *Variety* less than two years later claimed that "extras were hit harder than any other individual unit." See "H'Wood Labor Relatively Peaceful During 1940," *Variety*, January 8, 1941, 32.

secretary of SAG, issued a letter in October 1939 to 2000 Class A members instructing them not to accept any salary cuts that were imposed under the guise of "war time necessity."[16] It is fair to say that Goldwyn's call for unity throughout the industry was quickly undermined, if it had not already been naïve (or outright conniving, given that MGM's profits in 1940 were the highest since the boom year of 1937, as the *Labor Action* author revealed).[17]

For instance, despite Goldwyn heeding against staff cuts, more and more workers became faced with such a reality as the studios sought to consolidate their resources. While salary cuts could be negotiated for those in the SAG's "A" class, the options for dealing with those below-the-line were more straightforward: their employment could be eliminated entirely rather than renegotiated. In her anthropological study of the studio system, Hortense Powdermaker describes the option clause that guilds had with the studios, which gave the studios the option to renew or drop an employee each seven years, and also prohibited the employee from leaving until the seven years had expired. Most importantly, though, was the option for the studio to fire the employee after each six months. Powdermaker explains the novelty of this clause as it compared with other industries: "As a union contract which gives the employer the right to fire a worker every six months, but binds the latter for seven years' service, it is unique in trade union history."[18] Thus, not only was it baked into the structure of the studio system, but the above- and below-the-line division of labor—Goldwyn's "producers and workers" dichotomy—only crystallized and intensified once the war broke out.

[16] "SAG Against Pay Cuts Now," *The Hollywood Reporter,* October 5, 1939, 1, 3.
[17] In fact, MGM masked its profit increases by setting aside $2 million in a fraudulent contingency fund. See "Fact and Myth in Fabulous Hollywood."
[18] Hortense Powdermaker, *Hollywood the Dream Factory: An Anthropologist looks at the Movie-makers* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1950), 34.

At the same time that studios were asking actors to consider salary reductions, shortly after Goldwyn's letter the studios found themselves asking IATSE members to give up a raise they had already been promised. Eddie Mannix, on behalf of the producers, addressed a letter to IATSE chieftain Willie Bioff requesting that card-carrying IATSE members relinquished the 10% wage increase they were granted on September 25, 1939. Mannix points out in his letter that every effort was made during negotiations to encourage postponing the discussion until the war situation had settled, citing the catastrophic effect such a wage increase would have on the industry in the wake of dwindling foreign markets.[19] Yet Bioff, in characteristically aggressive fashion, did not back down, and instead threatened an industry-wide strike that would have irrecoverable consequences. The producers caved on their demands, and were left to plead for the increase to be willingly surrendered. In response, the unions issued an ultimatum that, should the raise not stand, they would initiate a work stoppage.[20] Both as a collective and at the individual level, those in craft guilds and below-the-line unions were defiant against the studios' desire to cut costs, lower wages, and trim the workforce, instead demanding wage increases to offset the increased cost of living.[21]

However, as many historians have demonstrated, it would be erroneous to mistake Bioff's strong stance in negotiations with studios for genuine concern for the union members he presided over. Bioff and partner George Browne were mobsters who infiltrated and corrupted studio unions, and were later indicted for racketeering in 1941.[22] Before then, by 1939, IATSE was "vying for complete control of Hollywood's labor force, hoping to create 'one big union' of

[19] "Prods. Ask IA To Give Up Raise," *The Hollywood Reporter,* October 31, 1939, 1, 4.
[20] "Union Ultimatum To Producers," *The Hollywood Reporter,* November 16, 1939, 1, 5.
[21] Just as Mannix sent his letter to Bioff, the Motion Pictures Painters Local 644 sat on producer doorsteps threatening to strike if they did not receive a 15% increase. See "Prods. Ask IA To Give Up Raise."
[22] "BIOFF, BROWNE GUILTY: FACING 30-YEAR TERMS," *The New York Times*, November 7, 1941, 1. For more on Bioff and union corruption in Hollywood during the 1930s, see David Scott Witwer, *Shadow of the Racketeer: Scandal in Organized Labor* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2009), 59-102.

motion picture employees" under their leadership.[23] As a result, the union developed a reputation as a "ruthless" outfit, and Browne himself as "no man to stand for monkey business in the ranks."[24] At least, this was the opinion of Westbrook Pegler, one of the most vocally anti-union columnists of the time. Pegler felt that IATSE's negotiating of higher salaries came with the caveat of "trading in their democratic rights" under the authoritarian leadership of Bioff and Browne.[25] However, support for leadership was far from unanimous within the ranks of IATSE—take, for instance, the establishment of the "IA Progressives" by communist propmaker Jefferson Kibre, whose objectives, in his own words, were "to clean up our union; to break up the present dictatorship, boot out some of the well-known racketeers, establish control by the membership and make the organization a credit to the men and the Industry."[26] Kibre rose to prominence through defending the "principles of unionism" that he felt men like Bioff were "crucifying."[27] In a letter responding to Pegler's column, Kibre highlighted that the wage increases Bioff and Browne negotiated were somewhat deceptive; in reality, both 10% increases only brought wage levels back to former levels, but the studios' granting of a closed shop meant that more workers had to share less hours (and pay higher dues and application fees). As a result, studios had "plenty of help at whatever conditions they [were] pleased to grant."[28]

Kibre's "IA Progressives," therefore, had plenty to grieve about when it came to their leaders, and were all too aware that the well-being of the rank-and-file was less than a priority. In

[23] Thomas Schatz, *Boom and Bust: American Cinema in the 1940s* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1999), 33.
[24] Westbrook Pegler, "Pegler's Getting Tired Of His Hollywood Story," *Appleton Post-Crescent*, March 3, 1938, 7.
[25] Pegler, "Pegler's Getting Tired Of His Hollywood Story."
[26] Jeff Kibre letter to Westbrook Pegler, March 21, 1938. Jeffrey Kibre Papers, 1936-1940. Box 2: Misc. folder. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI. For more on Kibre's challenge to IATSE, see Larry Ceplair, "A Communist Labor Organizer in Hollywood: Jeff Kibre Challenges the IATSE, 1937-1939," *The Velvet Light Trap* 23 (Spring 1989): 64-74.
[27] Jeff Kibre letter to Westbrook Pegler, March 21, 1938.
[28] Jeff Kibre letter to Westbrook Pegler, March 21, 1938.

other correspondence, Kibre summarized their position as a combination of "mounting resentment against the steadily worsening conditions of employment in the studios, together with the absence of a democratic machinery which would permit the rank and file an opportunity of taking constructive action to eliminate abuses and better their conditions."[29] Given the mutually beneficial relationship Bioff and Browne had sustained with the studios during this period, however, it would take a great deal of risk and sacrifice from the likes of Kibre to enact change. For one, as a result of Kibre's letter to him, Pegler was able to help expose Bioff and Browne's mob connections which contributed to their indictment in 1941.[30] In September 1939, Kibre submitted his resignation "from the Bioff-Browne State of Emergency Dictatorship," in which he confessed to writing the report that exposed the six-figure payoff to Bioff from the studios, as well as revealing the company union agreements which raise hourly rates but lowered the real annual income of the workers.[31] By the time Bioff and Browne faced a trial, $1 million had passed hands.[32] And while the two had often relied on the Red Scare to "deflect attention from their own misdeeds" and to play up Kibre's Communist Party affiliation, the approach of World War II and the United States's alliance with the Society union "helped to erode the anticommunism that had buoyed Bioff and Browne."[33] Yet despite their indictment and banishing from the union, the groundwork for conflict had already been established, and the

[29] Jeff Kibre letter to Harland Holmden, August 30, 1938. Jeffrey Kibre Papers, 1936-1940. Box 2: Misc. folder. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[30] See also David Witwer, "Westbrook Pegler and the Anti-Union Movement," *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 2 (2005): 527-552.
[31] Jeff Kibre letter to John F. Gatelee, September 5, 1939. Jeffrey Kibre Papers, 1936-1940. Box 2: Misc. folder. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[32] Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System: A History* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 88. For more on racketeering and organized crime in Hollywood during this period, see Denise Hartsough, "Crime Pays: The Studios' Labor Deals in the 1930s," *The Velvet Light Trap* 23 (1989): 49-63.
[33] Horne, *Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930-1950,* 55-56.

emergence of the Conference of Studio Unions (CSU) from within Kibre's "IA Progressives" became a central component of such conflict during the war.[34]

Indeed, IATSE's power push in the 1930s fostered a tremendous amount of conflict and tension with other guilds, culminating in a series of jurisdictional disputes before and during the war that made studio production increasingly untenable.[35] As Gerald Horne argues: "Jurisdictional disputes were a major issue before and during the war, as unions often fought among themselves as much as they squabbled with management."[36] And while tales of Bioff and Browne's exploits and the corruption of studio unions have predominantly been narrated by historians in terms of the money involved, and the eventual trials they faced, I argue that in order to understand wartime production culture, it is crucial to consider the logistical implications these disputes had on filmmaking in Hollywood. As Tom Schatz points out, the CSU comprised mainly preproduction craft unions, whereas IATSE comprised technical and production-related unions (in particular, having the projectionists in their ranks was critical to obtaining power in the 1930s).[37]

This meant that a large portion of jurisdictional disputes concerned labor related to *sets*—their design, building and erection, painting, plastering, and so on—which played a critical role in studio decisions to circumvent the problem altogether and shoot on location in the United

[34] The CSU was led by Herbert Sorrell of the Painters Union, who rose to prominence on the labor front by leading the Cartoonists Guild under his Painters Union to a successful strike against Disney in 1941. For more on the Disney strike, see Jake S. Friedman, *The Disney Revolt: The Great Labor War of Animation's Golden Age* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2022); Holly Allen and Michael Denning, "The Cartoonists' Front," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 92, no. 1 (1993): 89-117.
[35] The expansion of both IATSE and CSU, it should be noted, was also bolstered by Southern California's broader expansion of "area labor," and both unions benefited from locals thinking that being part of a larger collective would improve their individual bargaining positions. See Brett L. Adams, "The First Hollywood Blacklist: The Major Studios Deal With the Conference of Studio Unions, 1941-47," *Southern California Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 221.
[36] Horne, *Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930-1950*, 155.
[37] Schatz, *Boom and Bust,* 34.

States. Take carpenters, for instance. Loew's and MGM president Nicholes Schenck admitted under oath that, during the war especially, "carpenters particularly had a stranglehold over film production," due to the necessity for sets to be constructed.[38] Bioff knew this, and explicitly targeted studio carpenters by cultivating a dispute in January 1940 in which he demanded to studios that 50% of labor done by studio carpenters was to be reallocated to IATSE card-carriers. The claim would also require plumbers, plasterers, moulders, and sheet metal workers to be IATSE members if they worked on any material or special effect to be used in a film. Moreover, grips and propmakers would be reallocated work involving cutouts, remakes, the erection of scaffolds, the storing and caring for sets, and the erection of any special effect using wood, plaster, iron, or sheet metal.[39]

For the producers, Bioff's claim represented a major headache. In his testimony to the House of Representatives in 1947, Leon Goldberg, Vice-President and Studio Manager of RKO, opined that it was "immaterial to the producers whether it is A or B who does a certain job."[40] The work—producers admitted—was crucial, but who carried it out and under what conditions was of less importance, especially in the context of wartime production culture. Yet in the years that followed, numerous productions were disrupted and slowed down as a result. In his 1947 testimony to the House of Representatives, James Skelton, Business Representative for the Studio Carpenters Local Union, recalled a series of incidents on "hot sets," an industry term to describe a set affected by an ongoing jurisdictional dispute. Among them were occasions in which studio representatives physically loaded carpenters on to trucks to transport them back to a

[38] Horne, *Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930–1950*, 154-155.
[39] "Bioff Moves In On Studio Carpenters; Other H'wood Craftsmen Affected," *Variety*, January 3, 1940, 6.
[40] "Testimony of Leon Goldberg, Vice President and Studio Manager, RKO-Radio Pictures, Los Angeles, Calif." *Jurisdictional Disputes in the Motion-Picture Industry*, (House of Representatives, Special Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor, Los Angeles, CA: August 25, 1947), 211.

set and instructed them to do a specific job.[41] When the men refused, "the police department loaded them onto a truck and took them to the gate and dumped them when they got outside the gate."[42] This pattern continued until tensions boiled over in October 1945, when the Hollywood Bloody Sunday strike rippled throughout the industry. Yet the constant headache these squabbles gave to studios played an important role in prompting them to seek alternative solutions for sourcing labor, particularly that which concerned building and transporting sets.

Indeed, the chance to shoot on location and recruit from the local area was often framed by producers during the war as a logistical benefit, particularly during the height of tension in the jurisdictional disputes and filmmaking restrictions after Pearl Harbor. Coupled with an increasing manpower shortage, on several occasions studios moved production outside the city to benefit from collaborations with other industries, cheaper local labor, and to circumvent union jurisdiction. Although often framed in the press as doing so for other reasons, one of the primary contentions of this dissertation is that studios attempted to evade the labor strife in Hollywood by shooting on location domestically in ways that set a precedent for the postwar period and beyond. At the same time that labor played a definitive role for studio production in the war, the subject and act of labor itself became almost unrepresentable on the screen as a consequence.

While labor continued to be an issue throughout the war—both up to, including, and beyond the 1945 strike—this dissertation focuses predominantly on the period between the outbreak of war in Europe (September 1939) and shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack (December 1941) for a few reasons. First, this period was a crucial and consequential time in Hollywood

[41] Though he does not mention specific productions, Skelton names the studios involved: one incident at MGM, another at Pathe. See "Testimony of James Skelton-Recalled," *Jurisdictional Disputes in the Motion-Picture Industry* (House of Representatives, Special Subcommittee of the Committee on Education and Labor, Los Angeles, CA: August 25, 1947), 536.
[42] "Testimony of James Skelton-Recalled," 537.

history that has received less attention than others, yet during which a number of changes and industrial shifts took place simultaneously. The 1941 Senate Hearing, which saw accusations of warmongering and propaganda hurled at the industry, played an important discursive role in the justification of certain production practices and the narration of the division of labor—all of which became moot points after the United States officially intervened in the war. Until then, though, studios sought collaborations with the military, with the automobile industry, and with local authorities on location to improve the efficiency of production under the guise of the Allied war effort. Location shooting itself was most prevalent in the early war period, having slowed down due to war-related bands on filming transportation and unessential transport in general after Pearl Harbor.[43] However, because of the initial spike in 1942 and the various ways studios navigated the new restrictions on transportation and materials after the attack, many productions became more and more dependent on a racialized workforce, which is the subject of the fifth chapter. At the same time, the prevalence of civil rights and social justice issues across the country (and in Los Angeles in particular) manifested in some productions more than others, but was certainly in the minds of those in the industry at large.

The need for studios to find exploitable labor from alternative sources brought to the fore a different labor class—what I call *below* below-the-line—of those otherwise extraneous to the traditional above- and below-the-line distinction, whose work was often racialized. My argument is that the precedents these stories and production histories set effected the industry as the war drove on, and substantially influenced the industrial reshaping that followed the 1945 strikes and, later, the 1947 Hollywood blacklist, the 1948 Paramount Decree, and so on. An important byproduct of this argument is that wartime production culture was especially dialogic, in the

[43] Sheri Chinen Biesen, *Blackout: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 66-68.

sense that, while working in unchartered territory, studios would frequently look to what others had done or chosen to do when making a film under even vaguely similar circumstances. At the same time, when it came to labor, correspondence between studio employees and officials often expressed a weariness of setting a precedent that other studios might be forced to follow. Despite the competition between them, the war saw studios engage with and even look out for each other as they collectively navigated the logistical challenges of wartime film production, amidst the backdrop of an industry-wide labor crisis. Such collaboration is what enabled the industry leaders to profit from the conflict, and for the major studios to come out clean on the other side; only, this came at the expense of those at the bottom of the proverbial studio ladder.

Literature Review

In order to approach this history, it is important to consider the origins and emergence of the above- and below-the-line labor categories in film production. Although the terms have undoubtedly been rather uncritically taken up and reproduced by various industry figures, commentators, and journalists over the years, scholars across film industry, production studies, and media industry studies have taken valuable steps toward complicating and problematizing the distinction. This literature review is divided into two sections: "Rethinking Above- and Below-the-Line Labor" and "Working *Below* Below-the-Line." I begin the first section by tracing the definition and origin of the terms above- and below-the-line as they relate to film production labor, before surveying a range of scholarship that takes such labor as its focus. In doing so, I argue that using the binary distinction risks eliding the contributions of those whose work has been considered extraneous to what I call the 'sphere of film production.' In the second section, I begin with the claim that this elision is racialized, and suggest a third category—*below*

below-the-line labor—to both upset and critique the binary distinction, while simultaneously offering space for the contributions of marginalized and precarious labor in the story of film history. What remains of the second section surveys literature on racialized labor in order to support my theorization of working *below* below-the-line and to consider what such a formulation offers in the broader context of Hollywood history.

Rethinking Above- and Below-the-Line Labor

As many have noted, the 'line' in above- and below-the-line refers to a physical line on a budget sheet that separates creative personnel and 'talent' from craft labor, technicians, and material resources. Although designed to principally indicate differences in salary and compensation, the distinction has evolved to take on more than a financial meaning. For instance, Kate Fortmueller and Luci Marzola define the distinction in monetary terms: "Above-the-line labor consists of those who negotiate their own salaries on a project-by-project basis, such as actors, writers, and directors. Below-the-line workers have their salaries determined by industry standards often set by unions."[44] Yet as Miranda Banks explains, above-the-line labor is characterized "both by the industry and by society, in terms of its imagination, artistry, and inventiveness" and below-the-line workers, by contrast, are "people who work with their hands."[45] Vicki Mayer echoes this sentiment, suggesting that the creativity associated with above-the-line labor "more often demarcated intellectual from manual activities."[46] Similarly, David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson claim that the perception of labor types

[44] Kate Fortmueller and Luci Marzola, "Introduction: Unions in Hollywood," in *Hollywood Unions,* edited by Kate Fortmueller and Luci Marzola (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2024), 13.
[45] Miranda J. Banks, "Gender Below-the-Line: Defining Feminist Production," in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, edited by Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, and John T. Caldwell (New York: Routledge, 2009), 89.
[46] Vicki Mayer, *Below the Line: Producers and Production Studies in the New Television Economy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 4.

affected how studios dealt with them: the "talent" contributed "desired knowledge, craftsmanship, and special abilities," whereas in the below-the-line capacity there was "a ready supply of willing and able replacements" which gave the studios a bargaining advantage.[47] Consequently, it is to above-the-line personnel that aesthetic responsibility is routinely attributed, with the popular understanding prevailing that those below-the-line work chiefly to serve and fulfil the creative vision of those above them. Indeed, a 1977 article on the management approach of a film director in the *Harvard Business Review* puts it bluntly:

> Above-the-line people tend to be committed to the film as a whole. They include the 'management group' (producer, director, and script writer), and the key actors. Below-the-line people, such as members of the technical crews, carpenters, drivers, and so on, tend to be committed only to a particular aspect of the film.[48]

The authors here evoke the image of an assembly line in their characterization of below-the-line labor: systematic, compartmentalized, and largely devoid of creative responsibility or freedom. This more business-minded division of managers and workers is similar to Gerald Horne's description of Hollywood as comprising "a mix of proletarians (carpenters, painters, electricians) and entrepreneurs (such as screenwriters)."[49] The terminology might vary, but numerous figures broadly agree on a binary division of labor in film production.

Yet as scholars in production studies have painstakingly argued, below-the-line workers in media industries not only provide invaluable technical and creative contributions to the productions they work on, but are also capable of understanding, narrating, and theorizing the nature and stakes of these contributions.[50] John T. Caldwell makes the above- and below-the-line

[47] Bordwell et al, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 311.
[48] Eileen Morley and Andrew Silver, "A film director's approach to managing creativity," *Harvard Business Review* 55, no. 2 (March-April 1977): 60.
[49] Horne, *Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930-1950*, 13.
[50] For some representative works, see Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, and John T. Caldwell (eds), *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of the Media Industries* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Miranda Banks, Bridget Conor, and

distinction a foundational structuring device in *Production Culture* (2008), in which he argues that both groups have fundamentally different ways of theorizing and understanding their profession as embedded within a larger network. According to Caldwell, above-the-line personnel commonly deploy "genesis myths" and "paths-not-taken parables" to narrate their career trajectories, whereas those working below-the-line turn instead to "war stories" and "against-all-odds allegories" to recount their laborious experiences in difficult working conditions to carve out a career in the industry.[51] As such, while the physical, horizontal line on a budgeting sheet has materially determining consequences, it also structures and frames how production workers relate to their own labor and profession—what Peter C. Kunze has recently called "craft theory"[52]—which in turn becomes reworked, reiterated, and reproduced by the range of "deep texts" where these narratives might appear, such as trade and craft publications, interviews, promotional materials, and so on.[53]

The precise history and trajectory of the use of above- and below-the-line as terms to describe media industry labor is difficult to pinpoint due to their frequent use in geographical contexts.[54] For Vicki Mayer, the terms emerged as part of the shift from the studio era to the television age.[55] Similarly, Allen Scott highlights the 1960s as the period which introduced "a distinctive manner of classifying workers according to their labor-market power."[56] Scott points

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Vicki Mayer (eds), *Production Studies, The Sequel!: Cultural Studies of Global Media Industries* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

[51] John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Duke University Press, 2008), 38.

[52] Peter C. Kunze, *Staging a Comeback: Broadway, Hollywood, and the Disney Renaissance* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2023), 14.

[53] Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 26.

[54] For much of the twentieth century, for instance, "below the line" was often used to refer to the Mason-Dixon line. See, for instance, Kroydon H. Smith, *Just Below the Line: Disability, Housing, and Equity in the South* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2010).

[55] Mayer, *Below the Line*, 4.

[56] Allen J. Scott, *On Hollywood: The Place, The Industry* (Princeton University Press, 2004), 120.

to the stripping down of the major studios following the war and the 1948 Paramount antitrust case in particular as facilitating a less stable, "project-oriented employment system" that rendered below-the-line labor more precarious and nomadic.[57] However, while it may be that the above- and below-the-line distinction became more ubiquitous in industrial discourse during this period, in the trade press and newspaper articles covering individual productions, one can find much earlier uses of the terms. One example in the *Chicago Daily Tribune* used the Ginger Rogers film, *Tom, Dick, and Harry* (1941), to explain some of the logistics of film production to its readership:

> Each studio has its staff of wizards who can rifle thru a script and figure what set and labor costs will be—but there's also a handy rule-of-thumb method. You list the expense of actors, director and producer and call it "cost above the line." Physical costs—labor, materials, overhead—go below the line, and it's a safe guess that below the line expenses will be just half of those above the line.[58]

Tellingly, the author here conflates labor with physical resources required for production, broadly lumped together in the category of below-the-line expenses. This conflation, as other examples have shown, has persisted; as more recent budgeting guides for filming explain, "Below-the-line costs include technicians, materials and labor."[59] The lack of distinction between material resources and human labor evokes the broader industrial logic of inventories and book-keeping, grouping 'non-creative' personnel as one cost of many.

One of the main problems with drawing such a distinction is that it continually produces and defines a sphere of film production, as if such a concept is fixed and cannot change, evolve, and expand. By 'sphere of film production' I refer to the categorization of film production labor

[57] Scott, *On Hollywood*, 120.
[58] John Chapman, "Looking at Hollywood," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 26, 1941, 17.
[59] R.S. Singleton, *Film Budgeting (Or, How Much Will It Cost to Shoot Your Movie?)* (Los Angeles: Lone Eagle Publishing, 1996), 413.

as such—that is, any work that is considered a part of a film's production. This encompasses a range of occupations from writers, directors, and actors, to grips, carpenters, foley artists, and runners. Yet it generally excludes the work of truck drivers, mailmen, secretaries and personal assistants, and so on. In other words, the sphere of film production is a discursive category of labor that has been historically produced by figures within the industry, as well as by commentators, journalists, and historians as part of production culture. Because media industries constitute vast networks of workers, ancillary industries, resources, and geographical spaces, to attempt to describe the labor of film production in binary terms of above- and below-the-line is inevitably to exclude some forms of work that nevertheless contribute to the production culture. Caldwell's work in media industry studies and production studies, as well as several others, provides a crucial framework for understanding the labor of media production in nuanced terms attendant to the experiences of workers at every phase and level of the process. Not only that, but such scholarship routinely critiques the power dynamics inscribed in industry documents which explicitly seek to narrate divisions of labor—Miranda Banks, Vicki Mayer, and John Caldwell, for instance, argue that industrial myths and narratives as they appear in trade periodicals, interview and attestations, and other paratextual materials can be understood in relation to working conditions as a form of class consciousness.[60]

Caldwell has accordingly critiqued humanistic cinema and media studies for overestimating the determining role of industry itself, and for taking it as "a clean, self-evident sphere or as a bounded site for research that does not simultaneously involve the vagaries of human subjects and culture's thick complexities."[61] Yet as recent scholarship has sought to

[60] Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, and John T. Caldwell, "Introduction," in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of the Media Industries*, edited by Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, and John T. Caldwell (New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), 1-12.
[61] John T. Caldwell, "Para-Industry: Researching Hollywood's Blackwaters," *Cinema Journal* 52, no. 3 (2013): 157.

demonstrate, the film industry, like any other, is not and has never been a 'closed shop.'[62] In the studio system alone, myriad labor forms were fundamental to the functioning of studios that risk elision and exclusion if we persist with the idea of a concrete and defined sphere of production.

There is, of course, a rich tradition in film history of scholarship addressing Hollywood as an industry, which is often attentive to the conditions and divisions of labor.[63] Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson's *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* (1985) includes a chapter on the labor force, but the subject of labor and unions appears throughout the book as a consequence of its broader commitment to understanding Hollywood's production practices.[64] Janet Staiger in particular has sought to understand how studios structured and organized labor divisions, and how this changed as a consequence of technological developments.[65] In addition, Douglas

[62] For example, on the relationship between early film and footwear manufacturing, see Matthew Solomon, *Méliès Boots: Footwear and Film Manufacturing in Second Industrial Revolution Paris* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022); on the relationship between the film and chemical industries during the Second World War, see Alice Lovejoy, "Celluloid geopolitics: film stock and the war economy, 1939-47," *Screen* 60, no. 2 (2019): 224-241; on the relationship between film and the oil industry, see Marina Dahlquist and Patrick Vonderau (eds) *Petrocinema: Sponsored Film and the Oil Industry* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021); on the film industry's relationship to industrial manufacturing, see Luci Marzola, *Engineering Hollywood: Technology, Technicians, and the Science of Building the Studio System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021); on the film industry's relationship to the military, see Haidee Wasson and Lee Grieveson (eds) *Cinema's Military Industrial Complex* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018); on the film industry's relationship to a variety of corporations such as investment banks, auto manufacturers, and more, see Lee Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations: Media, Capital, and the Liberal World System* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018); on Nigerian cinema's relationship with various extractive industries, see Noah Tsika, *African Media in an Age of Extraction: Nollywood Geographies* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2024); on cinema's relationship to other extractive industries, see Brian Jacobson, *The Cinema of Extractions: Film Materials and Their Forms* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2025).

[63] To name a few, see Thomas Schatz, *The Genius of the System: Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1988); Tino Balio, *The American Film Industry* (Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1976); Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System*; Bordwell et al, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*; Richard Jewell, *The Golden Age of Cinema: Hollywood, 1929-1945* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2007); Richard Maltby, *Hollywood Cinema: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995). See also the invaluable "History of American Cinema" series from Charles Scribner's Sons, especially Donald Crafton, *The Talkies: American Cinema's Transition to Sound, 1926-1931* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1999); Tino Balio, *Grand Design: Hollywood as a Modern Business Enterprise, 1930-1939* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1995); and Schatz, *Boom and Bust*.

[64] See Bordwell et al, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 311-319.

[65] Janet Staiger, "Dividing Labor for Production Control: Thomas Ince and the Rise of the Studio System," *Cinema Journal* 18 (Spring 1979): 16–25. See also Janet Staiger, ed. *The Studio System* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995)

Gomery's *The Hollywood Studio System* (1986) focuses on the major studios and how their practices shaped the industry during its most prosperous period, and, as a consequence, labor appears in the book as one of the many problems the majors had to deal with, with the process of unionization described as "a force for creative independence in film production."[66]

While labor is not an explicit focus in his work, the contributions of Schatz to understandings of the film industry's modus operandi have been especially productive in their emphasis on the human agency of studio heads and key figures in Hollywood. Pioneering studies of individual studios that take similar approaches have also been of critical importance to this project.[67] In his essay "Film Studies, Cultural Studies, and Media Industries Studies," Schatz identifies a predisposition toward a political economy approach in the study of media industries, posing instead the question of "whether the industrial machinery functions to facilitate, enable, or even allow for individual human agency."[68] And although by "human agency" Schatz is referring principally to creative and personal expression in media industries, this dissertation takes methodological inspiration from his focus in its quest to describe and understand the logics of labor divisions and race in the studio era. That is, in my analysis of the division of labor, I

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[66] Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System*, 10.

[67] These include Tino Balio, *United Artists, Volume 1: The Company Built by Stars* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976) and *United Artists, Volume 2, 1951-1978: The Company That Changed the Film Industry* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987); Richard Jewell, *RKO Radio Pictures: A Titan Is Born* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2012); and *Slow Fade to Black: The Decline of RKO Radio Pictures* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016); Bernard F. Dick, *Engulfed: The Death of Paramount Pictures and the Birth of Corporate Hollywood* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2021); and *City of Dreams: The Making and Remaking of Universal Pictures* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2021); David Thomson, *Warner Bros: The Making of an American Movie Studio* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); Peter Lev, *Twentieth Century-Fox: The Zanuck-Skouras Years, 1935-1965* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013). Also of note is an ongoing series celebrating the centenary of the establishment of the major studios from Routledge. At the time of writing, three books have been published: Tino Balio, *MGM* (London: Routledge, 2018); Frederick Wasser, *Twentieth Century Fox* (London: Routledge, 2020); and Peter Krämer, Gary Needham, Yannis Tzioumakis, Tino Balio (eds), *United Artists* (London: Routledge, 2020); and five have been commissioned or are in progress: a volume on Universal Pictures by Thomas Schatz; on Paramount from Douglas Gomery and Clara Pafort-Overduin; on Warner Bros. from Richard Maltby; on Columbia from Matthew Bernstein and Eddy Von Mueller; and on Disney from Susan Ohmer.

[68] Thomas Schatz, "Film Studies, Cultural Studies, and Media Industry Studies," *Media Industries* 1, no. 1 (2014): 40.

often trace the structuring of such divisions from a management perspective; while similar problems plagued the film industry as did many other industries, such processes were still governed by the individual choices and practices of studio heads, location managers, directors and producers, and so on. Decisions to hire certain workers over others, and to shoot on location rather than in the studio, or how to handle the disruption of a jurisdictional dispute or work stoppage, were made by individuals with a degree of agency that I critically examine in the pages that follow.

Recent work that does make labor an explicit focus has often centered the efforts of creative, above-the-personnel in order to provide an account of human agency and its place within media industries. The likes of Miranda Banks, Virgina Wright Wexman, Katie Bird, Emily Carman, and Ronny Regev have sought to narrate and understand creativity and craft within the studio system as a form of labor, paying particular attention to unionization and activism in the process.[69] In addition, there has been a concerted effort among media historians in recent years to make central the kind of labor in many respects designed to remain concealed and invisible, highlighting below-the-line workers in the studio system, and which this dissertation intends to contribute to and engage with. For instance, Helen Hanson's work on film sound examines the technical accomplishments and labor of sound designers in studio

[69] See Miranda J. Banks, *The Writers: A History of American Screenwriters and Their Guild* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015); Virginia Wright Wexman, *Hollywood's Artists: The Directors Guild of America and the Construction of Authorship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020); Katie Bird, "The Editor's Face on the Cutting Room Floor: Fredrick Y. Smith's Precarious Promotion of the American Cinema Editors, 1942-1977," *The Spectator* 38, no. 2, (2018): 9-19; Emily Carman, *Independent Stardom: Freelance Women in the Hollywood Studio System* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016); Catherine L. Fisk, *Writing for Hire: Unions, Hollywood, and Madison Avenue* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); Kevin Brianton, *Hollywood Divided: The 1950 Screen Directors Guild Meeting and the Impact of the Blacklist* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2016); Ronny Regev, *Working in Hollywood: How the Studio System Turned Creativity into Labor* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2018). Such work continues in the tradition of important contributions focusing on above-the-line labor in Hollywood, such as: Danae Clark, *Negotiating Hollywood: The Cultural Politics of Actors' Labor* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995); David F. Prindle, *The Politics of Glamour: Ideology and Democracy in the Screen Actors Guild* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988); Nancy L. Schwartz, *The Hollywood Writers' Wars* (New York: Knopf, 1982)

Hollywood from the transition to sound in 1931 through to 1948.[70] Adrienne McLean's recent monograph on screen makeup takes a similar approach to narrating the development of makeup as a craft in Hollywood with its own technical developments, working conditions, and struggles for recognition.[71] Other excellent work by Helen Warner, Elizabeth Castaldo Lundén, and Kate Fortmueller has focused on costume design as a particularly gendered and under-appreciated form of below-the-line labor in Hollywood.[72]

Indeed, that which foregrounds the contributions of women in below-the-line positions to the studio system is of particular methodological significance to this dissertation in its navigation of sources and the question of visibility.[73] The historical elision of women's contributions to film production and studios more broadly has meant that scholars focused on their labor have developed innovative and creative approaches to archival sources and marginalia in studio production records. In this dissertation, I take guidance from these approaches to locate and foreground another elided and forgotten labor form, which is itself equally gendered: the type of manual labor performed on and around set by men (often of color) who were recruited spontaneously, precariously, and without union protection. The masculinized, menial work of

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[70] Helen Hanson, *Hollywood Soundscapes: Film Sound Style, Craft, and Production in the Classical Era* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).
[71] Adrienne McLean, *All for Beauty: Makeup and Hairdressing in Hollywood's Studio Era* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2022).
[72] Helen Warner, "Below-the-(Hem)line: Storytelling as Collective Resistance in Costume Design," *Feminist Media Histories* 4, no, 1 (2018): 37-57; Elizabeth Castaldo Lundén, "The Most Famous Costume Designer: Reviewing Edith Head's Career through a Contractual Lens," *Film History: An International Journal* 34, no. 4 (2022): 30-58; and Kate Fortmueller, "Gendered Labour, Gender Politics: How Edith Head Designed Her Career and Styled Women's Lives," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* 38, no. 3 (2017): 474-494.
[73] For key examples, see Erin Hill, *Never Done: A History of Women's Work in Media Production* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016); Helen Hanson, "Looking for Lela Simone: Singin' in the Rain and microhistories of women's sound work behind the scenes and below-the-line in Classical Hollywood Cinema," *Women's History Review* 29, no. 5 (2020): 822-840; Denise McKenna, "The Photoplay or the Pickaxe: Extras, Gender, and Labour in Early Hollywood," *Film History* 23, no. 1 (2011): 5–19; Heidi Kenaga, "Making the 'Studio Girl': The Hollywood Studio Club and Industry Regulation of Female Labour," *Film History: An International Journal* 18, no. 2 (2006): 129-139. See also Erin McGuirl, "The women who made Selznick's screenplays," *Ransom Center Magazine*, Harry Ransom Center, February 5, 2021. https://sites.utexas.edu/ransomcentermagazine/2021/02/05/the-women-who-made-selznicks-screenplays/

carrying and transporting heavy materials, and putting the body at risk, became more prominent in wartime film productions—especially those shot on location—which enabled studios to maintain production progress and cut labor costs.

This labor has not been studied as prominently as others, and is thus a central focus of this dissertation. Indeed, despite the impulse to recover such invisible or forgotten labor forms in the studio system, the adherence to an above- and below-the-line mode of categorization in film-historical scholarship means that there are additional labor types either glossed over or ignored completely because they are not considered to be within the sphere of the film production process. For instance, in their important anthology, *Hollywood Unions* (2024), Kate Fortmueller and Luci Marzola divide the book into two sections, each dealing with unions that fall into an above- or below-the-line category—though the authors do acknowledge this as a "reductive paradigm."[74] In fact, they begin the book's introduction with an evocative description of how the film industry imbricates a vast network of unions, which includes the Hollywood craft guilds, but is also dependent on organizations such as the Teamsters, the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.[75] Katie Bird's contribution to the collection focuses on "backlot workers," a term used to describe the workers responsible of setting and striking on-set materials and equipment, and which includes a wide range of labor types and union membership, ranging from "industrial labor and basic crafts (drivers, general laborers); building crafts (electricians, carpenters, plasterers); [to] craft studio mechanics

[74] Fortmueller and Marzola, "Introduction," 13. The anthology provides a much-needed update and addition to the tradition of scholarship explicitly devoted to the history of unions in film and media industries. For more, see, Lois S. Gray and Ronald L. Seeber, eds. *Under the Stars: Essays on Labor Relations in Arts and Entertainment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); Mike Nielsen and Gene Mailes, *Hollywood's Other Black-list: Union Struggles in the Studio Era* (London: British Film Institute, 1995); Ross, *Stars and Strikes*; Hugh Lovell and Tasile Carter, *Collective Bargaining in the Motion Picture Industry* (Oakland: Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, 1955).
[75] Fortmueller and Marzola, "Introduction," 1.

(machinists, grips, electricians, lamp operators, stagehands, property workers, riggers)."[76]

While, as Bird elaborates, these employees are "some of the least documented in Hollywood history," most of those considered below-the-line in the studio-era of Hollywood were likely to have at least benefited from union support, contracted pay with the studio, and, as a result, whose contributions are more readily traceable in studio records in archival collections.[77] For instance, Luci Marzola's *Engineering Hollywood* (2021) makes the compelling argument that the "invisibility" of the classical style was maintained by a labor force whose work was necessarily seamless and imperceptible. Charting the unionizing efforts undertaken by cinematographers and camera operators in the developmental period of Hollywood to achieve proper accreditation and recognition for their efforts, Marzola describes these technicians as "nearly invisible in the existing history of Hollywood, as they were considered employees of the studios or productions and were rarely credited on film prints."[78] In order to rectify the fact that these technicians' "anonymity has allowed them to disappear in plain sight," Marzola includes a biographic index of laborers at the end of the book.[79] Yet my concerns in this dissertation are with those for whom such a biographic index as the one Marzola includes would not be possible to produce—in other words, those working *below* below-the-line.

Working Below *Below-the-Line: Racialized Labor in Hollywood*

It has not escaped the attention of many of the scholars discussed above that labor in the studio system (both above- and below-the-line) was, in large part, a racially homogenous affair.

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[76] Katie Bird, "Backlot Work: The Working-Class Backbone of Hollywood's Unions," in *Hollywood Unions,* edited by Kate Fortmueller and Luci Marzola (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2024), 68.
[77] Bird, "Backlot Work," 70. The commendable detail and rigor of Bird's chapter is itself evidence of the level to which the contributions of backlot workers and their representative guilds have been documented and archived.
[78] Marzola, *Engineering Hollywood*, 85.
[79] Marzola, *Engineering Hollywood*, 3.

People of color were not only excluded from such positions, but even from the unions designed to protect those positions. In "Backlot Work," Bird explains: "The absence of white women and people of color within the backlot ranks was a result of earlier racial and gender segregation policies within the industrial unions."[80] This is affirmed by Horne, who, in his account of the rise and fall of the Conference of Studio Unions, reports that by its end, "only 10 of the 9,635 weekly studio employees were African Americans, and all of those were actors."[81] Yet one of my primary contentions in this dissertation is that such empirical data which points to the absence of people of color in below-the-line capacities is itself predicated on the above- and below-the-line distinction, and that rethinking and expanding the sphere of film production enables the inclusion of myriad other labor forms, many of which were both racialized and gendered. As Fortmueller and Marzola rightfully point out: "the stakes for limiting membership in ways that favor or exclude particular races or genders are particularly high in an industry that is responsible for telling stories about who we are as a society."[82] As media historians, it is necessary not only to critique the exclusionary practices of unions and craft guilds, but to actively locate and foreground labor contributions of those whom otherwise do not factor into such histories.

While some recent scholarship has focused on race and labor both preceding, during, and succeeding the studio era, it tends to highlight above-the-line personnel such as actors, directors, or writers.[83] On the occasion that such work looks at below-the-line contributions, it normally

[80] Bird, "Backlot Work," 70.
[81] Horne, *Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930-1950*, 52.
[82] Fortmueller and Marzola, "Introduction," 3.
[83] See, for instance, Catherine Russell, "The File on Theresa Harris, Black Star of the Archive," *Feminist Media Histories* 8, no. 3 (2022): 86-114; Yiman Wang, *To Be an Actress: Labor and Performance in Anna May Wong's Cross-Media World* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2024); Jacob Floyd, "Negotiating Publicity and Persona: The Work of Native Actors in Studio Hollywood," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 42, no. 3 (2018): 119-135; Miriam J. Petty, *Stealing the Show: African American Performers and Audiences in 1930s Hollywood* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016); S. Louisa Wei, "Women Screenwriters of Early Sinophone Cinema: 1916–1949," in *The Palgrave Handbook of Screenwriting Studies*, edited by Rosamund Davies, Paulo Russo, and Claus Tieber (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2023), 295-313.

focuses on extras.[84] This type of work was generally concealed or neglected in promotional materials, production discourse, and other paratexts. As a result, it is crucial for scholars to use what traces and fragments survive in both visual texts, production records, and other archival marginalia to highlight the contributions of those *below* below-the-line while simultaneously unpacking and critiquing the extractive logics that rely on exploitative, racialized labor practices for film and media production. I elaborate on this in more detail in the "Methodology" section; first, however, it is necessary to consider the relationship between race and labor in relation to the above- and below-the-line labor distinction.

To help underline the necessity of thinking outside the traditional sphere of film production, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's landmark essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" is particularly instructive. Addressing subaltern studies scholars, Spivak argues that subaltern classes, which exist in an alternative category beneath that of the oppressed, are denied access to historical narratives or to representation in a political or transformational sense. Spivak writes that "in the absence of a theory of exploitation as the extraction (production), appropriation and realization of (surplus) value *as representation of labor power,* capitalist exploitation must be seen as a variety of domination (the mechanics of power as such)."[85] Here, Spivak takes issue with European philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze and Michel Foucault making an equivocation between oppressed and subaltern groups.[86] In actuality, the former suffer under hegemonic power but retain some form of representation as part of the narrative of history and reality as

[84] See Laura Isabel Serna, "Atmosphere: Mexican Extras and the Production of Race in Silent Hollywood," *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 63, no. 1 (2023): 100-123; Liza Black, *Picturing Indians: Native Americans in Film, 1941–1960* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020); Kate Fortmueller, "Encounters at the Margins of Hollywood: Casting and Location Shooting for Bhowani Junction*," Film History* 28, no. 4 (Winter 2016): 100–124.
[85] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, eds. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, [1988] 1994), 74. Original emphasis.
[86] Spivak bemoans the English translation of Marxian "representation" as equivocating the German *vertreten* (the idea of political representation) and *darstellen* (*re*-presentation, technically understood in the form of functional transformation of a thing). Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 74.

"normative," whereas the subaltern class suffers "the asymmetrical obliteration of the trace of that Other in its precarious Subject-ivity."[87] There are political stakes, in other words, to describing certain social positions as oppressed, which runs the rhetorical risk of relegating other forms to a state of total invisibility. While I am not equating *below* below-the-line laborers in film productions with the comparably specific category of the subaltern—something Spivak herself has rightfully cautioned against—it is the equivocation of labor groups that experience and relate to their work in entirely different ways that Spivak's argument can helps us ultimately avoid.[88]

One way we might do this is by revising the discursive labor distinctions and categorizations commonly employed by both industry figures and scholars, and ultimately expanding the scope of labor encompassed by film production as it has so far understood. In this dissertation, I often look at traces of labor are designed to be concealed, yet the survival of those traces should raise broader questions for historians of film and media industry labor: whose work is left out, and truly has no trace? If it is not represented in the visual archive—broadly defined—where can it be found? Thinking beyond the confines of an above- and below-the-line binary and the traditional sphere of film production can help to better orient us toward these traces. Whether in peripheral, even ephemeral documents, archival marginalia, or in the background of a frame, looking for *below* below-the-line labor requires reading against the grain, so to speak, in order to find something designed to be concealed. Such is the mechanism of racialization as a process produced by industrial rhetoric and production-cultural discourse: it starts with a line, but has material consequences.

[87] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 76.
[88] Leon de Kock, "Interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: New Nation Writers Conference in South Africa," *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature* 23, no. 3 (1992): 29-47.

While racialized labor and the broader extraction, manufacture, and transportation of various material resources upon which film productions have historically depended is an area that remains relatively neglected in the context of film studies, scholars working in digital media studies have been probing such questions more persistently in recent years.[89] In Lisa Nakamura's study of Navajo women's labor in the manufacture of microchips for Fairchild Semiconductor in the 1960s, Nakamura argues that pre-existing associations with docility, manual dexterity, and affective investment in material craft led to the Navajo women being sought out for their labor, which contributed to their stereotypical representation in subsequent visual culture. That is to say, according to Nakamura, that these women's labor was both *racialized* and *racializing*, predicated on the idea of race and gender as "forms of flexible capital."[90] Nakamura's understanding of racialization as "a process, not a product" draws on the insights of work in critical race theory, critical ethnic studies, Black studies, and racial capitalism studies as a way of reorienting the focus of media studies toward material phenomena with material realities and consequences.[91]

As such, the field would be better equipped to trace and understand the mechanisms of racialization and the sourcing and extracting of labor necessary for film and media production. As well as functioning as a case study of racialized labor in and of itself, Nakamura positions the

[89] See, for instance, Sean Cubitt, *Finite Media: Environmental Implications of Digital Technologies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Evelyn Wan, "Labour, mining, dispossession: on the performance of earth and the necropolitics of digital culture," *International Journal of Performance Arts and Digital Media* 15, no. 3 (2019): 249-263; Rachel Shapiro, "Transnational Networks of Literacy and Materiality: Coltan, Sexual Violence, and Digital Literacy," *College English* 82, no. 2 (2019): 204-225; Michael Gallagher, "Childhood and the geology of media," *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 41, no. 3 (2020): 372-390; Christian Fuchs, *Digital Labour and Karl Marx* (Routledge: London, 2014); and several of the contributions to Richard Maxwell (ed), *The Routledge Companion to Labor and Media* (New York: Routledge, 2016).
[90] Lisa Nakamura, "Indigenous Circuits: Navajo Women and the Racialization of Early Electronic Manufacture," *American Quarterly* 66, no. 4 (December 2014): 933.
[91] Nakamura, "Indigenous Circuits," 934.

article as intervening in broader scholarship on digital media and culture by calling on researchers to actively seek out the labor and materials most concealed from our perspective. She draws on the impetus of critical infrastructure studies to bring to light "the unique materialities of media distribution—the resources, technologies, labor, and relations that are required to shape, energize, and sustain the distribution of audiovisual signal traffic on global, national, and local scales."[92] Taking this further, Nakamura compels the field to "look to locales and bodies not commonly associated with these technologies, in out of the way places, to see how race operates as a key aspect of digital platform production."[93] Thus her work provides an impetus for reading against the grain of how digital culture is often understood discursively by maintaining a strictly materialist focus in order to foreground race and racialization, and ensure that that which is designed to remain invisible is brought back into the purview of media studies.

By reading against the grain of archival documents, studio records, press coverage, and interviews—all of which narrate the labor of film production—film scholars might find traces of racialized labor that are otherwise rhetorically subsumed. Nakamura describes "Really looking at digital media, not only seeing its images but seeing *into* it" as a method for understanding their configuration of race and labor.[94] My hope is that the same can be said about the variety of primary and secondary materials I consult in this dissertation: by "really looking" at them, we can better comprehend the industrial mechanisms of labor divisions in relation to the process of racialization. Nakamura's article mobilizes an understanding of racialization that synthesizes complex historical processes in a way that can inform studies of the film industry. Jodi Melamed similarly theorizes racialization as both an ideological and narrative device, but also a process

[92] Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski, "Introduction," in *Signal Traffic: Critical Studies of Media Infrastructures*, eds. Lisa Parks and Nicole Starosielski (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2015), 5.
[93] Nakamura, "Indigenous Circuits," 937-938.
[94] Nakamura, "Indigenous Circuits," 920.

that produces material and constitutive discourses, or what she calls "racial knowledges." These knowledges "are at once productive and symptomatic of the total value making (such as political value and economic value) that secures specific historical configurations of personhood, human organization, and relations to the natural world as possible, imaginable, and sustainable."[95] Melamed offers a framework for analyzing individual instances of racialized labor by tracing their mechanisms across historical configurations and the production and sustenance of racial knowledges in material terms. Taking this persistent binding of labor and bodies with resources and materials, collectively understood as commodities in the logic of extraction, one can better situate Hollywood within these wider processes from which it both emerged and developed.

Methodology

This dissertation relies on a combination of research conducted in archives housing studio records, digitally available trade periodicals, national and local newspapers, and miscellaneous other primary sources dependent on the subject. These principally include the United Artists Collection and Walter F. Wanger papers in the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research; the Paramount Pictures Production Records at the Margaret Herrick Library; the RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records in the UCLA Library Special Collections; and the Screen Arts Mavericks and Makers Collection at the University of Michigan Special Collections Library. I combine and cross-reference details from archivally-housed studio records with periodicals and publications made available through the Media History Digital Library, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, Newspapers.com, Genealogy Bank, and the Chronicling America collection at the Library of Congress. In each chapter, I focus in detail on individual production histories, many of

[95] Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 12.

which were shot on location outside of Los Angeles, in places such as Detroit, Michigan; Acoma Rock, New Mexico; San Antonio, Texas; Tampa, Florida; and the Imperial Valley in California. As a result, a major component of my methodology is consulting local newspapers which often reported on and covered the production process and provide unique insights into the contributions of local labor sources.

In order to locate traces of precarious labor within individual production histories, I pay particular attention to the 'marginalia' of these materials—that is, information that is not necessarily the explicit focus of the document or article, but which might point toward a contribution to the production which is otherwise omitted from record. In addition, the cross-referencing approach often reveals inconsistencies and contradictions between different sources. What a trade periodical reports about a production might be glaringly different to what its production records in the archive indicate. To that end, I often analyze the rhetorical power of press coverage in relation to the actualities of production records in order to assess how the division of labor in the studio system was actively narrated by figures within the industry.[96] This methodology section is divided into two parts: the first elaborates on my approach to marginalia in archival materials and draws from other scholarly work with a similar focus on 'lost' or 'invisible labor forms. The second provides a more logistical perspective on my research method and the navigation of digitized primary sources—particularly local newspapers—drawing from

[96] As I explain in more detail in the pages that follow, in this dissertation I by no means appeal to the notion of the facticity of studio records. Many of my case studies suggest that labor was often solicited and performed in ways and from sources that were not documented the same way as others. There is also the question of reliability, and the problem of assuming that what appears in a studio record provides complete coverage of a production. However, when critically analyzed and cross-referenced with other sources, as Tom Schatz argues, "Because of the complexity, cost, and fragmentation of studio filmmaking, Hollywood left its legacy not only on celluloid but also on paper, and that documentation provides a comprehensive and reliable account of the studio system at work." Schatz, *The Genius of the System*, 9.

scholars in and around the "New Cinema History" who have pondered similar questions in their work on film reception and spectatorship.

Marginalia and Traces of Labor in Studio Records

Questions of ephemerality, archival access (or lack thereof), and the power dynamics embedded in historical artifacts are frequently taken up by historians investigating the labor and experiences of marginalized groups. Whether it is the study of gendered labor in the Hollywood studio system, the racialized labor of extras in Hollywood productions shot abroad, or the spectatorial experiences of marginalized ethnic groups, these pursuits often necessitate a novel (or at least alternative) attitude and approach toward what constitutes a project's archive.

Scholars researching marginalized populations are constantly reminded of the ways in which archives can function as institutions of power. Achille Mbembe, for instance, elaborating on the relationship between archives and state, reminds us that a document's being housed in an archive imbues it with a material aura and status of exclusivity because of all the material that is *not* preserved as such.[97] Not only that, but that which does survive in the archive is also, by its nature, mediated by structures of power, and, as a consequence, is of questionable reliability as a representation of marginalized experience. Carlo Ginzburg famously wrote about the unreliability of archival documents, given that they tend to be written by and thus representative of dominant classes. These written sources, he writes, represent the perspective of:

> individuals who were more or less openly attached to the dominant culture. This means that the thoughts, the beliefs, and the aspirations of the peasants

[97] Achille Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and its limits," translated by Judith Inggs, in *Refiguring the Archive*, edited by Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid and Razia Saleh (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002), 19-26.

> and artisans of the past reach us (if and when they do) almost always through distorting viewpoints and intermediaries.[98]

One way in which historians of marginalized populations have circumvented this distortion is by treating archival marginalia as the principal resource for recovering anecdotal evidence, fragmentary notes, and other ephemera in order to construct a sense of the experiences of their subjects. To take an example, Erin Hill's *Never Done: A History of Women's Work in Media Production* (2016) represents a crucial methodological intervention in negotiating absence in studio collections. Building on Radha Vatsal's "Reevaluting Footnotes: Women Directors of the Silent Era" Hill calls for reinterpreting the film archive and marginalia to research topics that were traditionally excluded from it, explicitly relating this pursuit to that of lost films.[99] Hill writes:

> This work frequently seeks out subjects in peripheral ephemera documents and in the footnotes and margins of other people's histories. The location (or lack thereof) of evidence serves as evidence in itself, and helps to tell the story of women workers through the ways they were variously remembered, classified, and erased in archives. Like many "lost" or "missing" films of the silent era, much of this history may truly be gone, but there is also much that may be rediscovered.[100]

This important approach is something Hill takes to both written and visual materials: in her chapter on studio tours, she uses these works to locate below-the-line, gendered labor as it was represented by the studios. Hill notes that the absence of information on labor along racial and ethnic lines in archival documents means that visual materials such as films and photographs are

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[98] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), xv.
[99] Radha Vatsal, "Reevaluting Footnotes: Women Directors of the Silent Era," in *A Feminist Reader of Early Cinema*, eds. Jennifer M. Bean and Diane Negra (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 119-138.
[100] Hill, *Never Done*, 11.

in many cases the only record of this labor at all.[101] Fortmueller applies this same necessary logic of the margin or the footnote to the visual text itself in her work on the labor of extras in the production of *Bhowani Junction* (1956), where the final film serves as the principal archival document of their involvement.[102] In cases like these, the absence of all other such information elevates the status of the film text as the only surviving primary document of marginalized experiences. Throughout this dissertation, I often refer to the film text in a similar capacity: as a primary source in and of itself, capturing, on occasion, the oft-excluded labor of people of color who briefly appear on screen.

There are also cases related to labor in which no such visual record or trace exists, prompting the historian to adopt alternative methods, as in the case of a recent article by Helen Hanson on the labor of Lela Simone, who worked in the sound department of the Arthur Freed unit for MGM musicals during the studio era. In order to navigate the notable lack of empirical data on women's labor in the industry during this period, Hanson turns to the writing of Ginzburg and microhistory as a method so as "to bring out, to individualise, the work of a woman technician against the larger, usually anonymous, background of labour below-the-line."[103] For Hanson, this means focusing in depth and detail on the daily practices of Simone, principally her contribution to the titular song from *Singin' in the Rain* (1952) as told through various archival documents and their marginalia. As a result, Hanson's microhistorical analysis manages to "bring into relief how the power relations of the workplace are traceable in the very documentation of work processes."[104] In instances like these, the power inscribed in archival documents (as explicated by Ginzburg and Mbembe) is put to critical and discursive use in the

[101] Hill, *Never Done*, 55.
[102] Fortmueller, "Encounters at the Margins of Hollywood," 100-124.
[103] Hanson, "Looking for Lela Simone," 823.
[104] Hanson, "Looking for Lela Simone," 825.

investigation of labor and experiences that were in many ways designed to be kept invisible. As Hanson summarizes, "[v]isibility in film history is dependent upon the scale at which the researcher chooses to work."[105] I take a similar approach to the studio records I examine, and this played a role in my decision to build detailed case studies of individual productions so as to tease out the same kinds of details Hanson was able to locate in her article.

Digitized Trade Periodicals and Local Newspapers

In the introduction to a special issue on early Hollywood and archival developments, Rob King identifies a recent trend in which historians have "placed renewed faith in the historical expressivity of *all* the past's written and visual traces, including—especially—its miscellany."[106] In the era of digitization, he argues that it is imperative for film historians to avoid replicating so-called traditional methods in order to become more "attuned to archival objects that interrupt or disrupt business-as-usual historiography, but it will also examine those objects for traces of the counterhistories lurking beneath the official historical record."[107] King warning against falling into some of the traps of working with digital archives which facilitate the habit of scanning for information that might be prone to glossing over potentially enlightening marginalia—something others have also commented on. Matthew Solomon, for instance, writes:

> The professional marginalia contained in trade journals can be revealing, but the method needed to locate potentially useful pieces of information within them typically involves a great deal of tedium, especially when one is reading text from the screen of a microfilm reader or computer monitor rather than from the pages of a hard copy of the journal itself. Even for those few specialized journals from the period that have been fully digitized—and for this period of theatre and film history, the number remains truly few, at least at this time, although this may one day change—and processed with character-

[105] Hanson, "Looking for Lela Simone," 824.
[106] Rob King, "Introduction: Early Hollywood and the Archive," *Film History* 26, no. 2 (2014): ix. Emphasis in original.
[107] King, "Introduction," xi.

> recognition software, a page-by-page examination is often the most fruitful approach since one does not always know exactly know what key words will yield answers to a research question.[108]

This passage usefully encapsulates some of the principal pitfalls and affordances of working with digitized materials, supporting King's call for reflexivity and for avoiding repeating and reproducing "consensus protocols."[109] Throughout this dissertation, I adopt a similar method toward reading and engaging with digitized primary source materials: a page-by-page approach, paying particular attention to marginalia and omissions, and cross-referencing with studio records in order to tease out contradictions, and to critically examine how narratives are produced in ways that enable individuals and institutions to structure power and the division of labor.[110]

In particular, trade periodicals such as *The Hollywood Reporter, Variety, Boxoffice,* and *Motion Picture Herald* serve as important discursive sites for the narrativization of studio labor divisions throughout this dissertation. As Eric Hoyt argues in *Ink-Stained Hollywood: The Triumph of American Cinema's Trade Press* (2022), media historians should take a "broad view" of trade papers in relation to each other and the wider industrial ecosystem, rather than as isolated pieces of data.[111] Hoyt importantly frames trade periodicals as inseparable from their

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[108] Matthew Solomon, "With Houdini in the Margins of Theatre History: On the Trail of the Mysterious Browning," *Performing Arts Resources* 28 (2011): 201-208. Solomon draws from Paulo Cherchi Usai's "analytic method" of negotiating archival materials like periodicals and trade publications. For more on this, see Paolo Cherchi Usai, *Silent Cinema: An Introduction* (London: British Film Institute, 2000), 94.

[109] King, "Introduction," ix.

[110] This is not to say, of course, that the digitized materials I consult are comprehensive or without omission. Indeed, working with digitally available sources, while a gift to film and media historians, is not without its problems and challenges; in particular, the fact that search engines are prone to error, and that still so many publications are incomplete or not digitized at all, are among these challenges. For more on this, see Richard Abel, "The Pleasures and Perils of 'Big Data' in Digitalized Newspapers," *Film History* 25, nos. 1/2 (2013): 1-10; Richard Abel, "Digging into Digital Newspapers in a Dark Time," *Moving Image* 20, nos. 1-2 (2020): 156-185.

[111] Eric Hoyt, *Ink-Stained Hollywood: The Triumph of American Cinema's Trade Press* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2022), 3. Elsewhere, Hoyt and Kelley Conway have described trade papers as "entry points" into film history, enabling scholars to "chart the release of films and gather evidence about their circulation and impact in particular places and times." Eric Hoyt and Kelley Conway, "Introduction: Building and Analyzing Movie

connections to the entertainment industry upon which they depended, delivering news that was "always embedded and interpreted within a particular community and culture (in this case, show business)."[112] This dissertation makes a concerted effort to situate trade periodicals within this context—often as mouthpieces for the industry (a particular subset of the industry, at least) and thus an important player in controlling narratives about the industry.[113] Their prevalence only grew during the war, when studios were impacted by labor issues, wartime restrictions, and accusations of warmongering by isolationist politicians. Indeed, having trade periodicals as an avenue through which to shape and influence public opinion about the industry during such a turbulent time played a significant role in Hollywood's survival of the war. My case studies illustrate this through a triangulation between archival sources, trade periodicals, and national and local newspapers.

Given the importance of shooting on location outside of the Los Angeles area to this dissertation, I rely heavily on local newspapers in order to help reconstruct, narrate, and interpret the production culture of films shot across the country—especially in towns and cities that previously were not renowned for their film culture. In doing so, my method draws from scholars whose work relies on and engages with local newspapers as important documents in shaping film culture at the local level. In his essay "Relocating American Film History," Robert C. Allen identifies a "determinative connection between the experience of metropolitan urbanity and the experience of cinema" and argues that localized accounts of filmgoing complicate these

Magazine Networks," in *Global Movie Magazine Networks*, edited by Eric Hoyt and Kelley Conway (Oakland: University of California Press, 2025), 6.

[112] Hoyt, *Ink-Stained Hollywood*, 6.

[113] Though he was unsuccessful, at one point Willie Bioff went to the chief editor of *Variety* and demanded that IATSE leadership received favorable coverage. It demonstrates—at the very least—how important and powerful the trade papers were to shaping and influencing public and industry opinion about Hollywood. See Horne, *Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930–1950*, 47-48.

historical narratives and assumptions about film spectatorship.[114] Indeed, scholars in "New Cinema History"—a methodological turn broadly predicated on "the need to understand the cinematic experience as a broader sociocultural phenomenon"—share Allen's concern for a local emphasis to avoid regurgitating understandings of film culture on the purely national scale.[115] Allen's essay, and "New Cinema History" more broadly, is part of a sustained attempt in the past few decades to 'localize' film history, though this is almost always construed in terms of reception, spectatorship, and cultural engagement, rather than production.[116] Yet, I take methodological guidance from this impulse to localize, and use it to consider how film production on location was experienced and understood as a local event, with significant implications for labor—even during the studio era. The influence Hollywood productions had on various cities and towns across the country when the cast and crew visited, hired from, and interacted with the area shaped the local understanding of film culture in profound ways. Work

[114] Robert C. Allen, "Relocating American Film History: The Problem of the Empirical," *Cultural Studies* 20, no. 1 (2006): 62.

[115] Daniël Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers, "Introduction: The Scope of new cinema history," in *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History*, eds. Daniël Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers (New York: Routledge, 2019), 3. "New Cinema History" combines quantitative information about exhibition and distribution on a local and global scale with spatial analysis, geovisualization, and other qualitative techniques. The approach is based on the logic that there is no film text without people to encounter it, and that a history of cinema, in order to go above and beyond 'traditional' film histories, must instead turn to the social and cultural experience of them. For examples of such work, see Biltereyst et al, *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History* and Richard Maltby, Daniël Biltereyst, and Philippe Meers (eds) *Explorations in New Cinema History: Approaches and Case Studies* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

[116] See, for instance, the case studies presented in Richard Maltby, Melvyn Stokes, and Robert C. Allen (eds.) *Going to the Movies: Hollywood and the Social Experience of Cinema* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007). See also Robert C. Allen's *Going to the Show* project, which documents the history of cinemagoing in North Carolina: Robert C. Allen, "Getting to 'Going to the Show'," *New Review of Film and Television Studies* 8, no. 3 (2010): 264-276. For examples in a US context alone, see Catherine Jurca and John Sedgwick, "The Film's the Thing: Moviegoing in Philadelphia, 1935–36," *Film History* 26, no. 4 (2014): 58–83; Matthew J. Prigge, "Dangers in the Dark: Motion Picture Reform in Progressive-Era Milwaukee," *Film History* 24, no. 1 (2012): 74–81; Mary P. Erickson, "'In the Interest of the Moral Life of Our City': The Beginning of Motion Picture Censorship in Portland, Oregon," *Film History* 22, no. 2 (2010): 148–169; James J. Lorence, "The Suppression of 'Salt of the Earth' in Midwest America: The Underside of Cold War Culture in Detroit and Chicago," *Film History* 10, no. 3 (1998): 346–358.

attempting to localize on-location filmmaking *during the studio era* is largely yet to be conducted, and this dissertation aims to redress this gap.[117]

Describing the discursive pathways offered by negotiating local newspapers for film historians, Richard Abel claims that such sources can enhance our understanding of "the intersection of a city's movie culture and practices with the movie industry as a whole and more broadly with the economic history, including labor history, of the period."[118] Abel's work has been pathbreaking for film and media historians interested in questions of regionality and the local by demonstrating the richness of local newspapers in shaping and defining film culture as it emerged in the 1910s.[119] More than anything, Abel's use of local newspapers challenges prevailing narratives about film culture as a nationally homogenous phenomenon, rather than something that varied wildly from region to region, and from city to city. Though I focus on production, the following chapters rely on local newspapers for a similar purpose: to convey how they offered the local community an entry point into the film industry.

Taken together, the three pillars of my primary source analysis—studio records in archival collections, trade periodicals, and national and local newspapers—facilitate the narration

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[117] Of course, in the postwar period and beyond, as location shooting became more common, the subject has received more coverage from scholars. I engage with scholarship on location shooting (both during and following the war) in Chapter 4. For engagements with Hollywood's more contemporary local presence on an international level, see Courtney Brannon Donoghue, *Localising Hollywood* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017); Kevin Sanson, *Mobile Hollywood: Labor and the Geography of Production* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2024). One example of recent work outside the US context but which, to my mind, superbly articulates how the network of localized production cultures affects an environment is Debashree Mukherjee's *Bombay Hustle: Making Movies in a Colonial City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020). In particular, the notion of "cine-ecologies" as a way of framing the material and geographical implications of filming in an urban context, entangling labor and material in the process, is enormously helpful for scholars pondering similar questions about labor in production studies. For work with a similar emphasis on locality and the film industry's impact on the local spaces and cultures it appropriates, see Vicki Mayer, *Almost Hollywood, Nearly New Orleans* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2017).

[118] Richard Abel, "Reading Newspapers and Writing American Silent Cinema History," in Daniël Biltereyst, Richard Maltby, and Philippe Meers, eds., *The Routledge Companion to New Cinema History* (London; New York: Routledge, 2019), 78.

[119] See *Menus for Movieland: Newspapers and the Emergence of American Film Culture, 1913-1916* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015); and *Motor City Movie Culture, 1916-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020.

of individual production histories in their provision of divergent and often competing perspectives. From a labor point of view, especially, a wartime production shot on location away from Hollywood might depend on recruitment from a local area. The trades, like *The Hollywood Reporter*, may choose not to report on the studio hiring locally, and might instead report on the same studio's activity on its soundstage in Hollywood itself, so as to avoid ruffling the feathers of the craft guilds in the midst of a jurisdictional dispute. At the same time, the local newspapers from the town or city where the production is taking place might report enthusiastically about the opportunities afforded to its residents to take part in a Hollywood production. Meanwhile, the production records from the studio collection might reveal correspondence between location managers and producers about how hiring locally has enabled them to circumvent having to pay union wages, or discussing how to negotiate pay for the locals without 'setting a precedent' for other productions during the war. Though the details of each case study vary considerably, I rely on this triangulation of primary sources in order to investigate, reconstruct, and understand the division of labor within the wartime studio system. In several instances, this division proved to be racialized in its production and exploitation of an alternative, *below* below-the-line workforce, who were denied access to the same protection and representation as those traditionally considered below-the-line.

Chapter Organization

This dissertation comprises five chapters, each of which focuses predominantly on a single production as a case study. Though attendant to the unique circumstances, the choices made, and the problems navigated on set, I argue that these productions should be considered representative of wartime filmmaking more broadly. That is, I chose the case studies on the basis

of their capacity to illuminate the conditions of wartime filmmaking, particularly from a labor perspective. Each of the films I examine were shot and released after the outbreak of war in Europe, and—with the exception of those in Chapter 5—before the Pearl Harbor attack in December 1941. The first two chapters deal with films made during this period but which do not remark on or make any reference to the conflict, while the last three chapters examine the industry's more explicit engagement with the subject of war. Taken together, they offer an insight into how the industry responded to the war in a representational, but—more significantly—in a logistical, financial, and laborious sense, before United States involvement became a material reality rather than likely possibility. As the chapters progress, a theme emerges: that the studios continuously realized the benefits of shooting on location in the United States and recruiting local labor in the process. The increasing untenability—as the producers saw it—of working within the unionized context of Los Angeles became only more apparent as the war went on, and further restrictions were imposed. The lessons learned by the studios, I argue, significantly informed the consolidation and reshaping of the industry in the postwar period.

Chapter 1, "'Made Up and Ready to Work': Race and Onscreen Labor in Studio-era Hollywood," develops a theoretical framework for the consideration of the representational stakes of performing labor onscreen. Given that most of the dissertation focuses on 'offscreen' labor in film production, this chapter takes a moment to consider what is at stake in instances where labor is performed onscreen as part of a narrative, but which points to offscreen conditions and tensions in the process. It begins with an ending—that of *Citizen Kane* (1941)—to bring to light a small, yet suggestive, detail from the film's production records. During a series of reshoots in November 1940, for the concluding moments in which we see Kane's possessions

thrown into the fire (among them Rosebud, his childhood sled), a decision was made to cast the men who do the throwing as "Mexican laborers." No explicit indication was given why this was the case, nor was it remarked on in correspondence between Orson Welles, his collaborators, or anyone close to the film. I use this curious casting decision as a way to think through the relationship between race and labor, race and representation, and between Hollywood, race, and labor together. By highlighting an instance in which members of a marginalized community—Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Los Angeles—perform some kind of labor on screen, blurring the distinction between filmed work and performed work in significant ways. The remainder of the chapter works to contextualize this moment within the context of World War II, and the discursive role played by race and labor, particularly for Mexican Americans in the late 1930s and at the time of the film's making. The prevalence of labor shortages, jurisdictional disputes, and a looming defense effort intensified the representational burden of the Mexican extras performing labor onscreen, in ways that, I claim, inform our understanding of race, labor, and resources in studio-era Hollywood during the early war years.

One of the reasons the performance of labor onscreen was a significant occurrence in the studio-era is that labor itself was something seldom represented at all in Hollywood. Following the Wagner Act in 1935, and the increasing tensions between the studios and the craft guilds, who had rapidly progressed towards unionism throughout the 1930s, films explicitly about labor became extraordinarily rare. For this reason, Chapter 2, "Paramount at the Packard Plant: Hollywood and the Auto Industry During World War II," focuses on Paramount's production of *Reaching for the Sun* (1941), a film about auto factory workers that was shot on location at the Packard Motor Car Company Plant in Detroit. Not only that, but Paramount made the decision to use actual Packard employees as extras in the background of the film's factory scenes. In

addition to marking the rare occurrence of a film about labor, *Reaching for the Sun* also represented a collaboration between the film and auto industry, capturing both only moments before they became fully imbricated within the defense effort. Yet this widely publicized collaboration gave the Packard Plant some much-needed good publicity, masking several of the internal conflicts, discrimination, and racial tensions on the factory floor. I place the production history of *Reaching for the Sun* in the context of these tensions in order to consider the representational stakes of the auto workers 'playing themselves'—that is, standing in for the auto industry at large, during a period marked by racialized labor divisions and leading ultimately to hate strikes. The chapter ends by arguing that the film's casting of white Packard employees to represent the auto industry contributed to the ongoing representational obfuscation of African Americans both on screen and in auto factories themselves.

While neither *Reaching for the Sun* nor *Citizen Kane* make much mention of the war, Chapter 3, "Soft Hands and Blistered Feet: Race, Labor, and the Intensified Efficiency of Wartime Production Culture," examines the industry's direct response to the subject. In particular, it discusses the Senate Investigation into Motion Picture War Propaganda—also known as "Senate Resolution 152"—and how figures in Hollywood used the attacks on the industry and accusations of warmongering to justify their production practices. While scholars have discussed the isolationist campaign against Hollywood's propagandistic efforts to support the Allied war effort, I look at the investigation from a labor perspective by detailing how industry figures such as independent producer Walter Wanger drew on interventionist rhetoric as a way of justifying the harsh labor conditions of wartime filmmaking. Using his production of *Sundown* (1941) as a representative instance of wartime production culture, this chapter describes in detail how the production and location managers exploited the labor of, first, Native

Americans living on the Acoma pueblo where much of the film was shot, and, second, the African American extras recruited from Albuquerque who played Kenyan villagers and soldiers. The decision to shoot the film on location in New Mexico and extract cheaper labor from people of color was, in correspondence between studio officials, increasingly framed as both a necessary circumvention of the challenges of filmmaking, while also logistically burdensome, given the efforts of the Los Angeles-based Screen Actors Guild to advocate for the wellbeing and safety of the extras on set. The chapter ends by turning to the press coverage of lead actress Gene Tierney, and argues that the racialized narration of and commentary on her glamor and performance effectively erased the work of those denied access to the representation of above-the-line stars.

Although framed in the press as novel and motivated by the unique circumstances of its pressingly contemporary, wartime source material, the decision to shoot *Sundown* on location was actually part of a trend in the early war years. More and more productions sought to evade the jurisdictional disputes, work stoppages, and wartime restrictions in Los Angeles and instead move productions out of the area to various parts of the country. Chapter 4, "Walkaway Productions: Local Labor and Location Shooting during World War II," investigates this trend, and argues that the lessons studios learned about recruiting local labor set a precedent for what would become known as 'runaway productions' in the postwar period. First, I focus on the production of *North West Mounted Police* (1940) as an example of some of the growing pains the industry experienced with location shooting; once Paramount had expended all the film's budget on location, they were forced to finish the film in the studio. In the process, however, Paramount were forced to negotiate hiring unionized Native American extras from the talent bureau in Los Angeles, after having worked with 'authentic' Native Americans from reservations nearby to the location. What remains of the chapter turns to the aviation genre as a significant

trend which encapsulated shooting on location and military collaboration. Indeed, Paramount's *I Wanted Wings* (1941) represented a collaboration with the Army Air Corps and War Department which was understood by all parties as both unique and symbiotic. In exchange for recruitment publicity for the Air Corps, the studio received expertise, materials, and personnel provided on site at Randolph, Kelly, and March Air Fields. At the same time that hundreds of studio employees were increasingly bereft of employment in Hollywood, Paramount benefited from shooting on location at the air field and recruiting labor locally—though, as production records indicate, women and people of color were excluded from representation and employment despite the uniquely time- and resource-sensitive conditions of the production.

Chapter 5, "Race, Labor, and Material Resources in Hollywood After Pearl Harbor" examines the immediate impact the United States's entry into the war had on the film industry, especially from a labor perspective. The West Coast location of Los Angeles meant that numerous regulations, rules, and restrictions were imposed on Hollywood studios, which severely affected the aviation genre, since no planes were allowed to be flown in the area. Yet, because combat films became of extra ideological importance after Pearl Harbor—particularly those that represented the Japanese as the enemy—several productions received support and collaboration from the military. Many were shot on location at airfields throughout the country, though still suffered under the restrictions imposed by the federal government. Among the biggest concerns for studios was the sourcing of actors and extras to play Japanese characters, since all previously employed Japanese performers were forcibly placed in internment camps as a result of Executive Order 9066. Productions such as *Air Force* (Warner Bros., 1943) and *Wake Island* (Paramount, 1942), among many others, turned to locally available Chinese or Filipino actors and extras to play the Japanese, and benefited from the Screen Actors Guild's decision to

waive membership fees to alleviate the situation. Paramount's choice to shoot *Wake Island* by the Salton Sea in Imperial Valley had significant implications for the industry at large in its use and exploitation of racialized labor. This is something the studio would rely on only months later when *Five Graves to Cairo* (Paramount, 1943) took a similar approach to sourcing labor and materials from the area as a workaround for restrictions on set construction. I argue that such decisions intensified the industry's desire for, and dependence on, racialized labor, or: those working below below-the-line.

The conclusion looks beyond the war and considers how the lessons learned both before and as a result of the Pearl Harbor attack influenced and shaped production practices. The profound reshaping of the industry following the Paramount antitrust case, the Blacklist, and the economic bust of the industry bleeding into the 1950s, have all been narrated as key components of the industry's transformation, but the events of the kinds of productions I examine in this dissertation, I argue, played just as substantial a role.

Chapter 1

"Made Up and Ready to Work"

Race and Onscreen Labor in Studio-era Hollywood

1.1: Introduction

Jean-Louis Comolli once accused cinema of having "rarely filmed work."[120] While it may be true that the physical act of performing labor is not a frequent subject of representation—certainly in studio-era Hollywood—this is not to say that it never occurs at all. Moreover, when labor is represented onscreen, its novelty and rarity place a burden on the figures tasked with carrying out the representation; that is, when opportunities to represent a subject are slim, the stakes are higher when such an opportunity does arise. This is especially true in instances where race is a factor, and members from a marginalized group are made to 'stand-in' for an entire race, ethnicity, nation, or culture. Richard Dyer has argued that this burden disproportionately befalls people of color, whose appearance on screen is invariably understood as somehow representative of their collective race, ethnicity, or demographic group, in contrast to white characters who are afforded the ability to appear as markers of numerous other roles and designations—a wife or husband, a teenager, a banker, football player, or criminal, all before they are understood *as white* specifically. Dyer writes:

> As long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people. There is no more powerful position than that of being 'just'

[120] Jean-Louis Comolli and Annette Michelson, "Mechanical Bodies, Ever More Heavenly," *October* 83 (1998): 19.

> human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity. Raced people can't do that – they can only speak for their race.[121]

In the study of race and labor in film history, then, representations of work by people of color in studio-era Hollywood provide an opportunity to consider the relationship between race and labor itself, between race and representation, and between Hollywood, race, and labor in tandem. The act of performing the labor in (usually fleeting) moments onscreen while simultaneously occupying these various discursive positions is, in a sense, a form of labor in itself—to account for this, I describe it as a 'representational burden.'

This chapter considers the representational burden placed on those representing labor in a racialized context as part of a rare moment of visibility. That is, I highlight an example in which members of a marginalized community perform labor on screen, and which blurs the distinction between filmed work and performed work in significant ways. I contexualize this example within the outbreak of the Second World War, when labor played a particular discursive role implicating a handful of industries in the process, including the film and defense industries. The heightened stakes of labor shortages, strikes, and a national defense effort intensified the representational burden of those performing labor onscreen, in ways that can inform our broader understanding of race, labor, and resources in studio-era Hollywood during the early war years.

The first half of this chapter considers the multiple theoretical questions at play in thinking about labor and film, broadly considered, including the notion of the image as an archive of labor. Drawing on theories of indexicality and bodily performance, this section establishes a framework for thinking about instances in which labor is performed as part of the narrative itself. The second half begins at the end of RKO's *Citizen Kane* (1941) and considers

[121] Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1-2.

the representational burden of performing Mexican labor in the context of Los Angeles in the 1930s and leading up to the film's production.

1.2: The Representational Stakes of Onscreen Labor

There is a discernible agreement among scholars that labor has largely been overlooked in film studies. That is, the representation of labor and work has not been a topic of sustained interest or engagement in the discipline save for the occasional passing mention, or its discussion as an ancillary subject to other themes such as gender, race, sexuality, and so on. For Keith Wagner, this lacuna is not limited to one country, region, or period, but encompasses film studies on a global scale: "Across geographies and histories, film scholars have proven uncomfortable in trying to understand labor, its movements, and how it is represented across various screenscapes."[122] Elsewhere, Wagner elaborates and expands this claim to encompass not just labor, but class itself, as a subject neglected by the discipline.[123] In an earlier polemic, David E. James shares in Wagner's belief that film studies has overprioritized an emphasis on individual demographic groups at the expense of "a generally accepted theory of class and of its articulation with other forms of structural social division, and hence the absence of any single systematic or comprehensive theory of the way class could inform the study of cinema."[124] For James and others, despite the influence of thinkers such as Karl Marx, the Frankfurt School, and Louis

[122] Keith B. Wagner, "Historicizing labor cinema: recovering class and lost work on screen," *Labor History* 55, no. 3 (2014): 314.
[123] Cramer et al identify a "glaring lack of attention […] to both class and capitalism in the field of film studies." Michael Cramer, Jeremi Szaniawski, and Keith B. Wagner, "Introduction: Always Historicize the Moving Image! Fredric Jameson's Place in Film Studies," in *Fredric Jameson and Film Theory: Marxism, Allegory, and Geopolitics in World Cinema,* eds. Keith B. Wagner, Jeremi Szaniawski, and Michael Cramer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2022), 2.
[124] David E. James, "Introduction: Is There Class in This Text?," in *Hidden Foundation : Cinema and the Question of Class*, edited by David E. James and Rick Berg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 5.

Althusser on film studies, there remains a need for a sustained analysis and engagement with film from a social class framework that would, by extension, encompass the representation of labor.

The majority of scholarship that does purport to take up this mantle is concentrated around the textual representation of a broad range of labor types across narrative, experimental, and documentary examples. For instance, the contributors to Ewa Mazierska's anthology, *Work in Cinema: Labor and the Human Condition* (2013), necessarily adopt a looser definition of what constitutes 'work' in their case studies, which comprise close analyses of the representation of labor in either individual films, the work of a particular director, or trends in national cinemas and genres. As Mazierska explains in the introduction, the collection's examples include "the work of criminals, prostitutes, professional sportsmen, astronauts, as well as affective labor and work on one's own self. Several chapters are also devoted to what is regarded as the opposite of work: unemployment, inactivity, leisure, play, military conflict, love making, and consumption."[125] One of the justifications for casting such a broad net is the contention that, for the most part, cinema has largely neglected labor as something to be represented. Elena Gorfinkel summarizes this contention when she points out that "although work is central to a collaborative, effort-intensive medium, human labor often remains the repressed of filmic representation."[126]

There is a theoretical precedent to this notion which accounts for labor's representational repression by positioning it as antithetic to cinema's objectives as a medium of spectacle and pleasure. Indeed, Comolli claimed that narrative films consistently gravitated toward the

[125] Ewa Mazierska, "Introduction: Work, Struggle, and Cinema," in Ewa Mazierska (ed), *Work in Cinema: Labor and the Human Condition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013): 2.
[126] Elena Gorfinkel, "Introduction," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 53, no. 1 (2012): 43.

spectacular rather than the mundane—what he calls a "cult of surface and of movement as quintessence of spectacle."[127] For Comolli, the narrativization of labor imparts a distortion and deforming of its nature, constituting a representational betrayal of sorts; he writes: "Representing work means de-realizing it, through the estheticization of gesture and of posture, through the body's ludic mechanization and virtualization."[128] As a result, the act of labor is alluded to, but ultimately concealed (or repressed). When it is represented, the formal properties of film require some adjustment in order to accommodate the repetitive, sequential qualities of labor, which is consequentially more common in nonfiction modes—more specifically, what Salomé Aguilera Skvirsky calls "the process genre."[129] Gorfinkel points to *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1895) as a prophetic example of this concealment, and one which

> reminds us that all of cinema is in some sense a spectacularized product of a labor that remains consistently off-scene—be it the labor behind the camera, in the bodies placed before it, or in those exertions that evade its view, transpiring offscreen, out of frame, before, after, and beyond it.[130]

Accordingly, Comolli also highlights the film as exemplary of cinema's predisposition toward spectacle and entertainment; he goes as far as to suggest that the women leaving the Lumière factory are becoming future spectators in the process, as they leave the mundanities of work in seek of pleasure.[131] To summarize: there is a strand of thinking that attributes cinema's inherent features as a narrative medium with a penchant for the spectacular as principal reasons for the overlooking of labor as a subject worthy of representation.

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[127] Comolli and Michelson, "Mechanical Bodies," 19.
[128] Comolli and Michelson, "Mechanical Bodies," 21.
[129] Skvirsky describes the genre as "the sequentially ordered representation of someone making or doing something." Salomé Aguilera Skvirsky, The Process Genre: Cinema and the Aesthetics of Labor (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020): 2.
[130] Gorfinkel, "Introduction," 43.
[131] Comolli and Michelson, "Mechanical Bodies, Ever More Heavenly," 19.

Despite Comolli's insistence that narrative cinema is incompatible with an authentic representation of labor, by reading against the grain of a film's design we can begin to trace the labor indexed by its images. Indeed, recent work by Kartik Nair, for instance, writing outside of a Hollywood context, has taken up questions of indexicality to read a film's *mise-en-scène* as an archive of production labor.[132] While I do not mean to open a lengthy engagement with classical film theory to ponder questions of the medium's indexical qualities, some parsing is necessary to posit this mode of reading for labor as fundamentally reparatory (and thus necessary).

Indexicality is a fundamental—if not always explicitly central—component to the understandings of film of two theorists commonly associated with the term: André Bazin and Siegfried Kracauer. Both locate the medium's power and significance in its photographic roots; for Bazin, the medium's very "raw material is the photograph"; for Kracauer, too, the fundamental property of film is its photographic nature, which makes it "uniquely equipped to record and reveal physical reality and, hence, gravitates toward it."[133] By explicitly relating the medium's essence to photography, these theorists characterize the cinematic image as a trace of the physical world, which relies on Charles Sanders Peirce's notion of the index as essentially material.[134]

To Kracauer, the cinema is, at its core, a revealing mechanism. Like other scientific instruments such as a microscope, telescope, or x-ray machine, the camera is a tool that facilitates an increased level of perception, bringing into view "things normally unseen."[135] In

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[132] See, for instance, Kartik Nair, *Seeing Things: Spectral Materialities of Bombay Horror* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2024).
[133] André Bazin, *What Is Cinema?*, trans. Timothy Barnard (Montreal: Caboose, 2009), 118; Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), 28.
[134] Peirce characterized the indexical sign as bearing a material connection with what it signifies: it is "physically connected with its object" in the sense that this connection produces a signifier (such as a footprint, a bullet wound, or a photograph). Charles Sanders Peirce, *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings*. *Vol. 2 (1893-1913*), eds. Peirce Edition Project (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1998), 9.
[135] Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 46.

this process of perception, and the redemption of physical reality, however, there are other material processes that necessarily remain concealed to facilitate such an experience. By this understanding, while the cinematic image is indexical of a particular object or event in a materially binding way, it is generally *not* indexical of various other things upon which it relies to exist, such as labor. Despite both Bazin and Kracauer's insistence on the photographic process as somehow automated and thus freed from the confines of human intervention, any materialist analysis of the cinema must contest this characterization in the interest of studying its physical presence in and impact on the world.[136] To take the medium's materiality as less of a given fact that presents itself to us, but rather as an indicator of wider processes, is one way in which the insights of classical film theorists like Bazin and Kracauer can be put to more explicitly political use in the context of indexicality and labor.

For example, the method of historical materialism as developed by Karl Marx is based on a perception of things as bearers of processes; Marx was only interested in material things to the extent that they informed his understanding of such processes. Part of the difficulty, for him, was that most things do not openly convey or offer up the processes that facilitated their existence (such as labor), and often actively conceal them. The commodity, the use-value of which incorporates an abstracted idea of human labor, "has value only because abstract human labour is objectified or materialized in it."[137] To the extent that we can crudely apply Kracauer and Bazin's teleological definitions of cinema in Marx's economic terms, we might say that for Kracauer, cinema's use-value is in its capacity to redeem physical reality, and for Bazin, it is in

[136] Bazin, for instance, argues that in photography, an image "takes shape automatically, without creative human intervention," Bazin, *What is Cinema?*, 7; Kracauer similarly describes "the intervention of the film camera" in breaking down the barriers that prevent us from perceiving the natural world. Kracauer, *Theory of Film*, 300.
[137] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1,* trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 129.

the preservation and representation of "the essence of things" in all their divinity.[138] In this sense, both theorists' conceptualizations of the medium depend in some ways on its abstraction of the labor upon which it depends. The final image is indexical of a certain material encounter that took place, but not of other (very material) encounters which it nonetheless requires. This is one way in which a purely indexical understanding of cinema is largely predicated on a rendering invisible of the labor that underpins it.

The idea that a commodity or object necessarily abstracts or obscures the labor of which it is a product, and whose value or effect depends on this invisibility is something Raymond Williams productively explores in his essay "The Ideas of Nature." Here Williams historicizes conceptions of nature throughout human thought, focusing in particular on where, how, and if at all humans have seen themselves as part of nature. Williams argues that the cultural perception of certain spaces as natural is based on the idea that they are untouched by humans, an idea which necessarily conceals various forms of human labor to uphold such a perception. He uses simple garden hedges as an example, which are largely considered natural, despite that they require planting, tending, and maintenance in order to *appear* natural and untouched. As he explains, "[a] considerable part of what we call natural landscape […] is the product of human design and human labour, and in admiring it as natural it matters very much whether we suppress that fact of labour or acknowledge it."[139] Although he does not use the term, we might say that, for Williams, the idea of nature is necessarily indexical of the labor that upholds it (because the idea functions as the trace of a material encounter), in the process restricting our view and perception of such labor. In a similar way, the medium-specific understandings of film put

[138] André Bazin, "De Sica: Metteur en Scène," *What is Cinema? Volume II*, trans. Hugh Gray (Oakland: University of California Press, 2005), 69.
[139] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Materialism* (London: Verso, [1980] 2005), 53.

forward by Bazin and Kracauer stress the image as indexical of a material encounter at the expense or, as Williams would say, suppression, of other material encounters.

For much of classical film theory, the essence of the medium lies in what or how it offers the spectator as an experience. Its indexical qualities only matter so much as they are relayed to an audience in some capacity. As a consequence, the necessary labor and resources are absorbed in the process of conveying meaning to an audience and thus made invisible. The impression of film, in other words, obscures and abstracts the often-exploitative labor underpinning its mechanisms. While histories of the film industry have looked to recover invisible labor from the margins of the archive, there has been little theoretical exploration of the ways in which these histories might impact how we read the image itself and in what ways it is complicit in concealing them. The challenge, as described by Hannah Frank, is ultimately to think about how "our knowledge of the labor process comes into conflict with our aesthetic experience of the films themselves."[140] One way to accomplish this is to historicize the material conditions under which filmed labor was solicited and performed in production histories. In other words, to understand the mechanisms by which labor is concealed and rendered visible, it is necessary to reflect on instances of comparably 'visible' labor.

Although a substantial amount has been written about acting and performance as forms of labor, my focus in this chapter is on a more specific example whereby a form of work is performed as part of the narrative, but for which there is little distinction for the performer between 'performing' such work in an actorly capacity or simply carrying out the work in front of a camera. In other words, I mean to distinguish between the performance *of* labor, and simply performing labor onscreen. While it has been established that "the history of cinema offers a rich

[140] Hannah Frank, *Frame by Frame: A Materialist Aesthetics of Animated Cartoons* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 5.

archive of representations of labor," instances in which labor is authentically performed by workers themselves can help to re-open conversations about indexicality, realism, and the notion of the image as archive.[141] As Gorfinkel argues, "when actual labor appears in the image—reflexively, spectacularly, or in a register of realism—it bears its visibility as a self-designated supplement, as excess, as an index of a kind of authentic surplus, even if a denigrated one."[142] Yet an important if underdiscussed component of these representations is performance. When such labor "appears in the image," who is performing it, and under what conditions? Is it possible to 'perform' labor, as opposed to simply 'laboring' in front of a camera?

In her work on the effort of the performer onscreen, Lucy Fife Donaldson considers how films mediate our engagement with the body of the actor as both an element of the *mise-en-scène*, and a character as part of the diegesis. While it may seem a straightforward concept that the character carries out a narrative action, and the performer dramatizes the event, when it comes to performing labor itself, the distinction is not as clear. As Donaldson points out, film is "a medium where the gap between the processes of production and our perception of and response to what we see on-screen, between perceived and actual effort, could be vast."[143] Elsewhere, Donaldson has described the "clash between rhetorical (filmed) body and actual body" as "not an ontological split between behaviour and thought/intention, but rather a material or sensorial doubling."[144] It is my intention in what remains of this chapter to think through some of these questions in the context of studio-era Hollywood, particularly approaching and during the Second World War, when labor issues and the war industry featured more frequently as

[141] Karen Pinkus and John David Rhodes, "From the Editors Cinema: Labor," *Diacritics* 46, no. 4 (2018): 5.
[142] Gorfinkel, "Introduction," 45.
[143] Lucy Fife Donaldson, "Effort and Empathy: Engaging with Film Performance," in *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative Cultural Practices*, edited by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), 164.
[144] Lucy Fife Donaldson, "The Work of an Invisible Body: The Contribution of Foley Artists to On-Screen Effort," *Alphaville: Journal of Film and Screen Media* 7 (2014), 1.

sources of discourse. To accomplish this, I turn to an instance where onscreen labor carries with it a representational burden—that is, the onscreen performance of labor by a marginalized, racialized group imbued with particular stakes. My aim is to consider what was at stake in such an occurrence where labor is performed onscreen as part of the diegesis, and what those instances can tell us about the medium's broader relationship to labor itself.

1.3: Mexican Laborers in *Citizen Kane*

In the famous final moments of *Citizen Kane*, we see a group of men in the Xanadu cellar throwing the possessions of the late Charles Foster Kane into the fire (Figure 1.1). Among those possessions, of course, is Rosebud, Kane's childhood sled, and the missing piece of the puzzle that makes up the entire film's narrative. Much has been written about the significance of this prop: Laura Mulvey described it as encapsulating "the central enigma of Kane himself" and "a semiotic riddle which will not be resolved until the end" while Noël Carroll considered in detail the possible interpretations of Rosebud's meaning and significance.[145] For all that is made of the sled itself, though, the men who transport and dispose of it in the fire are hardly ever mentioned. They are not named characters, but rather anonymous workers dutifully carrying out the task of discarding the contents of the Xanadu estate. In short, their identities do not play a role in the story, and yet they are physically central to the most climactic of reveals. One might say that their bodies are conflated with the materials they handle, and serve as physical vessels of a narratively significant prop more than they do as human characters with any real agency.

[145] Laura Mulvey, *Citizen Kane* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992), 17, 66; Noël Carroll, *Interpreting the Moving Image* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 153-165.



Figure 1.1: "Mexican Laborers" throw the remaining possessions of the late Charles Foster Kane into the fire. From *Citizen Kane* (RKO, 1941).

The film's production records, however, tell a subtle but suggestive story that complicates the relegation of these men to less than a footnote in the film's illustrious history. On October 21, 1940, extras were filmed as workmen in the Xanadu cellar on Stage 7, burning Kane's possessions. The call sheets identify them only as "bits and extras as required," alongside Paul Stewart, who plays the butler.[146] The fire itself reportedly grew to become a hazard, and as a result these final scenes in the cellar were the subject of a series of reshoots the following

[146] "*Citizen Kane* call sheet, October 21, 1940." Citizen Kane Production Files, RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records, UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 112P.

month.[147] In these reshoots, the extras who burn Kane's possessions were cast as Mexican; indeed, as the call sheets for November 20th and 22nd specify: "3 Mexican extras" and "3 Mex. Laborers," respectively.[148] The laborer who actually throws Rosebud into the fire was played by Harry Vejar, a Portuguese-American actor born in Los Angeles who frequently played (often-uncredited) characters from Central and South America.[149] Vejar was officially listed in cast lists under small parts and bits as "Portuguese Laborer" and paid $25 a day.[150] The casting of smaller roles and extras as people of color was a routine industrial practice during the studio era, and a way to signal certain types of onscreen labor as menial. *Citizen Kane* itself demonstrates this elsewhere, with the casting of a "colored laborer" to play one of the workmen loading boxes for Xanadu shown in the film's newsreel montage.[151] Yet the shift from a generic description of "extras" and "laborers" to one that specifies their nationality indicates something more deliberate.

The studio records and several books about the film characterize its production—particularly the latter stages—as hasty, rushed, and carried out under extreme pressure from RKO. For instance, according to Harlan Lebo, many of the boxes and crates the camera ominously tracks over moments before the fireplace scene were "gathered from the studio and from nearby junkyards and fruit stands in LA by Diego Silvera's staff of prop men."[152] Among

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[147] Harlan Lebo, *Citizen Kane: A Filmmaker's Journey* (Santa Monica: Angel City Press, 2022), 192.
[148] "*Citizen Kane* call sheet, November 20, 1940." Citizen Kane Production Files, RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records, UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 112P; "*Citizen Kane* call sheet, November 22, 1940." Citizen Kane Production Files, RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records, UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 112P.
[149] Among his diverse roles were "Mexican guest" in *Coronado* (1935); "Citizen Who Speaks No English" in *Miracles for Sale* (1939); "Half-Breed Archer" in *North West Mounted Police* (1940); "Indian tourist" in *The Bribe* (1949); "Sheik" in *The Desert Song* (1953); and "Spanish Man in Café" in *Holiday for Lovers* (1959).
[150] "Citizen Kane Cast List," Actors Contracts. RKO "Welles Files" microfilm, [1940s]. Richard Wilson – Orson Welles Papers, 1930-2000. Box 20, Roll #6. University of Michigan Special Collections Library.
[151] "*Citizen Kane* call sheet, December 9, 1940." Citizen Kane Production Files, RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records, UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 112P. I owe thanks to Harlan Lebo for helping to identify the shots that correspond with this particular call sheet.
[152] Lebo, *Citizen Kane: A Filmmaker's Journey*, 165.

the reasons for the production's going over time and budget were holdups regarding the use of miniatures, which were subject to Welles's approval and held by art director Perry Ferguson while Welles was out of the city for three weeks.[153] Indeed, despite Welles's battle with the studio over control of the film, even in its latter stages, many aspects of the production were dependent on his clearance and approval. The seemingly insignificant stipulation that the extras should be Mexican, which has largely escaped the attention of the wealth of scholarship produced about the film, is thus suggestive, I argue, of another story—one hidden in plain sight.

That the nationality of the extras is not alluded to diegetically means that their visual appearance in the film and the stipulation on the call sheet are the only indicators of their being Mexican. Would we read the characters as Mexican without the knowledge that their roles were recast as such? This raises a difficult question about relying on visual markers of race and ethnicity, which, in the case of Mexicans in the United States, has had a troubled and complex history. For instance, Laura E. Gómez writes about the historically ambiguous racial status of Mexicans:

> Yet it was precisely the ambiguity of Mexicans' racial status that positioned them to play a role as an intermediate group, between whites and non-white groups like blacks and Indians. Mexicans' status as a racially mixed group made it possible both for some Mexicans to occupy an "off-white" position and for the group overall to be classified as an inferior "mongrel" race. It may well have been the variations among Mexicans—due partly to perceptible differences in the extent of indigenous versus Spanish ancestry and partly to how individual Mexicans performed their racial identity that placed Mexicans as a group in an ambiguous racial position within the U.S. racial terrain.[154]

[153] Verne Walker, Letter to J.R. McDonough and Sid Rogell, "Citizen Kane," December 14, 1940. "Production Matters, Clearances." Richard Wilson – Orson Welles Papers, 1930-2000. Box 20, Roll #6. University of Michigan Special Collections Library.
[154] Laura E. Gómez, *Manifest Destinies: The Making of the Mexican American Race*, second edition (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 62.

Other scholars have pointed to the wide variation in skin-tone among Mexicans as a contributing factor to their historically ambiguous racial status in the United States.[155] Yet as Alexandra Minna Stern argues, the use of external markers such as skin color to categorize race dwindled by the 1920s when a renewed emphasis on classification via genetic ancestry "resulted in the passage of stringent immigration laws and quotas based on census figures, a solidification of most ethnic Europeans into the 'melting pot' of 'white,' and the concomitant extrusion of Asians and Mexicans to the domain of racial otherness."[156] As a consequence, Welles's specification of the extras' nationality should be understood alongside the evolving racial status of Mexican Americans at the time of the film's production and release—on the cusp of the United States' involvement in the Second World War. In what follows, I frame this casting decision within the backdrop of Mexican American labor and civil rights discourses in the 1930s in order to better contextualize the representational burden undertaken by the extras, both within the film industry at large and in Los Angeles.

1.4: Mexican American Civil Rights in Los Angeles

The 1930s were a fraught time to be of Mexican descent in Los Angeles. Although Mexican migration to the United States—especially to California—was not a strictly 20th century phenomenon, various factors in the first three decades led to a substantial influx.[157] Following

[155] Natalie Molina, *How Race Is Made in America: Immigration, Citizenship, and the Historical Power of Racial Scripts* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2014), 43-67; Edward E. Telles and Vilma Ortiz, *Generations of Exclusion: Mexican Americans, Assimilation, and Race* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2008), 211-237; Justin D. García, "You Don't Look Mexican!" My Life in Ethnic Ambiguity and What It Says About the Construction of Race in America," *Multicultural Perspectives* 15, no. 4 (2013): 234-238.
[156] Alexandra Minna Stern, "Eugenics and racial classification in modern Mexican America," in *Race and Classification: The Case of Mexican America*, edited by Ilona Katzew and Susan Deans-Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), 153.
[157] As George J. Sánchez points out, since Mexico ceded its Northern territories in the Mexican-American War and gold was discovered in 1848, Mexicans had traveled to the US for work. George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican*

the death, displacement, and unrest caused by the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920, the number of Mexicans living and working in the US rose from approximately 100,000 in 1910 to 1.5 million in 1930.[158] In California specifically, by 1930 Mexicans had become the largest foreign-born group in the state at 19 percent.[159] There, they found work in a variety of industries, from railroad construction, to agricultural production, to mining, and others.[160] The impression among many agricultural growers was that this influx of cheap labor was ultimately temporary—following The 1917 Immigration Act, it was argued that Mexicans could more easily return home given the proximity to the US.[161] Yet this was in the face of increasing hostility toward them; while in the 1920s Mexican immigrants were subjected to various Americanization programs by allegedly well-intentioned social workers and educators, the 1930s saw a "reactionary refrain" that brought numerous tensions to the fore.[162] Such tensions predominantly circulated around the value and necessity of the labor Mexicans and Mexican Americans provided to the region. Racialized notions of hard work and docility had helped make the case for Mexican labor in the 1920s, but the economic downturn of the following decade led many to

American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 18.

[158] Ricardo Romo, "Responses to Mexican Immigration, 1910-1930," *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 6, no. 2 (1975): 173.

[159] Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 96.

[160] Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 67-72.

[161] In her discussion of the "birds of passage" characterization of Mexican immigrants following the Mexican Revolution, Camille Guerin-Gonzales writes, "After the 1917 ban on nonwhite immigration, growers promoted the idea that Mexican immigrants would not settle permanently in the U.S. even more vigorously, as a way of reassuring those who opposed the recruitment of Mexican farm workers. Mexicans who returned to their home country each year, growers argued, would not change the racial, cultural, or social character of California." Camille Guerin-Gonzales, *Mexican Workers and American Dreams: Immigration, Repatriation, and California Farm Labor, 1900-1939* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994), 24.

[162] Eduardo Obregón Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003): 12. Pagán describes the lower rates Southern Californian businesses used to compensate "racialized nonwhite laborers" as "Mexican wages." Pagán, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon*, 12.

accuse Los Angeles's Mexican population of occupying jobs for unemployed European-Americans, draining public services, and contributing to crime rates.[163]

In spite of these hostile narratives, however, Mexicans and Mexican Americans had a profound social, cultural, and political effect on Los Angeles during the interwar period, including the burgeoning film industry. At least to some degree, the cheap labor they supplied played a role in Hollywood's industrial development.[164] According to Charles Ramírez Berg, the provision of cheap, non-union labor by Mexican immigrants in the 1910s was a compelling reason for film production companies to move from the east to west coast.[165] One of the principal avenues through which Mexicans contributed to film productions was as extras, given the high supply of their labor, as "representing a substantial workforce prepared to take on the often poorly compensated and dangerous work required of daily players."[166] Part of the reason for the demand for Mexican extras was the industry's preoccupation with setting films in Mexico and Latin America.[167] Indeed, Curtis Marez argues that the Mexican presence in Los Angeles had the dual impact on the film industry of providing cheap labor, as well as "ideas for plots, settings, characters, costumes, and most notably music."[168] Some who started work as extras, such as Emilio Fernández, went on to have careers in the Mexican film industry.[169] Yet this was not the norm; instead, for many Mexicans looking for work in Hollywood, background acting was one

[163] Colin Gunckel, *Mexico on Main Street: Transnational Film Culture in Los Angeles Before World War II* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015), 110.
[164] Curtis Marez, "Subaltern Soundtracks: Mexican Immigrants and the Making of Hollywood Cinema," *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 29, no. 1 (2004): 57.
[165] Charles Ramírez Berg, "Colonialism and Movies in Southern California, 1910-1934," *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies*, 28, no. 1 (2003): 83.
[166] Dolores Tierney, "Finding Emilio Fernández: Mexican Extras and Latinx Representation in Early Sound Era Hollywood," *Hispanic Research Journal* 23, no. 1 (2022): 5.
[167] Laura Isabel Serna, "Atmosphere: Mexican Extras and the Production of Race in Silent Hollywood," *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 63, no. 1 (2023): 105.
[168] Marez, "Subaltern Soundtracks," 57.
[169] For work on Fernández's career as a key director in the Mexican film industry in the 1940s, see Dolores Tierney, *Emilio Fernández: Pictures in the Margins* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

of the few positions they could obtain without facing discrimination—something that the Mexican press and other cultural authorities took severe issue with.[170] Otherwise, some worked as "common laborers," and there is evidence to suggest that a sizeable percentage of carpenters in Hollywood during the silent period were Mexican.[171] But the prevailing theme was devaluation and discrimination—not least due to the often-unstable and precarious nature of extra work, leading many Mexican immigrants to avoid it on this basis alone.[172] Even in above-the-line roles as actors, those who had enjoyed some success starring in silent films in the 1920s faced difficulties with the coming of sound. Dolores del Rio, for instance—who Welles was in a relationship with at the time of *Citizen Kane*—suffered a degree of marginalization with the coming of sound due to her accent being apparent.[173]

Outside of their employment as extras and actors, however, some have argued that the film industry had a negative impact on the livelihood of the Mexican community in Los Angeles. Colin Gunckel argues that Mexican actors facing discrimination from the production of Spanish language films in the 1930s—which favored Spanish actors—contributed to the social and economic difficulties Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Los Angeles faced at the time.[174] Yet

[170] As Gunckel argues, Mexican cultural authorities made the case that "the increased presence of Mexicans as labor and talent [would] alter the nature of onscreen representations." Gunckel, *Mexico on Main Street,* 7.
[171] Berg, "Colonialism and Movies in Southern California, 1910-1934," 83; in Mexican film critic Gabriel Navarro's serialized novel *The City of No Return* (1926-1927), a passage on labor in Hollywood describes the construction workers as "invariably Mexican." Gabriel Navarro, "The City of No Return (1926-27)," in *"There Are No Hispanic Stars!: Collected Writings of a Latino Film Critic in Hollywood, 1921-1939*, edited by Colin Gunckel and Laura Isabel Serna (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center Press, 2023), 171.
[172] In an illuminating anecdote, Berg describes his uncle, who moved to Los Angeles in the 1920s, refusing extra work in favor of picking produce in fields. Berg writes, "For him the movie business was too exotic-and too risky. He needed simple, straightforward labor, a set wage for a day's work. Working in the movies was just too fanciful for someone like him, forced to think first and foremost of survival." Berg, "Colonialism and Movies in Southern California, 1910-1934," 93.
[173] Gunckel, *Mexico on Main Street,* 90; Mary Beltrán, "Dolores Del Rio, the First 'Latin Invasion,' and Hollywood's Transition to Sound," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Culture* 30, no. 1 (2005): 55–85. For more on the subject of Latino stardom in Hollywood, see Clara E. Rodriguez, *Heroes, Lovers, and Others: The Story of Latinos in Hollywood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
[174] Gunckel, *Mexico on Main Street*, 105-109.

before this, the film industry's expansion in the 1910s and 1920s itself had topographical implications for Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the city. Marez claims that the Mexican presence in the city prompted early production companies to retreat to the safer enclosures of studios, in what he considers "precursors of the white-flight gated communities that characterize parts of contemporary Southern California."[175] Indeed, Mexicans had resided in the central city neighborhood of Sonoratown before they were forced to relocate east across the Los Angeles River to areas such as Boyle Heights, Brooklyn Heights, and Belvedere, where they faced housing discrimination and other issues.[176] In the public sphere, Mexicans and Mexican Americans were often excluded from restaurants, swimming pools, and movie theaters, which often branded signs stating "No Dogs or Mexicans allowed."[177] If they were not barred altogether, Mexicans were made to sit in the segregated gallery with African Americans.[178] There, they would engage with the often-stereotypical representations of Mexico and Latin America produced by Hollywood, meanwhile living with the material effects of the industry's expansion in the city.

The pattern of increasing marginalization that developed in the first decades of the twentieth century had an enormous impact on the cultural perception of Mexicans in Los Angeles. For some, the subjugation of the Mexican community was a foundational component of not only the film industry's development, but the ideological formation of the city "as an urban

[175] Marez, "Subaltern Soundtracks," 57.
[176] Berg, "Colonialism and Movies in Southern California, 1910-1934," 80. For more on the Mexican American community in East Los Angeles, see Ricardo Romo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).
[177] David G. Gutiérrez. *Walls and Mirrors: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the Politics of Ethnicity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1995), 131.
[178] Laura Isabel Serna, *Making Cinelandia: American Films and Mexican Film Culture before the Golden Age* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 190-192. Serna's work is part of an excellent group on the spectatorship of Mexican immigrants in Los Angeles, including Colin Gunckel, "Ambivalent Si(gh)tings: Stardom and Silent Film in Mexican American" *Film History* 29, no. 1 (2017): 110-139; Jan Olsson, "Hollywood's First Spectators: Notes on Ethnic Nickelodeon Audiences in Los Angeles," *Aztlán: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 26, no. 1 (2001): 181–196.

white spot [that] relied perhaps paradoxically on the simultaneous presence and disavowal of a racialized or immigrant working class."[179] Laura Isabel Serna explains:

> White American social workers, social scientists, and politicians also thought about Mexican migrants' encounters with cinema in racial terms. […] Journalists and social scientists alike ascribed a set of characteristics—laziness, filthiness, immorality, and low mental functioning—to migrants, declaring them racially unfit for citizenship.[180]

In that respect, the presence of Mexicans and Mexican Americans in Los Angeles can be understood in paradoxical terms: essential for industrial development in the labor they provided, as well as for the discursive production of otherness—yet simultaneously a problem of increasing seriousness that demanded resolution. As Gunckel summarizes: "Whether as industry labor, working-class immigrants, or textual figures, Mexicans faced erasure and invisibility."[181] Evidently, what remained central to the perception and understanding of the Mexican community in Los Angeles was the film industry, from production to exhibition and cultural circulation.

As much as Los Angeles's Mexican community might have been excluded from and at times exploited by the film industry, this is not to say they were without allies in Hollywood. In fact, Welles was one of the most prominent supporters of Mexican American civil rights in the industry, particularly regarding labor—all of which helps to better contextualize the casting decision in the *Citizen Kane* reshoots. Throughout the 1930s, Mexican American activist groups had sought support from a host of institutions and sources, but the financial power and media savvy of Hollywood's left-leaning contingent were among the most influential. Writing about Hollywood's ties with *El Congreso*—a labor and civil rights coalition supporting the Latino community in California, Zaragosa Vargas argues: "The alliance of the Peoples' Congress with

[179] Gunckel, *Mexico on Main Street*, 5.
[180] Serna, *Making Cinelandia*, 188.
[181] Gunckel, *Mexico on Main Street*, 89.

this Hollywood faction was essential to the Mexican American struggle for racial justice in Los Angeles."[182]

A central figure in fostering this productive connection was Josefina Fierro de Bright, a Mexican American activist who grew up in Los Angeles and had already become one of the main organizers of *El Congreso* at age 18.[183] Yet before her involvement with *El Congreso*, she had "cultivated connections to Hollywood in order to rally filmmakers around Mexican immigrant causes and to influence movie depictions of Mexicans."[184] Defense Committee Secretary Alice Greenfield McGrath accused Fierro de Bright of forging an alliance between the "three Communist parties" in Los Angeles, namely Hollywood, the labor movement, and "the neighborhoods."[185] Among these connections were Orson Welles, Dolores del Rio, Anthony Quinn, Katherine de Mille, Dalton Trumbo, and Fierro de Bright's husband, screenwriter John Bright, co-founder of the Screen Writers Guild (and who would later be blacklisted).[186] Bright helped to facilitate his wife's Hollywood collaborations, and had long been an advocate of Mexican American civil rights. He signaled his support by speaking at conventions, offering filmmaking advice to Mexican labor groups, and donating funds to causes across the country.[187] For instance, he notably joined the appeal for the Albuquerque national convention scheduled in

[182] Zaragosa Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights: Mexican American Workers in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 186.
[183] Mario T. García, *Mexican Americans: Leadership, Ideology & Identity, 1930-1960* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 155.
[184] Marez, "Subaltern Soundtracks," 59; García, *Mexican Americans*, 156.
[185] Quoted in Gigi Annette Peterson, "Grassroots Good Neighbors: Connections between Mexican and United States Labor and Civil Rights Activists, 1936—1945," PhD Dissertation (University of Washington, 1998), 207.
[186] Marez, "Subaltern Soundtracks," 63; García, *Mexican Americans*, 156; Shana Bernstein, *Bridges of Reform: Inrerracial Civil Rights Activism in Twentieth-century Los Angeles* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 88.
[187] For example, in May 1942 Bright was approached by representatives of *Consideracion de Trabajadores Mexicanos,* a Mexican labor organization, "to learn the technique of making films for civilian education in fire fighting, air raid precaution, first aid, airplane identification, and in various forms of intelligence." From "Mexican Labor Reps. Seek Film Making Techniques," *The Film Daily*, May 27, 1942, 6.

March, 1939, which aimed to address discrimination faced by the Spanish-speaking, alongside novelist Upton Sinclair and Herbert Biberman of the Screen Director's Guild.[188]

One of Fierro de Bright's first high-profile successes as an activist was not only supported by the Hollywood milieu she had surrounded herself with (including Welles), but played a key role in facilitating her involvement with *El Congreso*. In 1938 she led a boycott of the Eastside Brewery in Los Angeles which had become notorious for refusing to hire Mexican workers, despite Mexicans forming one of the largest customer bases for their beer. With financial backing from Bright, Welles, Quinn, and Del Rio, Fierro de Bright spread word of the boycott in a radio broadcast on a Spanish-language station. Welles, of course, was no stranger to the power of radio and very likely offered counsel regarding its uses.[189] In response to the boycott, the brewery U-turned on its discriminatory hiring policies and agreed to sponsor a regular radio program for Fierro de Bright to continue reaching the city's Mexican community.[190]

As a result, she caught the attention of Luisa Moreno, a Guatemalan-born labor dealer from New York's garment district, who founded *El Congreso* and quickly recruited Fierro de Bright. In Moreno's eyes, Fierro de Bright's radio reach could help to unify the various Spanish-speaking communities in the city.[191] And she was right: not long after the Eastside Brewery boycott, Fierro de Bright was at the center of attention again when she formed a bridge between *El Congreso* and the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee in 1942, enabling her to support the

[188] García, *Mexican Americans*, 148-149.
[189] For more on Welles's radio career, including the infamous *War of the Worlds* broadcast, see Paul Heyer, *The Medium and the Magician: Orson Welles, the Radio Years, 1934-1952* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).
[190] García, *Mexican Americans*, 156.
[191] Joseph A. Rodríguez, "Becoming Latinos: Mexican Americans, Chicanos, and the Spanish Myth in the Urban Southwest," *Western Historical Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (1998): 169.

families of the defendants in the high-profile People v. Zammora trial.[192] The trial served as an excuse for many to exacerbate existing biases toward Mexicans.[193] Welles and Bright publicly expressed their support for the Mexican community throughout the trial, with Welles providing a forward to a pamphlet about the case. In it, Welles expresses sympathy for the Mexican community's experience with police brutality and prejudice, and relates the broader perception of Mexicans in the United States as antithetic to the war effort:

> The fellas down in our section—there's nothing bad about them, no more than anywhere else. But things are tough. There's nowhere to go—no place to play games—or nothing—. If the cops catch you on the street after 8 o'clock, usually they run you in—or rough you up, anyway. If you look like a Mexican you just better stay off the street, that's all—. And where can you go? It's real bad. I'm going into the Army, and it's all right with me. I'm glad to be going. Things'll be better in the Army, and I'm glad of the chance to fight. It makes it hard, though, for a lot of our fellas to see things that way. They want to fight for their country, all right—but they want to feel like it's their country.[194]

Undoubtedly the most significant testament to Welles's political sympathies with the Mexican population both in Los Angeles and the whole country, the pamphlet and the entire case represented a culmination of growing tensions and hostility that crystallized and intensified during the war. Evidently, Welles had a level of interest and investment in the subject that very plausibly could have informed the casting decision in the *Citizen Kane* reshoots.

Beyond his documented support for such causes and his friendship circles, however, is another component which further substantiates Welles's connection with Mexican American civil and labor rights: William Randolph Hearst. It is well-established by scholars and historians

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[192] Catherine S. Ramírez, *The Woman in the Zoot Suit: Gender, Nationalism, and the Cultural Politics of Memory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009), 31. For a comprehensive account of Fierro de Bright's involvement with the Sleepy Lagoon trial, see Carlos Larralde, "Josefina Fierro and the Sleepy Lagoon Crusade, 1942-1945," *Southern California Quarterly* 92, no. 2 (2010): 117-160.

[193] As Sarah M.A. Gualtieri points out, "The prosecution insisted on referring to the young men as members of a 'gang' and repeatedly referred to them as Mexican as if to underscore their foreignness." Sarah M.A. Gualtieri, "The Syrian of Sleepy Lagoon: Ethnic Coalitions and Archival Silence," *American Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (2019): 425.

[194] Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee, "The Sleepy Lagoon Case: With a Forward by Orson Welles," 1943. UCLA Department of Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library.

that the character of Charles Foster Kane was to some degree inspired by Hearst, the media tycoon who owned the *San Francisco Examiner*—in fact, Hearst's empire famously attempted to force RKO to shelve the film before it could be released.[195] *Friday* published a detailed review of the film highlighting the parallels between Kane and Hearst's own life.[196] One aspect of Hearst's media career not usually discussed in relation to *Citizen Kane* but which can help illuminate the casting decision is his long-standing hatred of Mexicans. At least since the First World War, Hearst was convinced of the threat that "Japan and Mexico might sweep across Los Angeles's undefended borders and defile the region," an idea propagated by the *Los Angeles Examiner*, another newspaper Hearst owned.[197] Although Hearst held animosity and hatred for the Japanese and Mexicans (he was adamant the 'Yellow Peril' should have been taken more seriously), he had land investments in Mexico that were threatened by the Mexican revolution.[198] Indeed, Hearst's Chihuahua Province ranch was seized and looted by raiders during the Pancho Villa Expedition in 1916-1917, "to the indifference of the government and to Hearst's outrage."[199]

As a result, Hearst utilized his media empire to exacerbate anti-Mexican sentiments in California during the interwar period. In 1916 Hearst collaborated with filmmaking duo The Wharton Brothers to produce the serial, *Patria* (1916), which dramatizes a Japanese-sponsored

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[195] Robert L. Carringer, *The Making of Citizen Kane, Revised Edition* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1996), 111-115.
[196] "Orson Delivers," *Friday* 2, no. 3, January 17, 1941, 24-27. Welles later published a response to the review in which he corrected some journalistic errors and clarified his position on the matter in a diplomatic fashion. See "Orson Welles Tells His Side of the 'Citizen Kane' Controversy," *Friday* 2, no. 7, February 14, 1941, 8-9.
[197] Maxwell Johnson, *A Connected Metropolis: Los Angeles Elites and the Making of a Modern City, 1890-1965* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2023), 65.
[198] Johnson, *A Connected Metropolis*, 73-75. For an authoritative account of the anti-Japanese and anti-Mexican paranoia that Hearst helped to fuel, see David Tamayo, "The Perilous Borderlands: The Role of Anti-Japanese Hysteria in American Efforts to Annex Baja California, 1900-1942," *California History* 97, no. 2 (2020): 59-87. Tamayo argues that a handful of interest groups weaponized Japanese immigrant presence in Baja California to drive their efforts to annex the peninsula, and to prompt the US government to make a counteroffer for the land.
[199] Barbara Tepa Lupack, *Silent Serial Sensations: The Wharton Brothers and the Magic of Early Cinema* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020), 164.

Mexican invasion of the United States.[200] So incendiary and racially-motivated was the film that Woodrow Wilson requested that Hearst and the Wharton brothers removed *Patria* from circulation.[201] Another reason Hearst fanned the flames of anti-Mexican paranoia was the perception that Mexicans brought drugs—particularly marijuana—with them across the border. In the 1930s, Hearst supported first commissioner of the U.S. Treasury Department's Federal Bureau of Narcotics Harry Anslinger's Marijuana Tax Act of 1937, and his newspapers "heightened fears surrounding the substance and the Mexican laborers who allegedly introduced the drug to unassuming White adolescents."[202] The *San Francisco Examiner*, for instance, represented Mexicans with "disease-tinged verbiage that described illegal immigrants as rodent-like."[203]

In the broader context of the increased hostility toward Mexicans on the cusp of the United States's entry into the war, then, the significance of a Hollywood film critiquing the life of a media tycoon that virulently hated Mexicans was certainly noticed. Not least among Latino labor leaders and activists, such as Roberto Galvan, who supported the Hearst boycotts in Southern California in the 1940s. In fact, not only did Galvan and other Latino workers interpret *Citizen Kane* as a commentary on Hearst, but Galvan screened the film for Hispanic laborers in San Diego.[204] While the film has rarely been understood as a comment in support of Mexicans

[200] Berg, "Colonialism and Movies in Southern California, 1910-1934," 87.
[201] Johnson, *A Connected Metropolis*, 77. For more on the controversy and response to *Patria* by Woodrow Wilson, his secretary of commerce William Redfield, and Secretary of State Robert Lansing, see Louis Pizzitola, *Hearst Over Hollywood: Power, Passion, and Propaganda in the Movies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 157-161.
[202] Brian Denham, "Oriental Irritants and Occidental Aspirants: Immigrant Portrayals in Hearst Magazines, 1905-1945," *Journalism & Communication Monographs* 24, no. 1 (2022): 13.
[203] Melita M. Garza, "Framing Mexicans in Great Depression Editorials: Alien Riff-Raff to Heroes," *American Journalism* 34, no. 1 (2017): 39.
[204] Carlos Larralde, "Roberto Galvan: A Latino Leader of the 1940s," *The Journal of San Diego History* 52, nos. 3-4 (2006): 157-158.

and Mexican Americans, its exhibition by Latino labor activists, coupled with the decision to recast the extras that dispose of Kane's possessions as Mexican, can offer an alternative reading.

It would be fair to say that, more than a lot of industry figures, Welles was particularly invested in Mexican American civil rights and labor issues. Yet I want to express caution at attributing the casting decision to Welles for 2 reasons: 1) it is hard to say for certain that it was his decision, and to account for his motivations, and 2) because I intend to avoid the perpetuation of a 'white savior' narrative that emphasizes the nobility of a white man's making a statement in support of a marginalized community. Doing so risks eliding the experiences and labor of the men in the film, and—by extension—of Mexican Americans in 1930s Los Angeles. In the preface to *The Making of Citizen Kane*, Robert Carringer characterizes the prevailing historical narrative about the film as being firmly the product of one man's vision.[205] Though Pauline Kael famously launched an attack on this sentiment in 1971, the persistent interest in the Cahiers critics and of auteurist film theory kept afloat the notion that the story of *Kane* represented an age-old battle (and ultimately victory) between maverick artist and corporate power.[206] This is evidenced by the subtitle of Harlan Lebo's book on the film—*A Filmmaker's Journey*—and even the housing of Welles's papers in the University of Michigan's Screen Arts *Mavericks* and Makers collection.[207] Carringer, in contrast to this narrative, sets out his book's goal of emphasizing the collaboration that underpinned the film's making and success. He defines a collaborator as "anyone who makes a distinguishable contribution to a film—from the writer or cinematographer down through the ranks to the wardrobe manager and casting director and even

[205] Carringer, *The Making of Citizen Kane*, ix-xi.
[206] Herman J. Mankiewicz, Orson Welles, and Pauline Kael, *The Citizen Kane Book: Raising Kane* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1971).
[207] Lebo, *Citizen Kane: A Filmmaker's Journey*.

the still photographer assigned to the set."[208] Given that the Mexican extras are the ones who effectively close out the narrative and solve—for the audience at least—the central mystery, it would be fair to call this a distinguishable contribution.

In her study of Emilio Fernández's appearances as an extra in early sound films, Dolores Tierney comments on the methodological implications of centering extras in film histories:

> However, despite their ubiquity on screen, film studies has yet to develop an overarching framework for thinking through the role extras might also play beyond passively embodying stereotypes, to think how they may actively construct the ethnoscapes of the films in which they appear and how their performances might signify beyond straightforward stereotype. In other words, studies have yet to think through the uses to which extras are put in films' overarching racial and representational logics.[209]

The representational burden thus bestowed on the Mexican Laborers in the final moments of *Citizen Kane* should be understood as a double bind of sorts: these men played a part in the broader representational context of Mexicans and Mexican labor in the United States (in textual terms), but also in the film industry specifically. That is, the material relationship between Hollywood's development and the livelihood of Mexican immigrants in the city of Los Angeles is somehow implicated and inscribed in their brief appearance in Welles' film. The Mexican Laborers were cast as extras on the call sheets, seemingly characteristic of the preceding contributions to the film industry by Mexicans as described above. But the fact that background acting was historically among the only roles Mexicans and Mexican Americans were able to play in the industry elevates the stakes of their appearance and casting in *Citizen Kane*—raising the question of what laborious contributions to the film industry made by Mexicans were less visible than those onscreen.

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[208] Carringer, *The Making of Citizen Kane*, x.
[209] Dolores Tierney, "Finding Emilio Fernández: Mexican Extras and Latinx Representation in Early Sound Era Hollywood," *Hispanic Research Journal* 23, no. 1 (2022): 6.

1.5: Conclusion

In this chapter, I have used the brief appearance of Mexican extras in the film to consider the broader implications for the performance of labor onscreen, and the representational burden imposed upon those carrying such semiotic weight. The starting point for this analysis was a call sheet—a rudimentary document found in almost any production file for a film from the studio-era—which in itself highlights some of the pitfalls and affordances of looking for *below* below-the-line labor in studio records. These workers do not have their own folders or files in such records, and thus can only be located and traced in the marginalia of papers either in studio collections, or those of 'noteworthy' individuals like Welles. This is to say that those studying marginalized or racialized labor in Hollywood should not look past ostensibly well-trodden ground: instead, to recall Lisa Nakamura, "really looking" at studio records can bring into plain sight the contributions of workers of color to studio-era productions, and thus film history at large.[210] At the same time, this process depends on an engagement with and simultaneous critique of the logic of production records and studio collections: the use of racialized language, stereotyping, or the omission from record altogether are part of the fabric of studio-era Hollywood, which presents both a challenge and avenue for film historians researching 'invisible' labor.

This chapter has also demonstrated, in microcosm, what is possible by examining the day-to-day logistics of film production as it is legible through production records. That is, although we cannot account for the motivations behind casting decisions or other choices on-set, we can still place those moments within their historical contexts and connect them to what goes on outside and beyond the studio. *Citizen Kane* is, by no coincidence, the only production I

[210] Nakamura, "Indigenous Circuits," 920.

examine in this dissertation that was shot in the studio; the case studies that follow focus on productions either partially or entirely shot on location in the United States during the war. As I will argue, the decision to shoot on location was both motivated by but also heavily impacted below-the-line labor in the film industry. Yet in order to make those claims about the implications of sourcing labor locally while shooting on location, this chapter has served to remind us that studio labor itself was also *sourced locally* from the Los Angeles area, and, as a result, casting decisions like that in *Citizen Kane* cannot be separated from the social and economic challenges facing the communities referenced in those decisions, especially when they were normally excluded from any form of on-screen representation.

The contribution by the Mexican workers to the end of *Citizen Kane* exhibits a circumstantial form of labor—the anonymized trafficking of a dead media tycoon's personal possessions—and thus only gestures toward adjacent and ancillary discourses. It is suggestive of other social processes and the ongoing activism mere miles from the RKO soundstage throughout Los Angeles, but it is only that—a suggestion—and not something called attention to in the text itself. The rare occasion when the subject of labor and its on-screen performance was explicitly represented in Hollywood raises a different set of questions about representational stakes, which I take up in the following chapter on the relationship between the film and automobile industry in the early war years. Specifically, I frame Paramount's production of *Reaching for the Sun* (1941) in the context of Hollywood's general aversion from representing labor in the years approaching the war, and how the logistical decisions made during production both reflect and complicate that aversion. Rather than being burdened with representing a specific group of people on a racial or ethnic basis, as with the Mexican laborers in *Citizen Kane*, representations of labor and industry such as that in *Reaching for the Sun* provide opportunities

to reflect on the imbrication of different industries during the war, and the evolving labor climate in the country.

Chapter 2

Paramount at the Packard Plant

Hollywood and the Auto Industry During World War II

2.1: Introduction

In February 1937, Morris de Camp Crawford—editor of *Women's Wear Daily*—published an article pejoratively likening the General Motors Sit-down strike of 1936-37 with Hollywood's penchant for drama. In it, he compares the negotiation strategies of the auto and men's clothing industry in their respective labor disputes, arguing that the latter party "showed a sad lack of appreciation of the dramatic values involved" and instead focused on ironing out the details of the negotiation.[211] By contrast, Crawford claims, both the workers and their bosses in the auto industry strikes clamored for the front page and made a spectacle of proceedings unbecoming of such a respected industry. Crawford warns the reader of the imminent "danger in these large mob scenes—the extra hands, even in Hollywood, do at times get hurt."[212] If such scenes are needed, he continues, "hire extras from Hollywood. Do not detract from headliners by introducing untrained actors—besides, someone might get the idea that it was serious."[213] That Crawford's reactionary position on the General Motors strike hinges on the use of Hollywood as a rhetorical placeholder for melodrama, frivolity, and spectacle, is significant for two reasons: 1)

[211] M. D. C. Crawford, "Why Not Make Peaceful Labor Tactics Dramatic?" *Women's Wear Daily,* February 19, 1937, 7.
[212] Crawford, "Why Not Make Peaceful Labor Tactics Dramatic?"
[213] Crawford, "Why Not Make Peaceful Labor Tactics Dramatic?"

it signals the stark lack of visibility for Hollywood labor organizations and their various grievances and disputes during this period, so much so that the industry is invoked merely as an image, rather than anything material, and 2) the trivialization of the labor of extras, in particular, points to their palpably low status in the general discursive sphere. In short, it is a comparison between the film and auto industry that is decidedly unflattering for both parties.

In the years that followed Crawford's sarcastic remarks, however, the comparison between Hollywood and the General Motors strike proved to be somewhat short-sighted from the perspective of both Hollywood, the auto industry at large, and the impact the strike had on labor relations across the country. Mere days after an agreement was reached between the United Auto Workers and General Motors, the Conference of Industrial Organizations began their disruptive membership drive in Hollywood as a direct result of the GM sit-down strike. The CIO sought to include in its membership below-the-line workers of various trades, consolidated in a vertical union rather than as part of the American Federation of Labor crafts unions—a move which would have massive consequences for the film industry in the war years.[214] On the auto industry side, historians are in agreement that the GM strike transformed the UAW in size and influence, which only grew during the war.[215] As two of the country's most prominent industries, and whose status and division of labor would undergo substantial revision and evolution during the war, the entanglements between Hollywood and auto companies serve as an instructive indicator of the relationship between labor, resources, and race during this period.

[214] "CIO, Anti AF of L Group, Launches Its Studio Drive," *The Hollywood* Reporter, February 23, 1937, 3.
[215] For accounts of the strike and its legacy, see Sidney Fine, *Sit-down: the General Motors Strike of 1936-1937* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969); Timothy J. Minchin, "Gigantic Struggles: The Battle to Build the United Automobile Workers after the Sit-down Strikes, 1937-1945," *Labor History* 65, no. 1 (2023): 1-22; Jim Pope, "Worker Lawmaking, Sit-Down Strikes, and the Shaping of American Industrial Relations, 1935-1958," *Law and History Review* 24, no. 1 (2006): 45-113.

With that being said, such entanglements were seldom; most collaborations between the two industries were confined to advertising and promotion. For that reason, when the industries did meet within the site of film production, several important issues came to the fore. In this chapter, I use the Paramount production *Reaching for the Sun* (1941) as a case study of the film industry collaborating with the auto industry during a moment before either had gone full throttle with their respective contributions to the defense effort. I focus on Paramount's decision to shoot on location at the Packard Motor Car Company's plant in Detroit and to use auto workers as extras, arguing that the production affords a unique insight into the relationship between the film, auto, and defense industries during the defense program's early stages, while at the same time offering a theoretically productive example of 'performing labor' onscreen.

To do this, I first contextualize the relationship between Hollywood and the auto industry in the years leading up to the war in order to establish *Reaching for the Sun* as a novel collaboration (though not completely without precedent). In doing so, I consider the historical factors that contributed to the film's representation of a labor industry, and the absence of similar narratives in Hollywood at the time. The remainder of the chapter focuses on the production of *Reaching for the Sun* and the studio's dealings with the Packard plant, in the process touching on the broader implications of the decision to shoot certain scenes on location, and others back at the studio. Finally, I place this production history amidst the backdrop of increasing racial tension in the Packard plant and auto industry more broadly, as a way of reconsidering the representational stakes of the workers playing themselves in the film during a period of discriminatory hiring practices, hate strikes, and the racialization of industry labor during the war.

2.2: Hollywood and the Auto Industry

Writing for *Automotive News* in November 1940, Pete Wemhoff enthusiastically described *Reaching for the Sun* as "the first major production ever to utilize the motor industry as its setting."[216] And while elements of its production practices certainly broke new ground in this regard, this was not the first entanglement between the film and auto industries—both on a national scale, but also within Detroit itself. In fact, as early as the 1910s, auto companies had sponsored and produced numerous films for various purposes.[217] For instance, Lee Grieveson explains how several films were produced and distributed in order to assist the development of new road networks in the early twentieth century. Collaborations between the Bureau of Public Roads in the Department of the Interior and the Ford Motor Company, such as *The Road to Happiness* (1924), represented both state investment in infrastructure as well as a vested corporate interest in boosting the consumption of automobiles by building roads (and thus increasing demand). Grieveson dedicates a whole chapter to examining the cinematic exploits of the Ford Motor Company, arguing that, in the early years, film was "integrated directly with the time-motion study integral to the development of the accelerated temporalities of production in mass assembly."[218] Yet the Company's creation of a Motion Picture Department in 1913 shifted the emphasis from time-motion studies to educational films addressing Ford employees. Richard Abel explains that in order to continue to produce the newsreel, by 1914 "the department itself was operating on an assembly line basis with a technical staff of twenty-four men and six

[216] Pete Wemhoff, "Flicker," *Automotive News*, November 18, 1940, 13.
[217] Most scholarship I consult here concerns the film and auto industries of the United States, though such collaborations were of course not limited to one country. For an example from outside the US, see Alain P. Michel, "Corporate Films of Industrial Work: Renault (1916-1939)," in *Films That Work: Industrial Film and the Productivity of Media*, edited by Vinzenz Hediger and Patrick Vonderau (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 167-185.
[218] Lee Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations: Media, Capital, and the Liberal World System* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 16.

cameramen."[219]Abel also notes that several productions from the Ford Company actively supported and contributed to the war effort in World War I.[220] And the Ford Company were not alone: other local production outfits like The Metropolitan Film Company made nonfiction films on behalf of auto companies such as Cadillac, Chrysler, Buick, Hudson, and others.[221]

For Ford, though, operating on a smaller, local scale in Detroit was not enough. Grieveson argues that "Ford's investment in nontheatrical cinema had sought to counter the dominance of Hollywood" but could not compete with its corporate power, which itself was "modeled in part on Fordist mass-assembly practices, [which] marginalized alternative formations of cinema, most clearly by controlling distribution and exhibition and by the actions of its own industrial relations committee, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America."[222] In many respects, the straw that broke the camel's back between Ford and Hollywood was the rampant anti-Semitism Ford espoused in *The Dearborn Independent*.[223] Hollywood's response included exhibitors refusing to show his films, as well as creative retorts, such as Upton Sinclair's writing a book on Ford supported by the United Auto Workers Union—*The Flivver King* (1937)—and, of course, Charlie Chapin's production of *Modern Times* (1936).[224]

Yet in terms of genuine collaboration, most examples—evidenced by the amount of scholarship produced on the subject—concern the production of short, nonfictional, educational,

[219] Richard Abel, *Motor City Movie Culture, 1916-1925* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020), 151.
[220] Abel, *Motor City Movie Culture,* 153.
[221] Abel, *Motor City Movie Culture,* 140.
[222] Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations*, 137.
[223] For a detailed account of Ford's anti-Semitism, see Neil Baldwin, *Henry Ford and the Jews: The Mass Production of Hate* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2001); Leo P. Ribuffo, "Henry Ford and 'The International Jew,'" *American Jewish History* 69, no. 4 (1980): 437–77.
[224] Grieveson, *Cinema and the Wealth of Nations,* 138.

and industrial films by and for auto companies.[225] In other words (and to describe Grieveson's primary focus), much of the emphasis has been on auto companies' uses of film, rather than the film industry's use (or representation) of auto companies. Indeed, before *Reaching for the Sun*, *Modern Times* was perhaps the only high-profile feature production to deal with the auto industry in any meaningful sense. At one point in 1940, screenwriter John Wexley (who would later become central to the industry's war effort contributions when he wrote *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* [1939]) had finished a novel on the auto industry that was picked up by Random House for publication in June, titled "The Man in the Street."[226] Given Wexley's prolific screenwriting career, the novel could have provided Hollywood with an opportunity to grapple with representing the auto industry, but ultimately it was never published.[227]

Instead, most collaborations between the two entities in the years leading up to the war took place in the advertising space, rather than in film production. For instance, in 1936, General Motors and Ford began negotiating with independent producers with the intention of buying negatives of western films that were "gathering dust on exchange shelves" and reshooting scenes to insert their automobiles.[228] The idea was to "have the hero chase the bandits in his trusty

[225] For an example of auto companies sponsoring and collaborating with the film industry on a feature-length scale, see Elizabeth Heffelfinger's account of Wolverine Productions and General Motors' production of *Home Town Story* (1951): Elizabeth Heffelfinger, "*Home Town Story:* General Motors, Marilyn Monroe, and the Production of Economic Citizenship," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 37, no. 3 (2009): 126-136.
[226] "Rambling Reporter," *The Hollywood Reporter*, April 26, 1940, 2.
[227] Indeed, there is curiously little record of the novel and its fate following a series of announcements in the press of its impending publication with Random House. Accounts were given of Wexley's agent taking the draft manuscript to publishers; and in a newspaper segment on films hunting romance in industry, one article noted "Somebody'll buy John Wexley's forthcoming novel on the automobile business." One can only speculate as to why the novel never saw the light of day. A reasonable theory is that Wexley was immensely busy with screenwriting assignments, with Warner Bros. in particular soliciting his work on a project called "Secret Army" that also never came to fruition. Wexler ultimately sought a way out of his contract with Warner Bros. See "Paul Krohner East To Set Fall Play, Book Deals," *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 23, 1940, 2; "Wexley Scripts "Army'; W.B. Wants It Strong," *The Hollywood Reporter*, June 4, 1940, 6; "Films Hunt Romance In Industry," *The Cincinnati Post*, February 15, 1940, 19; "Wexley Asks Warners For Release On Contract," *The Hollywood Reporter*, November 13, 1940, 1.
[228] "Indies Turn Industrial: Motorization Of Westerns Looms As Quickie Makers Are Forced To Seek New Markets," *The Hollywood Reporter*, April 23, 1936, 1.

Chevrolet or Ford, rather than on the back of Thunderhoofs, thus giving the chase fans all the thrills and at the same time letting them absorb a little commercial propaganda."[229] Sponsorships and deals between individual stars and various brands were also commonplace during the studio-era, and the auto industry was no exception. In the late 1930s, for instance, Fred Astaire agreed to represent the Packard Motor Car Company on the radio as part of the Packard Radio Hour. In conjunction with the release of *Swing Time* (1936), the Packard company gave away three new cars to each of the three showmen who conducted the best exploitation campaign for the film.[230] At the local level in Detroit, one collaboration to promote a film brought together the two industries as explicitly as had ever been the case before.

Perhaps most remarkably, this entanglement occurred to promote a film that had little to do with either Detroit or the auto industry. Yet when it was announced that Detroit would host the world premiere of *Disputed Passage* (1939) at the Michigan Theater, Paramount's adaptation of the Lloyd Douglas novel, an elaborate tie-in was planned with the auto industry. Described as the first such tie-in in motion picture history, the premiere brought together "a glittering parade of stars and cars" as the film's stars arrived in 1940 models from several auto companies, allowing audiences a sneak preview of the following year's cars.[231] To plan the event, a Detroit World Premiere Committee was established, given that it was the city's first ever opportunity to host such an occasion. A reviewing stand was constructed in front of the theater for fans to see the stars arrive in 1940 models from Pontiac, Ford, Oldsmobile, Cadillac, Buick, Packard, Plymouth, Hudson and DeSoto cars.[232] Also included were antique models dating back to the first Chevrolet and a one-cylinder Oldsmobile. The parade was designed to coincide with the

[229] "Indies Turn Industrial," 3.
[230] "Theatre Managers, Publicity Men! Win a New Packard Car!" *Motion Picture Herald*, August 29, 1936, 82-83.
[231] "First World Premiere in Detroit Set," *Minneapolis Star-Journal*, October 14, 1939, 5.
[232] "Dorothy Lamour Airmailing Empty Sarong for Premiere," *Detroit Free Press*, October 14, 1939, 2.

Detroit Auto Show days after the premiere, and police estimates reported around 25,000 Detroiters in attendance on the night. Crowds started gathering at 6pm, split between a group of 10,000 on Washington Blvd and 15,000 on Bagley Ave.[233] Coverage of the event focused on the stars and their reception, with one reviewer highlighting the range of demographics united by their desires to get closer to the likes of Dorothy Lamour, John Howard, Akim Tamiroff, and more: "It was Detroit's first premiere and dowagers, debs, and factory workers rubbed elbows outside the theater in the crush of citizens seeking a glimpse of the screen players."[234] Such was the passion of the moment that police lines were broken by the crowds (Fig. 2.1).



Figure 2.1: Police lines broken by movie fans trying to see Dorothy Lamour at the premiere of Disputed Passage. From *Detroit Free Press*, October 20, 1939, 32.

[233] Clarke Wales, "25,000 Jam Detroit Streets for Gala Premiere of Film," *Detroit Free Press,* October 20, 1939, 1.
[234] "Dorothy Lamour Wins Detroit," *State Journal,* October 20, 1939, 14.

Despite issues pertaining to labor and industry not featuring either in the film itself or in the promotional campaign, H. William Klare, chairman of the Detroit World Premiere Committee, was keen to highlight the synergies between the film and auto industries in this groundbreaking collaboration. In fact, Klare went as far as claiming that both industries actively looked out for their employees and local communities. Klare was quoted in an interview as saying:

> Hollywood is the film capital of the world and Detroit the automobile capital. What is more fitting than the two cities join hands as a token of friendliness for both great industries, on which the residents of each city place so much importance? As a matter of fact, the motion picture industry gives support to thousands of workers, responsible men and women of their communities, just as the automobile industry does. Both industries have much in common in that these thousands of citizens of this country look toward both as a means of honest, respectable livelihood, and that both industries in the past have done much to bring progress of thought and living to America and the world.[235]

There is much to unpack here, but of particular relevance to my discussion is the sense of nobility and national reputation that Klare ascribes to both industries. If nothing else, his words serve as an historical index of a particular moment in which Hollywood and the auto industry enjoyed broadly positive public relations, though these were not to last. As the rest of this chapter will demonstrate, the series of discriminatory hiring practices and hate strikes that plagued companies like Packard during the early war years brought the auto industry to national attention for the wrong reasons. As for Hollywood, the Senate Hearing of 1941 and the series of labor strikes that impacted production for numerous studios also complicated the enduringly popular vision of the dream factory. With that said, it important to note that during the early war years, the two industries were far from equals in their size and influence. As Douglas Gomery shows, only through the "so-called Second World War boom" of 1941-6 was the film industry

[235] "Detroit Will Have Dual Premiere; Film, Auto Show," *Indianapolis Star*, October 16, 1939, 12.

able to move into the top ten US industries through its percentage contribution of all US corporate profits (1.5%), meanwhile the wartime restrictions on the automobile industry substantially slowed down its profit rate.[236] Regardless, in 1939, things were rosier for both parties, and the success of Paramount's dealings with the auto industry to promote *Disputed Passage* that Klare alludes to here might well have positively influenced their decision to shoot *Reaching for the Sun* on location at the Packard.

Of course, among the many differences between the two cases was the level of involvement of the auto industry. *Disputed Passage* had next to nothing to do with the subject, and the collaboration represented a strictly promotional tie-in, most likely agreed upon and established after production had concluded. As a coming together of two industries, the subject of labor and the workers involved were conspicuously absent; this was an occasion to marvel at glamorous stars in glamorous cars, and little else. It could very reasonably be argued that this dynamic represented Hollywood's attitude toward labor and industry during this period, which was quite simply to avoid the topic altogether. In what follows, I consider this representational lacuna in more detail in order to set up my discussion of *Reaching for the Sun*.

Several historians have pointed to various historical and industrial factors to explain why so few films—particularly from Hollywood during the studio-era—make an effort to depict everyday work and labor. For instance, in *Working-Class Hollywood*, Steven Ross charts the rise and fall of what he calls "labor-capital films" from the nickelodeon era through to the end of the silent period.[237] According to Ross, before World War I Hollywood produced a number of antiauthoritarian, anticapitalist, and even radical films about working life; yet the number of such

[236] Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System: A History* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 7.
[237] Steven J. Ross, *Working-Class Hollywood: Silent Film and the Shaping of Class in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998): 48.

productions dwindled greatly following corporate consolidation and studio oligopoly. These industrial changes, which shifted Hollywood's focus toward attracting a more unified, mass audience, coupled with the social climate of the red scare and internal labor conflicts within the studios, ushered in a more conservative sensibility that would come to largely characterize the industry throughout the studio-era. It was only following the passing of the Wagner Act in 1935, which provided bargaining units within labor unions a platform to negotiate with their employers in private companies, that mainstream Hollywood enjoyed a brief interest in representing organized labor. As William Puette documents, individual productions such as Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times*, Warner Bros.'s *Black Fury* (1935), and MGM's *Riffraff* (1936) made organized labor a component of their narratives, yet in most cases the depictions of unions were inflected with biases against 'unskilled' blue-collar workers, and tended to offer a "watered-down labor plot [which] would become the stereotype in movie portrayals of organized labor for the next twenty years and more."[238] In addition, the comedic tone and adherence to generic convention of these films often trivialized and demeaned the struggles of workers.[239]

As the decade progressed, post-Wagner Act representations of organized labor increasingly drew from the crime genre and the well-documented relationship between labor unions and organized crime that, for many, would come to define the 1930s (and affect the film industry itself).[240] For instance, Samuel Goldwyn's production of *Dead End* (1937) and Warner Bros.'s *Racket Busters* (1938) demonstrated "what would become Hollywood's fixation on the

[238] William J. Puette, *Through Jaundiced Eyes: How the Media View Organized Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 16.
[239] Puette, *Through Jaundiced Eyes*, 16.
[240] John Hutchinson, for instance, describes how in the years following the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, organized crime groups achieved "an unparalleled influence in labor-management relations." John Hutchinson, *The Imperfect Union: A History of Corruption in American Trade Unions* (New York City: E.P. Dutton, 1970), 68. For more on this, see Steven Fox, *Blood and Power: Organized Crime in Twentieth Century America* (New York: Morrow, 1989), 174-79.

theme union corruption and organized crime."[241] Peter Stead also argues that the 1930s saw Hollywood channel the stylistic energy and naturalistic acting of the social problem film cycle into genre films. Stead, in ways that echo the corporate and industrial changes pointed to by Ross, argues that Hollywood "remained fully in control of its product and was well able to resist any drift towards a more fully realistic examination of urban, rural, political, or industrial realities in contemporary society."[242] Indeed, more recently Dennis Broe has made the argument that many of the class tensions, organization, and union activity in the interwar period were a crucial component in the development of film noir.[243] As the 1930s drew to a close, then, explicit portrayals of organized labor and the working class had dwindled to a point of obscurity, as the industry increasingly favored genre fare.

This trend is reflected in contemporary journalism and criticism, particularly on the cusp of the United States' entry into the war. For instance, one review of *Reaching for the Sun* began by comparing the film industry's collaboration with the auto industry in the film with the increasing importance of the defense industry. The author writes: "With heavy industry going full tilt to meet the nation's defence needs, Hollywood, seeking to reflect current activities, is turning to the giant industries as a source of screen stories."[244] The author's framing of the production as pertinent to the war was not entirely off-base (as later analysis will reveal), but remains a curious editorial decision given two factors: 1) the existence of simultaneous Paramount productions that more explicitly engaged with war material, such as *I Wanted Wings* (1941) and *Caught in the Draft* (1941)—not to mention the exploits of B-picture unit Pine-

[241] Puette, *Through Jaundiced Eyes*, 17.
[242] Peter Stead, *Film and the Working Class: The Feature Film in British and American Society* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 240.
[243] Dennis Broe, *Film Noir, American Workers, and Postwar Hollywood* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 2009).
[244] "Battle of Machinery In Paramount Comedy," *The Gazette, Montreal*, April 29, 1941, 3.

Thomas Productions, who released three aviation films in 1941 (*Power Drive*, *Forced Landing*, and *Flying Bland*) that Paramount distributed—and 2) the film's being based on a novel that preceded the war entirely.

That said, the content of Wessel Smitter's 1938 novel, *F.O.B. Detroit*—about the author's own experience working in Ford's auto factories—was of little interest to Paramount. The film adaptation glossed over most of the source material's grittier details, much to the chagrin of its reviewer in *Friday,* a pro-labor, Popular Front illustrated weekly. Accordingly, the author describes the film as "strangely devoid of the reality of automobile workers' lives."[245] Although some critics of the novel praised Smitter's "deliberate exclusion of the conflict of ordinary labor troubles" and his giving organized labor a human face in the form of the two everyman protagonists, Benny and Russ, most reviews lauded the commitment to realism and authenticity in its portrayal of factory workers.[246] Indeed, one review openly pointed to Smitter's biographical experience as a reason for the novel's success: "When you read this story you'll be certain that no man could have written it without living the life it describes."[247] In the same review, Smitter is quoted speaking about his experience watching the faces of the men leaving the factory every day, which "haunted" him, and prompted him to write the novel.[248] The factory owner in the novel, "Mr. Holt," is a thinly veiled stand-in for Henry Ford himself, and the narrative pays ample attention to issues of unemployment and poverty in 1930s Detroit.

Yet the film adaptation, according to the *Friday* reviewer, "covers up its tremendous omissions by conveying a straightforward, humorous sense of how poor people live."[249] *Friday*

[245] "F.O.B. Detroit: Paramount Makes a Movie About Detroit Auto Workers – And It's Recognizable!" *Friday* 2, no. 4 (January 24, 1941): 25.
[246] Rose C. Feld, "A Dramatic Novel of Industry," *New York Times*, November 6, 1938, 102.
[247] "Automobile," *The Evansville Courier*, November 13, 1938, 36.
[248] "Automobile," 36.
[249] "F.O.B. Detroit," 25.

was one of the most important pro-labor magazines in its brief two-year existence from 1940-41, and much of its success came from its savvy intertwining of popular culture commentary and leftist politics. As Michael Denning summarizes, "*Friday* represented the Popular Front politics and laborist popular culture of the CIO working classes through the medium of the mass magazine, and captured the common sense of its audience, the second-generation blue-collar and white-collar ethnic workers."[250] The magazine provided significant coverage of Hollywood's own labor conflicts, and the review of *Reaching for the Sun* takes pains to contextualize the film within the industry's history of labor representation. In a striking passage, the author attempts to account for these omissions in ways that support the historical explanations offered by the likes of Ross, Stead, and Broe:

> There are many reasons why the movies do not touch on real things like unions; some of the reasons are pure conservatism, or being scared to approach life. This is usually rationalized away by imagining that people who don't like unions will boycott the picture. Most of the other reasons come from the fact that movie companies are big businesses with a labor problem of their own, like newspaper publishers, and they don't want to mention unionism, even two thousand miles away in another industry. If they do mention a union they generally show an "outside agitator" urging "misguided workmen" to be so thankless to their struggling employer that they ask for better wages and hours. Hollywood has not yet learned that a pro-union picture would make a few million dollars.[251]

The author here paints a pessimistic picture of the state of labor representation in 1941 when *Reaching for the Sun* was released, by which time the dust had settled on the Wagner Act, and the industry's priorities were elsewhere. Indeed, another review of the film described it as "strangely out of place in these days of tremendous industrial activity," noting how the "portrayal of idle Detroit factories, unemployed mechanics and seasonal industrial activity would

[250] Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Verso, 2011), 156.
[251] "F.O.B. Detroit," 25.

have been much more appropriate a few short years ago."[252] This is all to say that the consolidation of the major studios and the period approaching the United States's involvement in World War II marked a stark reduction in the production of social problem films, labor-capital films, and other subgenres that were best placed to represent labor and working conditions.

What's more, and undoubtedly related to Hollywood's reluctance to represent labor and industry during this period, was the fact the industry and the trade press did not go out of their way to discuss or narrate its labor practices and division (at least, not until it became discursively necessary during the war, as in the 1941 Senate Hearing). One striking opinion piece in *Variety* from July 1939 explicitly called upon Hollywood to take inspiration from the auto industry and more proactively narrate its production practices. The author writes:

> Whatever factions within the film industry are charged with the responsibility of fostering good will and cooperation might, with profit, turn to motors for inspiration and instruction. They might open their eyes and see right in Hollywood the opportunity to accomplish a revolution of industry attitude towards the picture business through a campaign designed to neutralize prevailing misconceptions.[253]

Clearly, for this author, the auto industry was doing a better job of managing its public relations—even though the dust had barely settled on the General Motors strike of 1936-37. Yet he goes as far as to unfavorably compare the production processes between the two industries in order to paint Hollywood as the superior producer of complex products that depend on complex labor: "the film producing center is a community of hard workers, creating a product much more difficult to fabricate than a gas driven joy wagon."[254] As I argue throughout this dissertation, the outbreak of war for the most part did result in a greater emphasis throughout the trade papers (as well as national and local press) on the labor of film production, though this was often relayed

[252] "The Theatre: Anachronism," *Wall Street Journal*, May 8, 1941, 11.
[253] John C. Flinn, "Film Showmanship," *Variety,* July 12, 1939, 8.
[254] Flinn, "Film Showmanship," 8.

through the lens of what Caldwell describes as the "war story" trade narrative.[255] That is, most wartime film productions were framed to the public as highly necessary exploits for which the cast and crew came together, and knuckled down to complete the productions in service of the war effort—no matter the cost (here meant explicitly in terms of labor, rather than dollars). However, the numerous labor issues that came to the fore during the war effectively doused the rhetorical opportunity for the industry to take control of its reputation in the manner called-for by the *Variety* author. One thing is certain: when he suggested that Hollywood took more inspiration from the auto industry, it is doubtful that he had an on-screen collaboration in mind; as the scholarship I discussed here has shown, such a representation of labor and industry was almost unfathomable for Hollywood at time.

For this reason, *Reaching for the Sun* provides a compelling example in its granting auto factory workers the chance to 'play themselves,' to speak—to perform their own labor in the context of a Hollywood production, and to represent the auto industry in a collaboration that was not commercially motivated or organized for promotional purposes. On an aesthetic level, of course, any film produced in the classical, 'invisible' style of studio Hollywood is ostensibly designed to conceal the labor upon which it depended, meaning that although instances of actual labor indexed by the camera and archived by the film itself can escape the aesthetic and ideological cleanliness of the studio system, some level of "denigration," in Gorfinkel's words, is inevitable.[256] *Reaching for the Sun*, as evidenced by the *Friday* review as well as its broader production history and press coverage, was no exception. Yet it still represented a novel collaboration between the film and auto industry, which occurred—importantly for both entities—on the cusp of the United States' entry into the war.

[255] Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 46.
[256] Gorfinkel, "Introduction," 45.

2.3: "Hundreds of workers became movie extras": Paramount at the Packard Plant

As soon as Paramount's plans to adapt Smitter's novel had been announced, representatives of the auto industry immediately expressed concerns and tried to get involved. The novelty of a Hollywood film about auto manufacturing was not lost on the Automobile Manufacturers' Association, for instance, who reached out directly to William Wellman, the film's director. In July 1940, the Association president, Alvan Macauley, wrote to Wellman explaining that he had taken the time to review *F.O.B. Detroit* and came to the conclusion that the novel contained "a number of inaccuracies" which the Association were willing to cooperate in rectifying. Macauley was skeptical about the possibility of an authentic representation of the industry despite Hollywood's "reputation for careful attention to fact in the portrayal of actual places and processes, and the enhanced national importance of the automobile industry at this time because of the national defense program."[257] In his response, Wellman revealed that Paramount bought the rights to *F.O.B. Detroit* "simply because I loved the three characters of the book." Wellman went on to explain: "Mr. Smitter's very evident dislike of certain parties in the automobile business did not interest me, nor do his writings on the capital and labor elements of the automobile business." Wellman's understanding was that Paramount would seek consultation on the story with another company in the automobile industry "to see that I have not included any of these unpleasant and unnecessary subjects."[258]

Whether or not Macauley was reassured by Wellman's rebuttal is unknown, but the

[257] Alvan Macauley letter to William Wellman, July 8, 1940. Folder 3808: "REACHING FOR THE SUN – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[258] William Wellman letter to Alvan Macauley, July 22, 1940. Folder 3808: "REACHING FOR THE SUN – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

director's reactionary approach to the source material and disdain for its socio-political critique of capitalist industry were reflected in the major changes made during the scriptwriting process. Indeed, Wellman and screenwriter W.L. River decided to make the film a comedy about a man who ultimately decides to eschew the appeals of modern, urban living, and instead to dwell amongst nature and dig clams for a living.[259] Yet despite the disinterest in authentically portraying the industry and drawing on Smitter's thematization in the novel, Wellman sent his assistant to Detroit "to study automobile production technique" in August, 1940, a month before production began.[260] Following his assistant's report, Wellman and Paramount then made the striking decision to shoot some of the factory scenes on location at the Packard Motor Car Company plant for two weeks in late 1940, using plant employees as extras. Given the rare opportunity to participate directly in the representation of their labor and workplace, the Packard auto workers appeared on screen performing a version of themselves: asked simply to 'work' as they would on any given day, yet placed in front of a camera and resigned to the background of the frame as atmosphere. An otherwise enthusiastic account of the Packard shoot in the *Detroit Free Press* made clear the transformation at play in the plant employees' representation: "The scenes were photographed right at the plant and thus hundreds of workers *became movie extras.*"[261]

In the film, there is a palpable tension between the attempt to strike a comedic tone and the reality of working on an assembly line. During the first scene that takes place inside the fictional Crane Motor Co. plant, the Packard extras are visible operating the machines in the

[259] Pete Wemhoff, "Flicker," *Automotive News*, November 18, 1940, 13.
[260] "Hollywood—Personnelities," *Boxoffice*, August 24, 1940, 30; "Hollywood Production…Pictures Now Shooting," *The Hollywood Reporter*, September 20, 1940, 6.
[261] Frank P. Gill, "Packard Auto Plant Scene of New Film," *Detroit Free Press*, November 24, 1940, 7. Emphasis added.

background of the frame while Russ (Joel McCrea) and Benny (Eddie Bracken) converse in the foreground. To establish the setting, the scene begins with a montage of close-ups of hands turning levers and operating machinery, soundtracked by upbeat, boisterous music. The physical labor of the employees serves as a dramatic backdrop for a dialogue scene between two main characters, and thus any real agency over representation the workers might have had is ultimately subsumed by the narrative conventions of a Hollywood film. Indeed, in his review of the film, Bosley Crowther lamented the film's comedic sensibility for overwhelming the thematic potential of Smitter's novel. As a result, said Crowther: "All suggestion of labor conflict has been carefully left out; the attitude of the workers toward their bosses and the effect which this has upon their lives have been gingerly overlooked."[262] Although commenting on the whole film, Crowther's observation here is neatly captured by the simple visual dynamics at play in the voiceless workers occupying the background of the frame as atmosphere to the protagonist's conversation in the foreground. At the same time, the physical labor of 'performing' in close-ups and background appearances, in its resemblance to their everyday jobs, evidences the blurred divide between performance and work in this unique instance. There is a tension between the actuality of their labor as captured by the camera—as indexed by it—and the film's design as playful and comedic; one review praised Wellman for packing "all the comedy possible into his direction."[263]

[262] Bosley Crowther, "The Screen," *New York Times*, May 8, 1941, 21.
[263] "'Reaching for Sun' Clicks As Fine Romantic Comedy," *The Hollywood Reporter*, April 8, 1941, 3.



Figure 2.2: Russ (Joel McCrea) and Benny (Eddie Bracken) talk on the job, while Packard employees appear as extras in the background. From *Reaching for the Sun* (Paramount Pictures, 1941).

National press coverage of the film often took pains to praise and exhibit the labor of the above-the-line personnel in ways that resemble the film's own treatment of such labor divisions in the opening factory scene. This was ostensibly less of the case at the local level, where Detroit newspapers were described by *The Hollywood Reporter* as "certainly building up" the release of the film given its local content.[264] In addition to premiering in Detroit at the Michigan Theater in April 1941, many components of the film's promotion and marketing played up its Detroit setting in order to appeal to locals.[265] *Boxoffice* offered suggestions for ballyhoo to Detroit theatre owners, encouraging "tieups with local automobile dealers, perhaps a street parade

[264] "Rambling Reporter," *The Hollywood Reporter*, January 30, 1941, 2.
[265] "'Reaching for the Sun' Will Premiere Here," *Detroit Free Press*, April 1, 1941, 16.

featuring their new models."[266] *Variety* reported that the film was "carried locally under its original title, 'F.O.B. Detroit.'"[267] While this was not strictly true—the film played, was advertised, and reviewed in Detroit under *Reaching for the Sun*—the name of the city and the novel upon which it was based were amplified in local promotions. For instance, a poster appearing in the *Detroit Free Press* bore the tagline "The Story of Detroit—Made in Detroit—For All Detroit!" and featured the novel title in larger font than the film title (Fig. 2.3).[268] Yet even at the premiere, the film's thematic relevance to the city and the novelty of representing auto workers were overshadowed by musical attractions and the special appearance of Eddie Bracken. A *Variety* article covering the premiere put it frankly: "Instead of outpouring of auto mechanics to see if the film had done right by them, audiences have been taken over by the jitterbug trade and [Harry] James' band had them beating time."[269] As with the film itself, then, the contributions from Packard employees were overshadowed in its promotion by a more traditional emphasis on above-the-line talent.

As a running theme in broader coverage of the film's production, the gendered narration of labor divisions was especially notable in articles on Ellen Drew's role as Rita, the love interest, who serves coffee to the plant employees on their breaks in the film. Although the actress endured some questionable physical treatment from her male costars on set, several news items pointed out the irony of Drew having worked in a similar job before becoming an actress.[270]

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[266] "For Your Convenience: Reaching for the Sun," *Boxoffice*, April 12, 1941, 63. Although unlikely to have been taken up by local theatre owners, a similar stunt was used over a decade later to promote *Genevieve* (1953), where ancient cars were lined up for 45 miles between Detroit and Ann Arbor. See "'Genevieve' Car Stunt Snowballs at Detroit," *Boxoffice*, April 10, 1954, 40.
[267] "DET STURDY; 'SUN' – VAUDE BIG $24,000," *Variety*, April 23, 1941, 9; 36.
[268] Poster, *Detroit Free Press*, April 18, 1941, 16.
[269] "Michigan, Detroit," *Variety*, April 23, 1941, 46.
[270] Drew was described as taking a "manhandling" in the filming of a love scene with McCrea, after which "she came out with a wrenched back." Hedda Hopper, "Notes Film Dogs Will Go On P.A. Tour," *The Evansville*



Figure 2.3*:* Poster advertising the premiere of *Reaching for the Sun*, from *Detroit Free Press*, April 18, 1941, 16.

In one interview, she remarked that she "ought to be good because I had a job like this—before I was discovered for pictures."[271] Another anecdote trivialized her embarrassment at having to

Courier, October 19, 1940, 7. In the filming of another scene, Drew fell into a hole in a creek and almost drowned. See "Ellen Drew Rests After Tough Role In Latest Picture," *The Port Huron Times Herald*, March 2, 1941, 13.

[271] Sheilah Graham, "Jane Withers Will Spend $25,000 on Music Education," *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 4, 1940, 38.

throw coffee in McCrea's face for one scene, joking that she "never spilled a glass of water, a bowl of soup or a cup of coffee on a customer when she was a soda-fountain waitress."[272] In this case, journalists and commentators openly made the connection between her previous employment when she actually conducted the labor, to her performance of it in the context of a film production, in more explicit and lighthearted ways than they did with the Packard employees. Yet one article in particular highlights the discrepancy between Drew's contemporary labor as a star, and the comparatively menial work that she carried out in the past. In it, the author openly comments on Drew's compensation as an actress being "about 50 times her pre-discovery wage," and describes her role as a waitress as "the easiest any girl has ever had." The author goes on to explain that after each scene ends, "prop men grab and wash the dishes and silver and restore everything to place. Meanwhile a hairdresser and make-up artist restore the actress."[273] Here, below-the-line personnel are portrayed as the anonymous workers whose labor is nonetheless fundamental to uphold the appearance of a Hollywood actress *performing* labor of her own.

Far from a philanthropic effort to grant auto workers the chance to represent themselves to a national audience, then, the production instead passed through the plant, extracting the necessary labor and footage, before returning west. In fact, the traveling crew arrived in Detroit on October 18, 1940 immediately following a brief stint in Chicago, where local labor was also enlisted.[274] A telegram reporting on the Chicago shoot sent back to the studio straightforwardly remarked: "union boys from here very good workers."[275] In addition to the 43 studio employees

[272] "Coffee Face," *The Calgary Herald*, December 16, 1940, 5.
[273] "Ellen Drew Is Working As Waitress At 50 Times Former Wage," *Chillicothe Gazette*, October 7, 1940, 3.
[274] Daily production report, October 18, 1940, folder 3809: "REACHING FOR THE SUN – production, reports" Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[275] Syd Street telegram to R. L. Johnston, September 29, 1940. Folder 3811: "REACHING FOR THE SUN – telegrams," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

who had traveled from California, Paramount also rented cameras and recording equipment from the Detroit-based production company Wilding Productions to save the cost of shipping studio equipment across the country.[276] The studio's interactions with the Packard employees and representatives were reportedly amicable and respectful according to the local press; however, the production records suggest a more ruthlessly efficient, business-as-usual approach. For instance, upon arrival in Detroit, it was noted that the plant did not operate on Saturdays and Sundays, and that its employees thus had the weekend off from work.[277] Yet after the first week of shooting, on Saturday October 26, 12 extras and 4 doubles were enlisted from the Packard company for more footage.[278]

After the shoot, Paramount arranged to ship a portion of the actual production line from the plant back to the studio on Melrose Avenue as part of efforts to reconstruct an accurate auto plant set.[279] This would allow Wellman and his crew to maintain visual fidelity to the environment while shooting in the comfortable familiarity of their home studio. Notably, the trafficking of assembly line parts and factory equipment garnered significantly more attention in the press than did the contributions of the plant employees during the Detroit shoot. In fact, the efforts to recreate the plant at the Paramount studio were framed as part of a "construction boom" for carpenters during this period, when rush orders required as many as 600 working on erecting sets.[280] A *Washington Post* article from December 1940 highlighted *Reaching for the*

[276] "Packard Plant Used as Studio for New Film," *Detroit Free Press*, November 13, 1940, 14; Wilding Picture Productions letter to Keith Glennan, September 2, 1940. 3808: "REACHING FOR THE SUN – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[277] Daily production report, October 19, 1940, folder 3809: "REACHING FOR THE SUN – production, reports" Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[278] Daily production report, October 26, 1940, folder 3809: "REACHING FOR THE SUN – production, reports" Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[279] "Packard Plant Used as Studio for New Film," 14. In addition, second units were sent for a four day shoot in Lake Arrowhead, California. See "Railroad Carries Four Film Units to Locales," *The Hollywood Reporter*, September 27, 1940, 7; "'Sun' Reaches Para. Lot," *The Hollywood Reporter*, October 24, 1940, 3.
[280] "600 Carpenters On Para. Construction," *The Hollywood Reporter*, October 3, 1940, 4.

Sun as an example of the movie industry's good health, in spite of the curtailing of foreign distribution markets. The article explains how the enormous motor assembly line "was built by artisans who had been thoroughly grounded in automotive practice."[281] Among the artisans was Stanislaus Narkiewicz, a Polish factory worker tasked with overseeing the setting up of the assembly line and coaching the cast to operate it properly.[282] Not unlike the prop men whose work upheld Drew's performance of labor, the factory employees who traveled west with the production contributed by enabling above-the-line personnel to more convincingly perform the labor they do for a living.

In his letter to Wellman, Macauley cited the national defense program as a reason for the elevated importance of the auto industry and its public visibility, and this was something press coverage of the production quickly caught on to. Indeed, the backdrop of war only served to intensify the general interest in production logistics and labor, with several press articles either making explicit reference to the war or evoking Caldwell's "the war story" trade narrative.[283] The *New York Times* article about the production revealed the amusing anecdote that the Los Angeles police initially mistook the "10,000" tons of assembly line equipment being transported to the studio for a defense measure.[284] A particular source of fascination was the six ton steel ingot manipulator for use in the film's battle scene between Russ and Herman (Albert Dekker).[285] In a *Washington Post* article on Eddie Bracken's involvement in the film's fight scenes, the author quipped: "If Eddie Bracken, Paramount's stellar young comedian, is caught in the forthcoming draft, he'll urgently request service in the army; not in the navy. He reached this

[281] "Huge Film Sets Show Industry Has Confidence," *The Washington Post*, December 8, 1940, A3.
[282] "Battle of the Machines," *New York Times,* April 6, 1941, X4.
[283] Caldwell, *Production Culture,* 46.
[284] Battle of the Machines," X4.
[285] "Para. Has Unique Battle Scene Lined for 'Sun,'" *The Hollywood Reporter*, October 30, 1940, 4.

decision after completing a scene as Joel McCrea's sidekick in 'RftS.'"[286] The playful tone reflects the privileged position of Bracken in regard to the draft, compared to the millions of men across the country for whom the reality was unlikely to be a source of comedy. Indeed, as a *Variety* article from October 1940 speculating about the impact conscription would have on the film industry remarked: "Few male picture stars fall in the draft limits. […] Cameramen, electricians, narrators and carpenters would be affected to the greatest extent."[287] Certainly, the *Washington Post* author's remark about the draft—rife with irony given the comparative likelihood for below-the-line personnel to be drafted—continues the press coverage's preoccupation with the labor of above-the-line stars.

One especially striking article began with a baffling comparison between fascist leaders in Europe and film industry technicians: "Like Europe's mass murderers, Hollywood technicians today are searching for some new method of attack."[288] Ostensibly likening below-the-line crew with Axis powers leaders, the article in fact goes on to attribute the technical accomplishments of the climactic fight scene to director Wellman. Military metaphors abound as the author narrates how Wellman "appears to have stolen a march on all his many rivals" and "mechanizes his warfare in his current picture."[289] Contrary to Caldwell's description of the "war story" narrative as a way of attesting to the grueling conditions of media production, this article uses the backdrop of war to exaggerate the sense of scale and innovation in the making of *Reaching for the Sun*.[290] It draws a parallel between the industrial exploits of the film industry in late 1940 with geopolitical conflict and the implication of various other industries in the process. In this

[286] "Comic Suffers Mal-de-mer," *The Washington Post*, May 9, 1941, 8.
[287] "Film Biz Appraising What Effect Conscription Will Have on Manpower," *Variety*, October 9, 1940, 15.
[288] "Movies Find New Weapons For Fighting," *The Lansing State Journal*, November 3, 1940, 14.
[289] "Movies Find New Weapons For Fighting," 14.
[290] Caldwell, *Production Culture*, 46.

respect, the article rather unknowingly alludes to the more material connections between the film and defense industries—something I explore in more detail in Chapter 4. For the purposes of this case study, however, the many articles that make reference to the war in relation to *Reaching for the Sun* help to usher in a discussion of how else we might frame the production in the context of the auto and defense industries.

2.4: Race and Labor on the Assembly Line

For one, Paramount's collaboration with the auto industry notably occurred at a time when many plants and companies were beginning to be leased to manufacture military vehicular equipment. When William S. Knudsen was appointed Commissioner of Production for the National Defense Commission in 1940, his principal order of business was to review and manage all contracts for airplanes and their engines.[291] Because engines were the bottleneck of production, and due to the domination of Wright Aeronautical Corporation and Pratt and Whitney Aircraft over the industry, the demand for planes from Great Britain could not be met without intervention. As a result, the auto industry was enlisted, and in June 1940, following unsuccessful negotiations with Henry Ford, Knudsen approached the Packard Company with the proposition to take up the manufacture of Merlin engines for Rolls-Royce aircrafts.[292] On June 26 1940 Knudsen met with M. M. Gilman, president and J. G. Vincent, VP in charge of engine production at the Packard plant to discuss terms.[293] Macauley agreed the $8 million lease after Edsel Ford's decision for the Ford Motor Company to accept the offer was vetoed by Henry Ford

[291] Paul A. C. Koistinen, *Arsenal of World War II: The Political Economy of American Warfare, 1940-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 48.
[292] Koistinen, *Arsenal of World War II*, 59.
[293] "Packard's Officials Confer with Knudsen on Engines," *Detroit Free Press*, June 27, 1940, 7.

himself.[294] Despite the plans being to construct a separate factory for the manufacturing of the Merlin engines, Packard began working on them in the same building used for automobile production.[295] It is thus probable that because the production of *Reaching for the Sun* occurred shortly after the Packard company had been officially issued its lease from the Defense Plant Corporation, but before it had moved production of the Merlin engines to a new site, the scenes shot inside the plant captured the same space that at the time was playing a crucial role in the national defense program.

Not only were the employees that were cast as extras representing the auto industry, then, but by extension the defense industry itself. While it is hard to know for certain on what basis the Packard employees who appear in the film were chosen, the circumstances surrounding employment in the auto industry offer some explanation. All the extras who appear in the assembly line scene are white, though this cannot be said of all employees at the Packard plant at the time of shooting. Following the Great Migration, which refers to the influx of African Americans in Northern cities such as Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, New York City, and Pittsburgh fleeing Jim Crow laws in the South, Detroit became a notable hotbed of racial tension.[296] As Harvard Sitkoff straightforwardly puts it: "No city expected racial trouble more

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[294] Charles K. Hyde, *Arsenal of Democracy: The American Automobile Industry in World War II* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 48.
[295] Hyde, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 49.
[296] For broad accounts of the Great Migration, see Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Random House, 2010) and Ira Berlin, *The Making of African America: The Four Great Migrations* (New York: Penguin, 2010); for an account of the relationship between the Great Migration and film spectatorship, see Jacqueline Stewart, *Migrating to the Movies: Cinema and Black Urban Modernity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2005); for an account of the relationship between the Great Migration and religion, see Milton C. Sernett, *Bound for the Promised Land: African American Religion and the Great Migration* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); for two excellent accounts of the Great Migration in Chicago but which provide detailed framing of the national trend, see James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011) and Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, & Black Urban Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

than Detroit, and none did less to prevent it."[297] Lured by the promise of a better standard of life, upon arrival in Detroit, thousands of African Americans found "a city where [they] were still barred from all but a handful of neighborhoods."[298] Between 1910 and 1920 Detroit saw a 611% increase in its black population—a significantly higher rate than the other Northern cities.[299] Due to a combination of housing shortages, poor urban planning, and the city's unique melting pot of working class immigrants from across the globe developing a preoccupation with space, territoriality, and property ownership, the years leading to and during the Second World War were rife with racially motivated violence, hate strikes, and race riots.[300] To put it simply: African Americans were more than present in Detroit when *Reaching for the Sun* was shot; they were actively fighting for their right to live and work in a city increasingly hostile toward their very existence.

Hostility aside, as the United States's entry to the war loomed, various industries became more and more dependent on the labor of African Americans who had recently relocated to the North. Many auto factories in the Midwest hired African Americans, for instance, but they were predominantly segregated from their white colleagues.[301] Black employment at Ford, Dodge,

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[297] Harvard Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War," *The Journal of American History* 58, no. 3 (1971): 673.
[298] Steve Babson, *Working Detroit: The Making of a Union Town* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986), 156.
[299] New York experienced a 66% increase; Chicago a 148% increase; and Philadelphia a 500% increase. Carole Marks, "The Social and Economic Life of Southern Blacks During the Migration," in *Black Exodus: The Great Migration from the American South*, ed. Alferdteen Harrison (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), 46.
[300] See chapter 1 of Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*, updated ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1996] 2014); George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics*, 20th anniv. ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, [1998] 2018).
[301] Lloyd H. Bailer, "The Negro Automobile Worker," Journal of Political Economy 51, no. 5 (1943): 415-428; Kevin Boyle, "'There Are No Union Sorrows That the Union Can't Heal': The Struggle for Racial Equality in the United Automobile Workers, 1940-1960," *Labor History* 36, no. 1 (1995): 5-23; Joyce Shaw Peterson, "Black Automobile Workers in Detroit, 1910-1930," *The Journal of Negro History* 64, no. 3 (1979): 177-190.

Chrysler, Chevrolet, and Packard rose from 5,741 in 1910 to 120,066 in 1930.[302] Yet in their roles, African Americans were frequently resigned to working in dangerous conditions and subjected to more laborious tasks due to the opinion oft-expressed by managers in Detroit that "Black workers had superior abilities to withstand extreme heat and exhaustion."[303] This was true not just of auto manufacturers but in parts manufacturing companies in the area as well.[304] In his book *Arsenal of Democracy* (2013), Charles K. Hyde explains the situation faced by African Americans in the auto industry:

> The automakers who hired black workers, including Ford, initially placed these workers in the most difficult, dirty, unpleasant, and dangerous jobs in their plants, which helped minimize white workers' objections to their presence. African American workers were rarely found in the mainstream production departments, which meant that they were segregated from white workers. Typically black workers labored in the foundries, paint-spraying operations, heat treatment plants, and sanding operations.[305]

Although many of the issues encountered by African Americans working in Detroit's auto factories were shared across different companies, due to differing hiring policies and management approaches, treatment could vary considerably. For instance, many scholars have focused on Henry Ford's complex, often contradictory treatment of his black workers which—although lauded as progressive at the time—has since been described as paternalistic and ultimately exploitative.[306] Yet the Packard company especially garnered a reputation for bigotry and vitriol between its black employees and the white majority made up of Polish Americans and

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[302] Darlene Clark Hine, "Black Migration to the Urban Midwest: The Gender Dimension, 1915-1945," in *The Great Migration in Historical Perspective: New Dimensions of Race, Class, and Gender*, ed. Joe William Trotter (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 128.
[303] Elizabeth Esch, *The Color Line and the Assembly Line: Managing Race in the Ford Empire* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018), 94.
[304] Robert C. Weaver, "Detroit and Negro Skill," *Phylon* 4, no. 2 (1943): 133.
[305] Hyde, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 179.
[306] See, for instance, Esch, *The Color Line and the Assembly Line*; Beth Tompkins Bates, *The Making of Black Detroit in the Age of Henry Ford* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); John Brueggemann, "The Power and Collapse of Paternalism: The Ford Motor Company and Black Workers, 1937-1941," *Social Problems* 47, no. 2 (2000): 220-240.

white southerners.[307] The plant was described, for instance, as "among the slowest companies in modifying its employment policies, and its personnel director, C. E. Weiss, was probably the most unabashedly bigoted executive in the industry."[308] It was even alleged that local union leadership at the plant had ties with the Ku Klux Klan.[309]

For many historians of labor, civil rights, and race relations, the Packard plant is most famous for the series of hate strikes that took place during the war. The first among these came in October 1941 when black activist Christopher Alston pushed the Local 190's leadership to transfer the plant's black employees on the same basis as their white coworkers, resulting in two African American metal polishers being moved from automobile to defense work. In response, 250 white metal polishers took part in a sit-down strike, forcing the union steward to return the black men to the automobile department.[310] According to George Lipsitz, the two black men were forewarned that "bloodshed might ensue" should they have accepted the transfer, such was the racism and vitriol already present at the plant.[311] The 1941 hate strike set a precedent that continued throughout the war, leading up to the May 1943 wildcat strike by twenty-five thousand white employees protesting the promotion of three black men to the assembly line.[312] Although condemned by the National War Labor Board for threatening to impact the national defense effort, the hostility towards African Americans in the auto industry only increased throughout the

[307] Hyde, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 182.
[308] August Meier and Elliot M. Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 165.
[309] Hyde, *Arsenal of Democracy*, 182; George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 75.
[310] Meier and Rudwick, *Black Detroit and the Rise of the UAW*, 127.
[311] Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight,* 75.
[312] David M. Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism: Black Workers and the UAW in Detroit* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 26.

war.[313] As David Lewis-Colman summarizes, "Critics framed hate strikes as unpatriotic acts that undermined the Allied war effort."[314]

While the racial animosity that reared its head in the hate strikes had undoubtedly been brewing in Detroit long before the war broke out in Europe, the defense program's effect on industry labor played a notable role in shaping the conflicts as well. Some argued that before the war, most African Americans were satisfied with working lower-end jobs because it granted them job security and paid higher than anything they could manage in the South. For example, at an automobile factory in Flint, where all black employees were classified as janitors regardless of if they worked as laborers, machine cleaners, or truck drivers, this classification was unchallenged because the result was immaterial—they were happy to have jobs at all. Yet the curtailment of auto production that occurred when attention shifted to defense work meant that "these once job-secure Negro workers found that according to the six-point defense transfer program they were eligible for a limited number of janitorial jobs only in war production, and they pressed for upgrading and a new interpretation of the union contract."[315] As a result, thousands of African Americans found jobs in automobile repair and service shops, filling stations, laundries, office machine repair and service establishments, cleaning and pressing concerns, hotels and restaurants, delivery services, and other such roles.[316] The caveat, however, was that in the majority of these instances, African Americans were replacing white workers in service roles. This created a dynamic whereby white workers suffered a feeling of displacement,

[313] The NWLB instructed striking Packard workers to "resume production of vitally needed war material at once." From "WLB Orders Strike to End at Detroit," *New York Times*, June 5, 1943, 1.
[314] Lewis-Colman, *Race Against Liberalism*, 16.
[315] Weaver, "Detroit and Negro Skill," 135.
[316] Joseph S. Himes, Jr., "Colored Labor Faces a Bottleneck," *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life,* 19 (November 1941): 329.

as well as a sudden adjustment to working alongside black colleagues with whom they previously shared little interaction.

Such rifts contributed not only to the tensions that erupted in hate strikes, but also to perceptions of black labor in other roles. Indeed, while many African Americans occupied the new gaps in service positions, there was an increasing demand for 'skilled' workers in technical and mechanical capacities—a demand that could have been met were it not for continuously discriminatory hiring practices. So much was this the case that Sidney Hillman, Director General of the Office of Production Management, issued a statement to industries with defense contracts in 1941 asking management "to examine their employment and training policies at once to determine whether or not these policies make ample provision for the full utilization of available and competent Negro workers. Every available source of labor capable of producing defense materials must be tapped in the present emergency."[317] Hillman openly cites "artificial factors" such as "racial identity" as getting in the way of the defense effort, and frustratedly points to the availability of skilled African American workers prohibited from contributing due to discrimination.[318] Hillman continues:

> Negro workers of skills and aptitudes are in many instances not being included in many of the training programs for defense. Such practices are extremely wasteful of our human resources and prevent a total effort for national defense. They result in unnecessary migration of labor, in high rates of labor turnover, and they increase our present and future housing needs and social problems for defense workers.[319]

Despite Hillman's call, several African American critics and commentators continued to berate the defense industry for persisting with racist hiring practices even to the detriment of the

[317] Sidney Hillman, "To All Holders of Defense Contracts," reprinted in "A Word from OPM," *The Crisis* 48, iss. 5 (1941): 151.
[318] Hillman, "To All Holders of Defense Contracts," 151.
[319] Hillman, "To All Holders of Defense Contracts," 151.

national war effort. In a scathing report, Elmer Carter, editor of *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*, scoffed at the lack of action taken in response to this request: "All apparently continue on a course of racial discrimination that is inexcusably unfair and undemocratic, and that will in the end prove to be unwise."[320] As Carter saw it, African Americans blamed unions in large part for siding with management's decisions to protect the interests of white employees. Carter described "tacit collusion between organized labor and management" and claimed that African Americans held value for white managers only insofar as they could be used as scab labor to subjugate white workers.[321] In other words, despite Hillman's efforts to combat discrimination in the interest of defense, the racialized image and idea of black labor was too productive and useful a tool for the interests of white managers and union representatives.

To mitigate the tension between the desperate need for workers in various positions with the ideological projects of race and racialization in labor industries, some commentators leaned in to stereotypes about black labor. Dr. Anson Phelps Stokes, chairman of the Committee on Negro Americans in National Defense Industries, responded to Hillman's statement by pointing out the impossibility of adequately speeding up defense industries without making use of the black labor force: "An 'all-out' defense effort cannot disregard the Negro tenth of our population which is known for its loyalty."[322] The allusion to the inherent loyalty of the African American population gestured toward still-prevalent stereotypes about black servitude and a desire for white approval, as in the Uncle Tom figure.[323] In another striking editorial for *Opportunity*, Carter made the case to the War Department for the suitability of African Americans for

[320] Elmer Carter, "Industrial Democracy," *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 19. Iss. 5 (1941): 130.
[321] Carter, "Industrial Democracy," 130.
[322] "Negro Participation in Defense Work," *Monthly Labor Review*, 52 (June 1941): 1390.
[323] For an authoritative overview of the uses and meanings of the Uncle Tom figure, see Adena Spingarn, *Uncle Tom: From Martyr to Traitor* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2018).

transport roles in defense industries. Citing the numerous examples of white and black drivers working amicably together for truck companies across the country, Carter implores the War Department to lift the racially discriminatory ban in order to assist with the timely development of the tank corps. In doing so, he appeals to the racialized notion that black skin is more resistant to heat that Elizabeth Esch describes in her account of white managers' attitudes towards African Americans.[324] Carter writes:

> We presume that no one in the War Department will doubt that the Negro is able to stand intense heat—perhaps because of the pigmentation of his skin, or its exceptional thickness, or his equatorial heritage (see treatises by American physiologists, anthropologists and sociologists). Nor can there be any doubt that the Negro possesses the manual dexterity to drive automobiles, tractors and trucks. This being the case, it would appear that Negroes would be ideally fitted for the armored division as drivers and gunners and radio operators in heavy and light tanks, since heat generated within the enclosed armor is, according to reliable reports, a factor to be reckoned with.[325]

In this provocative passage, Carter so adamantly pleads the case for African American employment in the defense industry that he appears to draw directly from the ideological textbook of white managers. So utilitarian are his motives, it seems, that Carter discursively contributes to the production of racialized associations between blackness and bodily durability, resistance, and even "fungibility"; that is, "a racist optics in which black flesh is itself identified as the source of opacity, the denial of black humanity, and the effacement of sentience integral to the wanton use of the captive body."[326] Though drawing from Aimé Césaire's equation of colonization to "thingification," and focusing predominantly on antebellum slavery, theorizations of "fungibility" offer a productive way of framing enduring perceptions of blackness in relation

[324] Esch, *The Color Line and the Assembly Line*, 94.
[325] Elmer Carter, "A Suggestion to the War Department," *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 19, Iss. 5 (May 1941): 130.
[326] Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-making in Nineteenth-century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 19-20.

to labor and value.[327] For instance, influential Black Feminist scholar Hortense Spillers describes the process as the "profitable 'atomizing' of the captive body" which relates to the multiple uses of black labor throughout the war—whether for rhetorical purposes, fueling feelings of displacement in white-dominated unions, filling in for service roles, or as the unused workforce excluded from the defense effort entirely.[328]

In either scenario, black labor presented a representational problem: the workers themselves blamed the collusion between unions and management for their discrimination, while commentators and journalists such as Carter resorted to racialized notions to directly appeal to the War Department. Well-intentioned retorts by white civil right activists like Stokes equally leant into such notions. With the struggle for visibility, recognition, and integration across departments in the plant a persistent concern for the black population in the early war years, the casting of white employees as extras in *Reaching for the Sun* played its own part in the sustenance of racial division and inequality. Macauley, who was in fact president of the Packard company from 1916-1939, may have been concerned about the authenticity of the film's representation of the auto industry, and on the surface level of employee demographics, he was right to be. But the devaluation and erasure of black labor traceable in the film's casting choices and production culture tell perhaps a more truthful, if sobering, tale about the industry's treatment of African Americans. The white Packard employees may have had the opportunity to work below-the-line as extras in a Hollywood production, yet their occupation of space on screen ultimately obfuscated the labor and activism of the plant's black population, who were not

[327] Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, [1950] 2000), 42.
[328] Hortense J. Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," *Diacritics* 17, no. 2 (1987): 68.

granted such access to representational means—instead, they continued to work *below* below-the-line.

At a time rife with work stoppages, protests, and disputes—enough to constitute a full-blown national labor crisis—Hollywood's taking up a labor and industry-related subject for the first time in years presented both an opportunity and a representational burden. The decision to shoot scenes inside an auto plant that had recently signed a lease to manufacture aircraft engines and transform its operations to focus on defense marked an explicit crossover between the film, auto, and defense industries. Present throughout this crossover was the rhetorical and material subjugation of a racialized workforce that were routinely denied access to means of representation. In that respect, when Paramount hired Packard employees as extras, the absence of African Americans not only contributed to their continued representational obfuscation that characterizes *below* below the line labor but also reflected a broader industrial logic of simultaneous extraction and exclusion. Industries, especially during the war, depended both on the availability of black labor in roles of servitude as well as on its continued confinement to such roles.

2.5: Conclusion

As the Packard and many other auto plants began plans to convert their operations to serve the defense effort, halting civilian automobile production in the process, Paramount seemed to have set a cinematic precedent. At least, only in the sense that they shot footage on location at the plants; as I have discussed, the nature and content of that footage left much to be desired as far as the representation of labor goes. Shortly after shooting wrapped up for *Reaching for the Sun*, two more production units set up shop in Detroit auto plants to capture footage of the

transformation to armament production. The first was the film unit of the short-lived Office for Emergency Management, headed by George Gercke.[329] Gercke contributed two short films in service of the Allied war effort: *Men and Ships* (1941), which depicted the training routines of the American Merchant Marine, and *Power for Defense* (1941), which portrayed dams and power plants being used to support defense plants in the Tennessee Valley. For the OEM, however, he was tasked with setting up two camera crews at the Packard plant to spend one month "filming the end of the commercial auto industry as the last cars leave the assembly lines."[330] Not long afterwards, Universal Pictures moved forward with plans to distribute four single reel films referred to as "Victory Featurettes" in collaboration with the Government's Film Division, one of which—*Arsenals of Might* (1942)—showcased the same conversion of the factories from civilian to armament production.[331]

How much the experiences and contributions of the factory workers themselves featured in either film is unknown, but one suspects that similar problems of visibility and racialized obfuscation affected these productions as they did *Reaching for the Sun*. With both the film and auto industry in full swing for the war effort by this point, the production culture combining both industries had evidently evolved from the frivolous romantic comedy narrative of the Paramount film to a stern, documentarian approach. For many reasons, *Reaching for the Sun* represented a collaboration that was possible at its time, but which likely could not have happened even

[329] Though it does not touch on the exploits of the film unit, for more on the OEM, see Mordecai Lee, *Get Things Moving!: FDR, Wayne Coy, and the Office for Emergency Management, 1941-1943* (New York: SUNY Press, 2018).
[330] "OEM Unit Shoots Detroit 'Factory,'" *The Hollywood Reporter*, February 10, 1942, 13.
[331] "U. Skeds Release Of 4 War Featurettes," *The Hollywood Reporter*, September 22, 1942, 6. *Arsenals of Might* was later released alongside 11 other shorts on subjects suggested by the Office of War Information as part a series called "America Speaks." The shorts included films from other major studies such as MGM, Fox, and RKO. See "All Together Now! Producers, Distributors, Exhibitors and Government Representatives united to bring to the nation's screens a vital series of 12 'America Speaks' fighting films!" *Motion Picture Herald,* August 22, 1942, 66-67.

months later than it did. One of these reasons is the surge in location shooting that characterized the early war years in Hollywood, which I explore in more detail the next two chapters. Paramount's decision to shoot on location in Detroit would not have been possible once the travel restrictions imposed in 1942 took effect. As Tom Schatz explains, the government's transportation restrictions—which ranged from gasoline rationing to tire shortages, as well as a ban on pleasure driving altogether—"had an enormous impact on the movie industry."[332] *Reaching for the Sun* captured both the film and auto industries on the cusp of their full-scale transitions to defense mode, at the same time that an undercurrent of racialized labor infected both industries.

[332] Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 144.

Chapter 3

Soft Hands and Blistered Feet:

Race, Labor, and the Intensified Efficiency of Wartime Production Culture

3.1: Introduction

Although the United States did not officially enter the war until the Pearl Harbor attack in December, 1941, the film industry had long been engaged with the conflict in Europe. By August 1941, the major studios had 45 war films either in production or recently completed.[333] The enthusiasm with which Hollywood took up the subject of war led to accusations of warmongering and a high-profile hearing in 1941: the Senate Investigation into Motion Picture War Propaganda, which—among other things—gave leading industry figures the chance to publicly describe and narrate the role of the film industry in a time of geopolitical instability. Faced with charges of propaganda and monopoly practices, a variety of executives, producers, journalists, and commentators played their parts in denying the accusations and effectively justifying the exploits of the film industry. Of course, implicated in these practices were the industry's attitude toward labor and resources during the war which, although rarely commented on explicitly, surfaced in telling ways during these discussions. In addition, several wartime productions received increased attention from the trade press, national newspapers, and local newspapers (especially if the film was shot on location, away from Hollywood), all of which

[333] "45 Films Now In Work Have Defense Or Patriotic Mood; Many Stress Comedy Angle," *The Hollywood Reporter*, August 19, 1941, 1.

gave readers an insight into how studio officials were gracefully managing the logistics of film production against the odds of global, national, and industrial circumstances.

Yet the renewed attention paid to the mechanics of the filmmaking process and the labor required to achieve expected results often reinforced existing understandings of what constituted below-the-line labor. In their efforts to turn the spotlight towards those working beneath the creatives and the stars, journalists covering these productions frequently neglected to report on some of the gruesome details related to the working conditions and overall treatment of those excluded from the above- and below-the-line distinction altogether. Indeed, the increased attention paid to the unusual hiring practices and sense of urgency that characterized several wartime productions, but failure (or refusal) to explicate the ways in which some studio officials weaponized these circumstances to justify the exploitative treatment of—-not exclusively, but in particular—workers of color, was one of the key characteristics of the industry during the Second World War. Turning to an example production, 1941's *Sundown*, from one of this period's most vocal and prolific producers—Walter Wanger—enables us to better understand the relationship between the narrativization of labor divisions, the rhetoric of wartime Hollywood, and the physical, lived reality of those working *below* below-the-line.

In this chapter, I focus predominantly on the treatment of the African American extras cast to play Kenyan villagers and soldiers in *Sundown* as exemplary of the industry's attitude toward workers of color during the war. In several instances of the production, the bodies of the extras were pushed to extreme lengths in order to stay on schedule and within budget. The rhetoric surrounding each logistical decision involving the extras is characteristic of what I call 'intensified efficiency'—a modality of filmmaking and production management typical of wartime productions designed to accelerate the process, strip down all unnecessary costs, and

wrap up proceedings in a timely manner in order to get the film ready for distribution and to have an immediate impact in the war effort. A byproduct of intensified efficiency and the focus of this chapter is the effect on working conditions for those *below* below-the-line. First, I periodize the production of *Sundown* by describing its producer's discursive role in shaping industry conversations happening in the months preceding principal photography, particularly surrounding the 1941 Senate Hearing. In doing so, I contextualize wartime production culture by highlighting the rhetorical emphasis on the industry's moral duty and the necessity of aiding the war effort, in conjunction with the material reality of cost-cutting, labor and resource shortages, and enforced pragmatism in filmmaking logistics. Then, turning to *Sundown* as an example of such production culture, I focus on the contributions of the Acoma Pueblo to the production in their agreement to have their land used for location shooting, as well as offering assistance to help build the set. The majority of the chapter that follows closely examines the treatment of the African Americans in production, in contrast to how their casting was framed in the trade and African American press. The chapter concludes, by way of contrast, by turning to the treatment of 'above-the-line' personnel such as lead actress Gene Tierney, and argues that the racialized, gendered, and highly orientalist narration of and commentary on her performance served as a way of erasing the work of those denied access to such representation and coverage—*below* below-the-line laborers.

3.2: "Hollywood has not been unmindful of its own": The Film Industry's Wartime Production Culture

Hollywood undoubtedly made a marked contribution to World War II history. By the time the United States had joined the war, the industry was in full swing with the production of

war pictures, collaborating with the military, the War Department, the Office of War Information, and various other bodies and institutions which together represented a collective attempt to aid the Allied war effort. In addition to producing numerous recruitment, educational, training, and recreational films for the government, Hollywood also engaged with the subject of war in its normal genre fare.[334] As Bernard Dick notes, despite the passing of the 1939 neutrality act, and the declaration of a neutral stance by producers such as Jack and Harry Warner, the industry had been engaging with the subject of war consistently before the Pearl Harbor attack.[335] Indeed, the amount of scholarship produced about Hollywood's activity during the war is itself evidence of the industry's enthusiastic up-taking of its role in the conflict.[336] Yet as many of these works explain, the trajectory was not entirely linear, and support for the industry's activity hardly unanimous. In fact, for Thomas Patrick Doherty, World War II marked a profound shift in the perception of Hollywood from a producer of entertainment to a bona fide "weapon of war."[337]

In actuality, the early part of the war saw the industry in dire economic straits, which had profound effects on the organization and division of industry labor. The outbreak of war in Europe drastically impacted Hollywood's foreign trade, especially in Great Britain. As a result,

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[334] Will Hays separated the industry's wartime efforts into three categories: educational, inspirational, and recreational films. The former two were each devised for military servicemen and the general public as target audiences, while recreational films were aimed at both. See Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 61. Doherty provides a compelling overview of these collaborative productions in the chapter "Government Work," 60-84.
[335] Bernard F. Dick, *The Star-Spangled Screen: The American World War II Film* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1985), 67-69.
[336] For a handful of representative works, see Doherty, *Projections of War*; Dick, *The Star-Spangled Screen*; Clayton R. Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1987); Colin Shindler, *Hollywood Goes to War: Films and American Society 1939–1952* (London: Routledge, 1979); Michael E. Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers: Warner Bros.'s Campaign against Nazism* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Ralph Donald, *Hollywood Enlists! Propaganda Films of World War II* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017); M. Todd Bennett, *One World, Big Screen: Hollywood, the Allies, and World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); Charman Simon, *Hollywood at War: The Motion Picture Industry and World War II* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1995).
[337] Doherty, *Projections of War*, 5.

writes Thomas Schatz, "The war-induced decline in foreign revenues and the problems over British remittances forced the studios to focus more heavily than ever on the domestic market."[338] When the industry consciously decided to produce more war pictures aimed at a domestic audience, then, Hollywood faced accusations of warmongering and propaganda by a group of isolationist politicians, which resulted in the Senate Hearing in 1941.

The Senate Hearing—officially known as "Senate Resolution 152"—represented a pivotal moment in Hollywood history that captured and dramatized broader discourses about internationalism and democracy, and the role of mass media and popular culture in shaping public opinion.[339] It came as a culmination of long-term suspicion among isolationists that the industry was actively producing interventionist, anti-Nazi propaganda to influence national opinion. Following World War I, Hollywood made a concerted effort to stop portraying Germans in a negative light due to the export market, which proved fruitful in the interwar period—that is, until Adolf Hitler placed limits on the releases of American films in Germany from 1936.[340] Chris Yogerst describes the growing anti-Nazi activism in 1930s Los Angeles, amidst which Warner Bros. emerged as the most explicitly anti-Nazi studio, becoming the first of the majors to pull their films from the German market as early as 1933.[341] The studio's most significant contribution to the anti-Nazi sentiment during this period was *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* (1939), which represented "a watershed moment for an industry largely cautious of how it should approach the growing unrest in Europe."[342] Although the film was released as part of a

[338] Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 27.
[339] Chris Yogerst, "Searching for Common Ground: Hollywood Prior to the Senate Investigation on Motion Picture Propaganda, 1935-1941," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 39, no. 4 (2019): 742-743.
[340] John E. Moser, "'Gigantic Engines of Propaganda': The 1941 Senate Investigation of Hollywood," *The Historian* 63, no. 4 (2001): 736-737.
[341] Yogerst, "Searching for Common Ground," 728.
[342] Chris Yogerst, *Hollywood Hates Hitler! Jew-Baiting, Anti-Nazism, and the Senate Investigation into Warmongering in Motion Pictures* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2020), 17.

"remarkable tide of anti-Nazi, pro-British, interventionist movies that flooded American theaters from 1939 to 1941," the explicit condemnation of Hitler raised particular concerns about compromising the United States's neutral stance.[343] As a result from the backlash, Will Hays imposed a temporary ban on anti-Nazi films, though it was lifted as soon as January 1940 when the industry resumed production of films openly critical of Nazism.[344]

The brazen anti-Nazism and interventionism of films like *Confessions of a Nazi Spy* struck a chord with isolationist politicians, who responded by launching an attack on the major studios. Extreme isolationists in Congress such as Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana, D. Worth Clark of Idaho, and Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, along with the America First Committee, organized a subcommittee of the Senate Interstate Commerce to investigate Hollywood for warmongering.[345] The subcommittee's agenda was essentially that "the eight largest motion picture companies were taking advantage of their access to the American people to promote involvement in a war that was none of America's concern."[346] The subcommittee also suggested that Hollywood was under severe pressure from the Roosevelt administration to produce interventionist propaganda, and that the two entities were collaborating in tandem to shift public opinion towards the war.[347] The congressional inquiry began in September 1941, before reaching an inconclusive end in late September. The isolationists were ultimately unsuccessful in their attack, which was dismissed on the basis of its anti-Semitism, and the

[343] Bennett, *One World, Big Screen*, 54. Although the prevailing narrative is that the industry substantially contributed to pro-war and anti-Nazi sentiment through its production of films propagating such messages, others have critiqued this period for not addressing the situation of European Jews as explicitly as one might expect, given how many high-profile producers and executives were themselves Jewish. For instance, see Felicia Herman, "Hollywood, Nazism, and the Jews, 1933-41," *American Jewish History* 89, no. 1 (2001): 61–89.
[344] Moser, "'Gigantic Engines of Propaganda,'" 737.
[345] John Whiteclay Chambers II, "The Movies and the Antiwar Debate in America, 1930-1941," *Film & History* 36, no. 1 (2006): 51.
[346] Moser, "'Gigantic Engines of Propaganda,'" 731.
[347] Arthur F. McClure, "Hollywood at War: The American Motion Picture and World War II, 1939-1945," *Journal of Popular Film* 1, no. 2 (1972): 125.

embarrassing lack of knowledge the subcommittee had about the very films it accused the industry of producing. In the process, the hearing received ample press coverage which heavily favored the film industry, and brought the practices and politics of the major studios to the forefront of cultural discourse in ways pertinent to the discussion of the division of labor.

To date, coverage of Senate Resolution 152 in film history has predominantly focused on the anti-Semitic nature of the isolationists' assault on Hollywood. Both Steven Carr's *Hollywood & Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History Up to World War II* (2001) and Chris Yogerst's recent book, *Hollywood Hates Hitler! Jew-Baiting, Anti-Nazism, and the Senate Investigation into Warmongering in Motion Pictures* (2020) unpack in detail the anti-Semitic implications of the subcommittee's rhetoric throughout the hearing's duration.[348] Even before the committee was officially organized, Nye had attracted criticism for a speech in which he claimed Jewish studio executives controlled "considerably more than half of the motion picture industry."[349] In his biography of Wheeler, too, Marc Johnson describes in detail Wheeler's involvement in anti-Semitic groups and causes in the years prior to the investigation.[350] In that respect, the isolationists did a poor job of hiding their explicitly anti-Semitic agenda, which quickly discredited their myriad criticisms of the industry—some of which were not entirely baseless. In sharp rebuttal to the accusations of warmongering, Wendell L. Wilkie, whom the studio heads had elected as their spokesman, opened his speech in the hearing by highlighting Hollywood's racial and ethnic diversity as part of a point about the industry's condemnation of Nazism.[351] Wilkie alleged that the isolationists "engaged in a scheme to focus on foreign-born Jews in the

[348] Steven Carr*, Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History Up to World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Yogerst, *Hollywood Hates Hitler!.*
[349] Marc C. Johnson, *Political Hell-Raiser: The Life and Times of Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2019): 302.
[350] Johnson, *Political Hell-Raiser*, 295-315.
[351] Johnson, *Political Hell-Raiser,* 303.

motion picture industry as unduly influencing public opinion."[352] With the press largely in the pocket of the film industry, in some respects the hearing was over before it had properly begun.

Yet, there is a dimension of the hearing that has not been as arduously discussed in film historical scholarship, but which is germane to the focus of this chapter. One of the many accusations launched at the film industry by the subcommittee was that it had long engaged in monopolistic business practices, and that production and distribution being controlled by a handful of studios was directly related to the industry's capacity to produce coordinated and targeted propaganda pieces to influence the American public. Some journalists felt that Hollywood was essentially overcompensating with "administration boot-licking" in light of the rumors of an impending monopoly suit which brought on the consent decree.[353] There was a belief that the film industry's desperation to sustain its own practices contributed to its enthusiastic cooperation with Washington and support of the defense effort. And while I do not intend to lend any credence or validity to the isolationists' more anti-Semitic claims about the industry, which were most certainly rooted in pervasive conspiracy theories about a Jewish plot to control American mass media, the *accusations of business monopoly* certainly put the industry on the defensive, prompting leading figures to effectively justify their practices and lay claim to the moral virtue of Hollywood at large.[354]

Indeed, the isolationists repeatedly made it clear that, in their view, the structure of the film industry from a business perspective actively enabled its propagation of pro-war messaging.

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[352] Chambers II, "The Movies and the Antiwar Debate in America, 1930-1941," 51.
[353] "The Washington Idea on Hollywood," *Variety,* August 27, 1941, 4.
[354] As Steven Carr shows, the conspiracy theory that Jews infiltrated Hollywood to seize control of the entertainment industry was not a new idea in the United States, but one rooted in decades of anti-Semitism dating as early as the nineteenth century. Carr highlights the pernicious influence of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903), a fabricated document which describes a Jewish plot for global control, on twentieth century anti-Semitism. See Carr, *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism*, 55-60. For a more in-depth history of *The Protocols*, see Stephen Eric Bronner, *A Rumor About the Jews: Reflections on Anti-Semitism and the* Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

The control by the eight biggest studios—Paramount, Loew's, Fox, Warner Bros., RKO, Columbia, Universal, and United Artists—over equipment, stars, and distribution, meant that almost no film could reach the American public without the consent or input of at least one of them.[355] As Koppes and Black summarize, the isolationists' charge was that "through monopoly control the industry dictated what could and could not be shown in the movies."[356] Nye was an especially adamant critic of Hollywood's monopolies, and brought up charges against the industry from 1938 through to 1941 which violated the Sherman Act.[357] In their response, industry figures chose not to actively deny the accusations of monopolistic practices, but rather to recast the terms of the debate by pointing to the patriotic contribution to the war effort by the major studios. For instance, in his letter to D. Worth Clark from August 1941, Will Hays likened the film industry to the defense industry itself and spoke of the obligation to cooperate with the government, as well as "the duty of the industry to reflect upon the screen these needs of our democracy at a time when it is imperilled."[358] As Marc Johnson summarizes, "The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) […] seized on the hearings as an opportunity to tell the industry's story, casting studio executives as patriotic defenders of freedom of expression."[359]

One of the easiest ways for industry figures to tell their stories and convey their messages, of course, was through the press. Indeed, the heavily biased coverage of the hearings in the popular and trade press did little to dispel the accusations of monopolistic business practice, but were nonetheless effective in casting a negative impression of the isolationists.

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[355] Moser, "'Gigantic Engines of Propaganda,'" 743.
[356] Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 18.
[357] Yogerst, *Hollywood Hates Hitler!*, 58.
[358] "Will H. Hays Tells Senator Clark Charges Are 'False, Shameful,'" *Motion Picture Herald*, September 6, 1941, 17.
[359] Johnson, *Political Hell-Raiser,* 302.

Influential journalists like Arthur Krock and Dorothy Thompson ridiculed the senators' attacks on the film industry, and others framed the studios as comparatively patriotic.[360] Trade periodicals went to especially extreme lengths to defend Hollywood and cast it as the victim. Even Hedda Hopper, who was a staunch isolationist, blamed the Roosevelt administration and liberal activists for perpetuating the interventionist cause rather than the film industry. Hopper argued that the public wanted timely pictures and that the idea that Hollywood should ignore the war was naive.[361] But it was in trade papers such as *The Hollywood Reporter* that the studios sought to truly control the narrative. One article explicitly likened the hearing to a movie set and used this framework to mock the isolationists and trivialize the whole affair. Yet in the spirit of poking fun, the article at one point draws on the above- and below-the-line labor distinction to direct pejorative remarks toward internationalist committee members who, by other accounts, performed well on behalf of the studios. The description of the scene, penned by Jack Moffitt, reads:

> Picture the DeMille setting. The investigation is held in the caucus room in the Senate office building. The Senators have marble halls in which to dream up their charges. Amid the Corinthian columns and crystal chandeliers, the cast and extras were gathered. Half the room sheltered two hundred and fifty specimens of the general public. Opposite was the press and the committee.
>
> Let's look at the cast. Chairman Clark, blonde and affable. He showed a habit of winking at Senator Nye when he tossed off a pleasantry. He has a cute wink something like that of Lanny Ross'. […] McFarland, the last Committee member, lounged in a corner. He looked unimportant as a prop man.[362]

[360] Larry Ceplair and Steven Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood: Politics in the Film Community, 1930-1960* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1980), 161. One article in *The Indianapolis Star* described Hollywood producers as "Beating their breasts and waving the American flag," and anticipated "a stirring pleas based on the patriotic motives" in the hearing. Harold Heffernan, "Hollywood Today: Producers Protest War-Mongering Charge," *The Indianapolis Star*, August 23, 1941, 11.
[361] Jennifer Frost, "Dissent and Consent in the 'Good War': Hedda Hopper, Hollywood Gossip, and World War II Isolationism, *Film History* 22, no. 2 (2010): 173.
[362] Jack Moffitt, "Senate Investigation a Joke," *The Hollywood Reporter*, September 10, 1941, 1.

McFarland, a young Democrat from Arizona, was underestimated by the isolationists and at one point pressed Nye for specific details about the films he apparently found so offensive. Nye, flustered, eventually confessed that he had not actually seen several of the films he had cited as examples of warmongering by the industry.[363] What is striking about this *Hollywood Reporter* article, then, is the castigatory use of below-the-line labor to characterize seemingly innocuous and unimportant members of the committee on either side. It reminded readers who was the driving force behind the narrative, and whose industry was under attack. Perhaps the charges of monopolistic practices were not so far off base.

Indeed, the Senate Hearing was a significant event for many reasons, but especially because it gave figures from the industry the opportunity and platform to narrate production practices and ultimately to wax lyrical about the moral virtues and fundamental utility of the industry to a democratic society. It also made abundantly clear who were the elected spokesmen of the industry, and what power they wielded when pushed into a corner. More specifically, it reiterated the stark division of labor within the industry, in which a handful of men had both power and voice over a large community of workers. Ceplair and Englund put things in no uncertain terms:

> The industry's clear victory in Washington demonstrated indisputably that unified, organized, and aroused film producers and executives constituted a formidable force—far stronger than the guilds. This strength was used narrowly and rather selfishly, though, in the defense of the product itself and their control over it; it was not used in defense of constitutional principles.[364]

The comparison to the power of the guilds here is telling in the implication that whichever group controlled access to the media, and thus the narrative of events, would ultimately come out on

[363] Bennett, *One World, Big Screen*, 86.
[364] Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*, 161.

top. The Senate Hearing afforded above-the-line personnel the chance to restate their own importance and righteousness as purveyors of truth, freedom, and democracy. Few among these were as vocal as Walter Wanger, who went as far as accusing the Senators of having been "hyponitzed by Mein Kampf" and determined to imitate Hitler and bring his anti-Semitic principles to the United States.[365]

As soon as Wheeler and Nye initially accused the major studios of war-mongering, Wanger elected himself a spokesperson of the industry and declared in an incendiary editorial: "Hollywood is not thinking in terms of profits so much as of service to the nation in this grave national emergency."[366] Evoking a sense of patriotism and moral duty, Wanger boldly reframed the Senate's claims that "leaders in the industry have been propagandizing for war under guidance of certain pressure groups," instead listing the industry's many contributions to the war effort, including star appearances at army camps, as auctioneers, flower girls, ushers, and waitresses to entertain soldiers and sailors.[367] Fresh off the success of Hitchcock's *Foreign Correspondent* (1941), by August 1941 Wanger had wrapped up *Sundown,* and *Eagle Squadron* (1942) was in pre-production. In addition to his production work, Wanger had amassed a reputation for the kind of rhetoric he espoused in the editorial, which some called "message mongering."[368] Regardless, his position on Hollywood's role in the war was clear: to continue "to serve all classes well, to lend every aid to the restoration of public faith and to champion, the American way of life, come what may."[369]

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[365] Yogerst, *Hollywood Hates Hitler!*, 39.
[366] Walter F. Wanger, "Walter Winchell On Broadway," *St. Petersburg Times*, August 19, 1941, 11.
[367] Heffernan, "Hollywood Today: Producers Protest War-Mongering Charge"; Wanger, "Walter Winchell On Broadway."
[368] Matthew Bernstein, *Walter Wanger, Hollywood Independent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 141.
[369] Wanger, "Walter Winchell On Broadway."

Wanger's emphasis on the vitality of the film industry to the war effort and to the propagation of democratic values was predicated on the notion that the industry was itself a bastion of such ideals. In numerous speeches and exchanges, Wanger highlighted the co-operative spirit that galvanized studios to put rivalries aside and play their part for the national defense. As Matthew Bernstein argues, "[a]s the crisis in Europe deepened, Wanger was a harbinger of the industry's internationalism"—eventually leading to his election as Academy president, a role which enabled him "to articulate Hollywood's highest social aspirations."[370] For instance, recounting the various relief efforts by studios to support their own workers, such as the establishment of an $800,000 bank account raised through Sunday radio programs of the Gulf Screen Guild show to maintain a home for indigent and aged studio workers, Wanger proudly remarked: "While contributing to these many causes Hollywood has not been unmindful of its own."[371] Despite this comment, and in all his rhetoric of the industry's moral duty, Wanger generally spoke conspicuously little about the economic restraints placed on the industry, or the importance of profit to its sustenance, despite the significance of these factors to his own career as an independent producer.

Indeed, in light of his claim that the industry was "not thinking in terms of profits," some commentary from the period suggests that this was not entirely the case.[372] For instance, an earlier article from October 1939 in the *Los Angeles Times* responding to the Nazi invasion of Poland and initial outbreak of war in Europe drew from the film industry's response to World War I to suggest that "propaganda and flag-waving" should be strictly avoided for financial reasons.[373] Author Edwin Schallert pointed out that films explicitly dealing with the subject of

[370] Bernstein, *Walter Wanger, Hollywood Independent*, 150.
[371] Wanger, "Walter Winchell On Broadway," 11.
[372] Wanger, "Walter Winchell On Broadway," 11.
[373] Edwin Schallert, "Film Industry Avoids Stories on Headlines," *Los Angeles Times*, October 29, 1939, C2.

war were less lucrative, and that only a handful produced after the World War I had ended (such as Universal's *All Quiet on the Western Front* [1930]) were received more enthusiastically by the American public. Over the next year or so to 1940, however, more and more films related to the ensuing conflict were scheduled, planned, and produced, which prompted some journalists to reflect on the ethics and merits of the industry's preoccupation. In one especially passionate editorial, Bosley Crowther bemoaned the uncritical adoption of the war in Europe as the basis for a number of sensationalized, "cheap thrillers" such as *Women in War* (1940), *The Lion Has Wings* (1939), and *Ski Patrol* (1940). These efforts, according to Crowther, gave "a sham, sticky-sweet picture of people amid the horrors of war, and [were] an obvious journeyman job turned out in a hurry to catch an expected market, much after the fashion of those 'quickies' which always follow fast upon a sensational crime or big journalistic expose."[374] Crowther ended by calling on Hollywood to proceed with caution and resist the urge to profit from the fear and anxiety of the American public.

Yet as box office figures continued to fall as part of a "national disinterest in pictures, occasioned by the emotional depression of America," the industry's financial situation became increasingly desperate.[375] In fact, it was proposed among some studios that such low exhibition figures could necessitate "the wholesale dismissal of employes in the low-bracket scale."[376] Using the argument that studio employees earning over $500 a week were protected by their contract from arbitrary dismissal, by June 1940 Twentieth Century-Fox had let go 350 rank-and-file workers, and MGM 250. In the latter case, only three days before the cut occurred, the studio

[374] Bosley Crowther, "Proceed with Care: A Sober Discourse Upon the Subject of Pictures About the War," *New York Times*, June 2, 1940, 123.
[375] Douglas W. Churchill, "Trouble at Home, Too," *New York Times*, June 2, 1940, 123.
[376] Churchill, "Trouble at Home, Too."

claimed in a press release that "there would be no curtailment of employment."[377] The scaling back and cutting entirely of B-picture productions, which so many of the industry's employees relied on for basic income and wellbeing, marked another harsh measure by the major studios to preserve their financial interests at the expense of below-the-line employees. While studio executives continued to monitor and assess the situation in Europe's effect on industry employment, it became increasingly clear that these below-the-line laborers—cameramen, electricians, and carpenters and extras—were most likely to bear the brunt of the impact.[378] A *Variety* article from January 1941 reported:

> There has been a general tendency on all lots to cut corners and retrench wherever possible. Orders to double check every expenditure were issued when it became apparent that foreign markets were going to disappear because of war conditions. The extras were hit harder than any other individual unit, but many painters, carpenters, teamsters, technicians and electricians found themselves between pictures more often than at any time in the past five years.[379]

The article's singling out of extras is especially pertinent, given that available jobs and earnings had been steadily decreasing for months by early 1941. A *Boxoffice* article from February 1941 reported that the situation was so dire that the Central Casting Agency could barely afford to pay its own casting directors, never mind the extras themselves.[380]

On the one hand, then, the industry responded to accusations of warmongering by digging its feet in the sand and restating its patriotic goals as a bastion of democracy and freedom; on the other, it was reconciling a stark lack of labor and resources in the midst of ongoing labor strife in Los Angeles, resource shortages, filming restrictions, and geopolitical uncertainty. The Senate Investigation represented a significant moment for the film industry by

[377] Churchill, "Trouble at Home, Too."
[378] "Film Biz Appraising What Effect Conscription Will Have on Manpower," *Variety*, October 9, 1940, 15.
[379] "H'Wood Labor Relatively Peaceful During 1940," *Variety*, January 8, 1941, 32.
[380] "Hwood extras paid lowest ever," *Boxoffice*, February 22, 1941, 29.

forcing its officials to reflect on the value and role of Hollywood in a time of crisis, which translated, I argue, into more streamlined, scaled back, but ideologically ambitious and heavily moralized wartime productions. What characterized these productions was a sense of novelty, a lack of precedent within the industry, and a need for extreme measures and a by-all-means-necessary approach to production logistics. I call this production culture one of 'intensified efficiency.' Those who bore the brunt of it, perhaps unsurprisingly, were the extras and workers solicited for necessary labor, but who were not afforded the same kinds of protection, representation, or compensation as they would be under 'normal' industrial circumstances. In order to understand how a wartime production played out in the broader context of the industry's growing sense of self-importance, at the same time as its increased financial precarity, the remainder of this chapter focuses on one exemplary production: Walter Wanger's *Sundown*.

3.3: Building their "Own Africa": Set Construction and Native American Labor in *Sundown*

Amidst a very material and financially restrictive environment, Walter Wanger's idealistic internationalism found one of its clearest expressions in *Sundown*, based on English novelist Barré Lyndon's story that featured in the *Saturday Evening Post.* Wanger had previously purchased the rights to Lyndon's *Sundown* before the war broke out, but its adaptation into a serial form in January 1941 gave the impending film adaptation, in the words of Thomas Cripps, "an aura of prescient journalism."[381] Indeed, after similar events to those depicted in *Foreign Correspondent* actually occurred in England (the bombing of a radio station), with the

[381] Thomas Cripps, *Making Movies Black: The Hollywood Message Movie from World War II to the Civil Rights Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 38.

production of *Sundown* Wanger was touted by contemporary journalists as being "ahead of England in the African situation."[382]

Set in Manieka and what at the time was British East Africa, the film follows a set of British colonials who combat German soldiers' attempts to get local tribes to rebel and smuggle weapons. The British soldiers enlist the help of Zia (Gene Tierney) who runs a network of trading posts in East Africa. The film was shot on location in New Mexico to stand in for East Africa, and several African American extras were recruited locally to play the 'Natives' and tribal soldiers. Production took place in the summer of 1941, and the film, directed by Henry Hathaway, was released on October 16th at the Four Start theatre in Los Angeles.[383] The film played to positive reviews and received Academy Award nominations for cinematography, original score, and art direction. In the years since its release, *Sundown* has received little critical or academic attention, and features on very few (if any) lists of significant war films, or Wanger productions. Yet the context and nature of its production provide fascinating insights into the logic of the industry toward race, labor, and resources during the climate of war.

What remains of this chapter investigates the production of *Sundown* by looking at how Wanger's studio responded to a series of 'problems' involving the large cast of African American extras, as well as the shooting of scenes at a Native American pueblo and the trafficking of the cast and crew across several locations. As with any case study, there are aspects of the film's production that are representative and indicative of industrial trends and attitudes at large, while other more idiosyncratic components are more attributable to the individual production and its precise context. Bearing this in mind, this chapter aims to use *Sundown* as a way to come to terms with how, at least, some studios used the rhetoric of the industry's renewed

[382] Hedda Hopper, "And Nowhere a Drop to Drink," *The Washington Post*, July 17, 1941, 8.
[383] "'Sundown' Opening Set," *Motion Picture Herald,* October 4, 1941, 54.

vitality with regard to the war effort, in relation to the shortage of labor and resources, to justify questionable treatment of their workers and extras who were seldom as protected as those considered 'below-the-line.' This treatment, often racially inflected, typifies what I describe as *below* below-the-line labor.

After months of research and location scouting, director Henry Hathaway and his team made the bold decision of making Acoma Rock, New Mexico a primary location for the film.[384] It was a bold decision for many reasons: it was 740 miles by road from studio headquarters in Los Angeles, 65 miles from Albuquerque (the nearest major city), and, as an official Native American Reservation, necessitated a lengthy process of negotiations and agreements with the indigenous population. Yet both Hathaway and Lyndon himself were set on shooting there because it looked "exactly like the Kenya country."[385] In particular, the high plateau and elevation of Acoma was considered strikingly similar to the Lake Tanganyika area of Kenya.[386] An agreement was eventually reached between production manager Dan Keefe and the pueblo officials in May 1941.[387] Among the conditions in the contract was that all traces of production were removed once shooting had wrapped, and the surface of the rock itself was to be replaced where it had been found. Any roads built were to be taken out, wells filled in, and landing fields strewn with boulders again.[388] The transformation from Reservation to East African village and back to Reservation again was thus logistically challenging and highly labor intensive.

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[384] Lawrence F. LaMar, "War Comes To Hollywood With Black Troops In Featured Role," *The Chicago Defender*, August 9, 1941, 21.
[385] Frank Daugherty, "Movies Build Own 'Africa' On Plateau in New Mexico," *The Christian Science Monitor,* August 26, 1941, 6.
[386] "New Mexico Weather Pleases Wanger," *The Albuquerque Tribune*, June 23, 1941, 2.
[387] "Acoma to Be Transformed Into African Village for Motion Picture 'Sundown,'" *Albuquerque Journal*, May 26, 1941, 5.
[388] Daugherty, "Movies Build Own 'Africa' On Plateau in New Mexico."

Production manager Dan Keefe, however, had a plan. In a letter organizing the company's moving to the Shiprock location, Keefe suggested a continuation of the strategy that brought success in the Acoma shoot: "using Indian labor."[389] Part of the negotiation process involved the terms and conditions of labor provision, which Governor George Cerno of the Acoma Reservation and interpreter Steve Orilla made a priority. As a result, construction and transportation of materials was divided among the Native Americans, who shared the stipend set by the contract—an agreement described in the local press as "fortunate for the Pueblo Indians who live there."[390] The locals' knowledge of the area was considered an asset for what was amounting to be a difficult construction project, and, indeed, before contracts were signed and finalized, important problems had already been solved in correspondences between Keefe and Pueblo officials. For instance, when Keefe expressed his concerns about transporting equipment and materials to the top of Acoma rock, Native American service engineers suggested using a small caterpillar tractor to drag small sleds to help navigate the meandering trail to the top of the mesa.[391] In addition, the Forest Service shared their knowledge of the landscape and assisted Keefe in his desire for acacia trees to feature in the background of a handful of scenes, advising that "native 'screw bean' and black locust trees would serve as good imitations."[392] The pinyon-juniper woodland was also trimmed to resemble East African thornbush.[393]

On the surface, things seemed amicable and symbiotic. Keefe, demonstrating his respect for the Pueblo residents and the terms of their agreement, even specified to the cast and crew that

[389] Dan Keefe Letter to Lewis Leary, May 26, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 13: General correspondence, 1941 May-August. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[390] "New Mexico Weather Pleases Wanger."
[391] "Acoma Is Studied For Movie Scenes," *Albuquerque Journal,* May 16, 1941, 5.
[392] "Acoma Is Studied For Movie Scenes."
[393] "New Mexico Weather Pleases Wanger."

no alcohol was allowed on the Acoma set because it was a US government reservation.[394] Yet the sizable task of constructing the set itself and transporting materials was no doubt a strenuous endeavor for the locals. Using the Acoma locals as part of the contract as well as "every unemployed carpenter in Albuquerque," the crew built a 500 foot tramway alongside the Rock, up which provision trucks, lumber trucks, supply trucks, and property trucks, and a generator truck could be transported.[395] All truck drivers were also local recruits, and a 40 tent city to house and feed the entire crew was built at Laguna as part of the project.[396] In fact, a 2,000 gallon water truck had to be lifted to the top of the Rock twice a day when the crew discovered the Native American windmills could not provide enough water from the wells.[397] Frank Daugherty of the *Christian Science Monitor* reported that "Indians, carrying two or three pieces of lumber each plodded the quarter of a mile from the bottom of the rock to the top from sunup to sundown."[398]

While it is true that virtually every Hollywood studio production involved a certain amount of manual labor, the spectacle of this labor constructed in the press is best understood, I argue, in the context of the war effort and the galvanizing rhetoric propagated by the likes of Wanger. The approaches by studios to recruiting labor and effectively managing a workforce regularly evoked a culture of duty, sacrifice, and efficiency in the name of the 'greater good.' One article in *The Albuquerque Tribune* explicitly used militaristic language in its description of *Sundown*'s production: in an eye-catching headline, the author wrote that "British Troops Will

[394] Dan Keefe, "Notice to Cast and Crew," June 10, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 1: Correspondence RE: Acoma, New Mexico, May-Jun 1941. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[395] Daugherty, "Movies Build Own 'Africa' On Plateau in New Mexico."
[396] "African Animals To Roam at Acoma," *Albuquerque Journal*, June 9, 1941, 7.
[397] Daugherty, "Movies Build Own 'Africa' On Plateau in New Mexico."
[398] Daugherty, "Movies Build Own 'Africa' On Plateau in New Mexico."

Occupy Fort at Acoma But They're from Hollywood."[399] While undoubtedly preying on the prevalence of this type of headline as real-world developments unfolded across the Atlantic, this article's characterization of the film's production as an urgent and serious affair places it alongside the national defense effort in a manner that resembles the idealistic speeches Wanger had become renowned for. Importantly, the article makes the labor of the production a central part of its militaristic rhetoric: "Because of the urgency of the matter, construction work on the 'fort' will start tomorrow with a group of local workers hired to build eight buildings just west of Acoma."[400] In that respect, as much as the negotiations with the Pueblo officials were framed as mutually beneficial and amicable, the intensive nature of the labor required for set construction and the hurried nature of the production as a whole facilitated a power imbalance between the studio and the inhabitants of Acoma Rock.

Almost as soon as the sets had been constructed, and truckloads of materials transported up the rock, all traces of production were removed, as per the agreement. Yet it is implied in a number of articles that the burden of this labor also fell on the same residents who had helped to erect the sets in the first place. The *Albuquerque Tribune* article, for instance, which reported that "[w]orkers had already started tearing down the properties today" later declares: "The work was divided among the natives."[401] Despite their being compensated for this labor, then, the residents of Acoma Rock bearing the responsibility of transporting materials and removing them, as well as building sets and taking them down, paints the seemingly amicable agreement between Keefe and Pueblo officials in a more exploitative light. While the press reported that "[a] large staff of workers was restoring the Acoma Rock location exactly as it was before the Wanger company

[399] "British Troops Will Occupy Fort at Acoma But They're From Hollywood," *The Albuquerque Tribune,* May 30, 1941, 9.
[400] "British Troops Will Occupy Fort at Acoma But They're From Hollywood."
[401] "New Mexico Weather Pleases Wanger."

moved in, and in a few days there will be no trace of the movie troupe's occupancy," the emphasis on respecting the contractual agreement and erasing material traces of production has the rhetorically adverse effect of erasing the labor of the residents.[402] Indeed, as another article remarked, "Indians of the nearby pueblo do not appear in the picture."[403] The placeholding phrase "workers" which features in so many reports of the film's production, as well as the film itself, then, serve as surviving evidence and traces for this labor, which is otherwise characterized as paternalistic and altruistic, or erased entirely.

The stakes of this erasure cannot be separated, I claim, from the climate of war and the national defense effort, as well as the historical treatment of Native Americans. Indeed, the subject nature of *Sundown*—the occupation of land—coupled with the unique logistical problems presented by the production—building a set on a Native American Reservation before taking it down—would, on the surface, present itself as somewhat ironic, or even paradoxical. Yet correspondence between studio officials made little to no references to the implications of their actions. Keefe, in particular, was broadly accepting of the legal requirements and stipulations involved in his negotiations with the Native Americans, and seemed more concerned with union demands. In fact, in a letter to Percy Guth, Keefe suggested that the principal negotiator for the Native Americans might provide some legal protection against Guild claims:

> Several disputes may come up as to the number of people including laborers that the unions may insist upon using on location in variance with priveledges that had to be granted to the Indians and believe that we might need legal held. You will note that he is the Indian legal authority here signinf the contract as such and he appers the most likely man to protect us against unreasonale demands.[404]

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[402] "Gene Tierney Forced to Quit Picture In New Mexico for Operation on Tooth," *The Albuquerque Tribune*, June 25, 1941, 9.
[403] "Harry Carey on Location at Acoma," *The Albuquerque Tribune,* June 19, 1941, 9.
[404] Dan Keefe Letter to Percy Guth, May 23, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 13: General correspondence, 1941 May-August. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI. All spelling errors are verbatim from original source.

Discussions and negotiations with Native Americans were thus a means to an end, and one of many logistical hurdles to be overcome in support of the progress of production. The commitment to an authentic depiction of East African terrain and the story of events unfolding in real time both superseded minor production obstacles as well as justified an 'any means necessary' approach to stay on schedule and do what was needed to support the war effort.

In his book on Hollywood's numerous productions about British involvement in the war, Mark Glancy writes:

> Some film-makers undoubtedly thought that they were making a valuable contribution to the British war effort when, in the early war years, they updated the genre to the present conflict. Like the earlier British Empire films, films such as *Safari* (1940), *The Sun Never Sets* (1939) and *Sundown* (1941) portray the good and civilizing influence of the British in their Empire. The novelty of these films is that, rather than fighting the uncivilized natives, the British are now protecting the natives from fascists.[405]

This noble guise of Allied Propaganda is something that translated to virtually all spheres of production. As a film that posed a relatively unique set of logistical problems, the logic used to overcome them can broadly be characterized as intensified efficiency, due to both the rapidly evolving situation of the war itself as production developed, and the tight restrictions on budget and resources. In fact, so intertwined were the availability of filmmaking resources and the geopolitical situation that at one point the Wanger studio reached out to representatives of the Royal Air Force asking to borrow some bombers to use in the film, and were met with a perplexed response: the studio were reminded that the British needed the ships urgently for the actual war going on, and could not spare any for motion picture use.[406] The studio also received

[405] Mark Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain: The Hollywood 'British' Film 1939-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 189-190.
[406] "British Refuse Loan of Airplanes," *Albuquerque Journal,* June 20, 1941, 23.

special authority from the U.S. Army to obtain authentic military rifles and automatic weapons for the battle scenes, something that threatened to delay production before an agreement was reached. Studios ordinarily had special arsenals for gun props, but amidst the outbreak of war and the declaration of national emergency, "all serviceable weapons [had] been commandeered by the U.S. military authorities."[407]

The studio's commitment to representing the British war effort overrode domestic concerns about labor disputes, land agreements, and the transportation of resources. These were obstacles that stood between the materialization of an idealistic, dutiful contribution to the Allied powers. The framing of the production and the studio's engagement with the natives of Acoma rock highlighted the valiant attempts to pull together a realistic dramatic rendering of contemporary events in a short space of time, amidst a shortage of labor and resources. Yet the perspective of the Native Americans is erased by these accounts and is only legible through fractured and scattered anecdotes about their negotiations with Keefe and the studio. One particularly strikingly exchange between Wanger and the chief of the Acoma tribe places the studio's exploits in a lineage of colonial invasion and conquest:

> Before Walter Wanger began the production of his new African adventure film, 'Sundown,' he sent a crew all over the West and Mexico, to find a place resembling Kenya Colony, in Africa. "I want a spot where no white man ever visits," Wanger instructed. They found such a spot—Acoma Rock, N. Mex. Wanger arrived there with his technicians. He met the guide and interpreter, who introduced him to the chief of the Acoma Indian tribe. "Chief say white man here before," the guide translated. As verification, the chief produced a portrait of an ancient ruler of Spain. "Alvarado here before," the guide declared. "Year—1540."[408]

Evidently, for the inhabitants of Acoma rock, the production of *Sundown* was cut from a similar cloth as the preceding centuries of invasion and displacement inflicted on them by European

[407] "'Sundown' Reputed as Wanger's Best," *Kinematograph Weekly*, October 23, 1941, 28.
[408] Leonard Lyons, "Departmental Memo," *The Washington Post*, October 27, 1941, 16.

colonialists. By qualifying and contextualizing Wanger's desire for a location unentrenched by white settlers, the chief in his response almost seems to be nudging the Wanger to reconsider the optics of his filmmaking exploits. This exchange may have been more amicable, financially lucrative, and less violent than those in the past the chief is alluding to, but the implied comparison between Wanger's film production and the expedition into the Acoma Pueblo by Hernando de Alvarado, the lieutenant under Francisco Vázquez de Coronado, takes what was previously only hinted at and gestured toward, and makes it explicit. In an alarmingly off-color remark in his article about the film's production, Daugherty outright states that "the life of the British frontier colony may not differ so very much from the life which has been lived around the Acoma Rock vicinity. Frontiers have a way of resembling one another more than casually."[409] It would be naïve to consider the film industry extraneous to these histories. Rather, driven by an ostensibly anti-fascist impulse that manifested in a desire to convey the moral good of the British empire, the studio's treatment of the Native Americans on Acoma rock for the production of *Sundown* represented just once of many instances in which locally recruited workers of color were exploited and racialized under the guise of intensified efficiency and the duty of the war effort.

3.4: Managing the Workforce

While the treatment and interactions with the Acoma residents were covered only passingly by the press, the film's recruitment of African American extras to play the askari soldiers and Kenyan villagers received ample attention in comparison. Motivated by a similar scarcity of labor that saw the studio recruit carpenters and truck drivers from the local area, and a

[409] Daugherty, "Movies Build Own 'Africa' On Plateau in New Mexico."

desire to circumvent the existing labor infrastructure in Hollywood, Dan Keefe turned to the nearest city, Albuquerque, to recruit extras. Although a cost-saving move on the surface, in reality the studio ran into several obstacles in their handling of the extras which reveal, at the very least, a disdainful neglect of their wellbeing and physical safety. Indeed, the methods Keefe employed in order to 'manage' the population of extras and the general attitudes expressed towards them during the film's production represent, I argue, an especially vivid illustration of how figures in the industry weaponized a rhetoric of Allied Propaganda and the war effort to justify exclusionary and exploitative treatment of people of color on set, culminating in a racializing logic that conflated human body and raw material.

Importantly, the story told about these extras as evident in the film's production records is markedly different from the one legible in the local and trade press. Indeed, much effort was made to frame the film's casting choices as a progressive step forward for the employment and on-screen representation of African Americans in Hollywood, particularly in the African American press.[410] One article in *The Chicago Defender* described the trafficking of the extras to Acoma rock in record-breaking terms: "The group represented the largest number of sepia actors to ever go to such great distance, in the history of Hollywood film productions."[411] Another in *Afro-American* contextualized *Sundown* within a broader trend of increased visibility for African Americans in the entertainment industry, noting that leading figures and producers "had suddenly awakened to the fact that an unlimited storehouse of ability was at hand in the ranks of colored artists."[412] The film was placed alongside *Reap the Wild Wind* (1942)*, They Died with*

[410] For an overview of the history and experiences of African American extras in Hollywood, see Anthony Slide, *Hollywood Unknowns: A History of Extras, Bit Players, and Stand-Ins* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 196-204.
[411] Lawrence F. LaMar, "Race Gets Big Break In This Film About British Rule In Africa," *The Chicago Defender*, June 14, 1941, 20.
[412] Harry Levette, "Theatre Talent Fazes Filmdom," *Afro-American*, July 5, 1941, 13.

Their Boots On (1941)*, The Little Foxes* (1941)*, Sullivan's Travels* (1941)*,* and *Tarzan's New York Adventure* (1942) as representing the highest rate of industry employment for African Americans in 10 years.[413] Another *Chicago Defender* highlighted the semiotic burden of the extras to faithfully convey real-world events, and to represent "the heroic guardians of Great Britain's far-flung colonial possessions."[414] Beyond the African American press, trade publications reported on the technical challenges of representing the black extras: the August 1941 edition of *American Cinematographer*, for instance, sported a photograph from the set of *Sundown* on its front cover, showing Gene Tierney being led along by a Kenyan soldier (Fig. 3.1). The caption reads: "Note use of umbrella to shade camera, and effect of 'booster' lamp on players especially in case of negro at right, who is partly in lamp's beam, and man at left, who is not."[415] Attesting to the aptitude of director of photography Charles S. Lang, the cover and caption provide another rare moment of visibility for African Americans in the industry, indicating both the unique circumstances and demands of *Sundown* as a wartime production.

The importance of the production, then, was twofold: aiding the war effort, and providing employment and visibility for African Americans. Both of these endeavors neatly aligned with the progressive and internationalist persona Wanger had carefully cultivated in the previous decades. Indeed, Bernstein traces these values to Wanger's experience working for the Committee on Public Information in Italy during World War I, which confirmed his "sense of social responsibility" as well as the unifying capacity of films on an international scale.[416] Wanger's relationship with Walter White, leader of the National Association for the

[413] Harry Levette, "Film Stars Getting Better 'Break' Now Than in Ten Years," *Afro-American*, August 30, 1941, 13.
[414] LaMar, "War Comes To Hollywood With Black Troops In Featured Role."
[415] "The Front Cover," *American Cinematographer* 22, no. 8 (August, 1941): 364.
[416] Bernstein, *Walter Wanger, Hollywood Independent*, 34.

Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), also played a crucial role in his characterization as socially and racially conscious.



Figure 3.1: Front cover of *American Cinematographer* 22, no. 8 (August 1941).

Even before Wanger, Darryl Zanuck, and Wendell Willkie organized a talk directed at film producers by White in 1942, the two had exchanged letters.[417] In one correspondence, White plead the case against discrimination of African Americans by the defense effort and asked Wanger to read enclosed testimonies and to help in any way he could: "England's and our desperate need of planes, ships, ammunition and other war materials makes the refusal to utilize thirteen million Negroes in the defense program, suicidal."[418]

In a later message, Wanger enthusiastically told White about his plans for *Sundown*, explicitly highlighting its provision of "an opportunity to use a lot of the colored boys and girls in the community." Wanger goes on to boast that "throughout the entire picture negro actors have roles of marked importance, parts commanding respect and appreciation of negro courage and loyalty."[419] Wholly convinced of the film's representational potential and the urgency of its subject matter, in these exchanges Wanger's rhetoric demonstrates what Cripps describes as "a conscience-liberal stress on the respect earned by, and the appreciation of, Negro courage and loyalty that the war had made possible."[420] Yet as the remainder of this chapter will argue, the reality of the production and the experiences of the extras paint a less heroic and celebratory picture as the one espoused by the press and Wanger himself. To a large degree, the constraints of wartime film production and the culture of intensified efficiency made this impossible; as Lauren Rebecca Klaroff argues in her account of Walter White's engagement with Hollywood:

> While this political atmosphere seemed most amenable to White's cause, liberals in Hollywood, like those in the OWI, were significantly circumscribed by conservative politics during these precarious war years. Whether written by leftist

[417] Bernstein, *Walter Wanger, Hollywood Independent*, 175.
[418] Walter White, letter to Walter Wanger, May 17, 1941. Walter F. Wanger Papers, 1908-1968. Box 14, Folder 9: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1940-1944. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[419] Walter Wanger letter to Walter White, June 16, 1941. Walter F. Wanger Papers, 1908-1968. Box 14, Folder 9: National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 1940-1944. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[420] Cripps, *Making Movies Black*, 39.

> scribes or produced by racially progressive studio heads, radicalism was often stymied in the making of motion pictures.[421]

That said, I would hasten to avail the studio of blame for their treatment of the extras. On the contrary, the film's production records reveal disturbing details about the management of the extras' bodies in ways that point toward a rhetoric justification of such treatment in the context of wartime film production.

For instance, while the African American press enthusiastically described the trafficking of the extras to each location, the logistical problems presented by housing, moving, and feeding such a group proved difficult for Keefe to manage. It also revealed rather plainly that the treatment of the extras was directly related to and informed by their race. Indeed, in his organization of the Shiprock shoot, Keefe pondered several options for housing the extras, leaning toward a contained camp for the production, due to the fact that "The negro problem is the one that makes ordinary housing impossible."[422] In light of the discriminatory policies held by most establishments in the area, Keefe considered an "Indian hotel," which would still entail the studio having to appoint someone to manage and feed the extras.[423] Keefe also expressed a fear that negotiations with the Native Americans from the hotel may take "several days," but that, on the other hand, building their own camp was a hefty financial and logistical commitment.[424] Ultimately, though, Keefe decided on the latter, and devised an elaborate plan to manage the entire cast and crew. Taking into account what the press described as an

[421] Lauren Rebecca Sklaroff, *Black Culture and the New Deal: The Quest for Civil Rights in the Roosevelt Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 206.
[422] Dan Keefe Letter to Percy Guth, May 23, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 13: General correspondence, 1941 May-August. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[423] Dan Keefe Letter to Percy Guth, May 23, 1941.
[424] Dan Keefe Letter to Percy Guth, May 23, 1941.

unprecedented number of African Americans working on the film, a plan was arranged for total segregation between white and black laborers (Fig. 3.2).

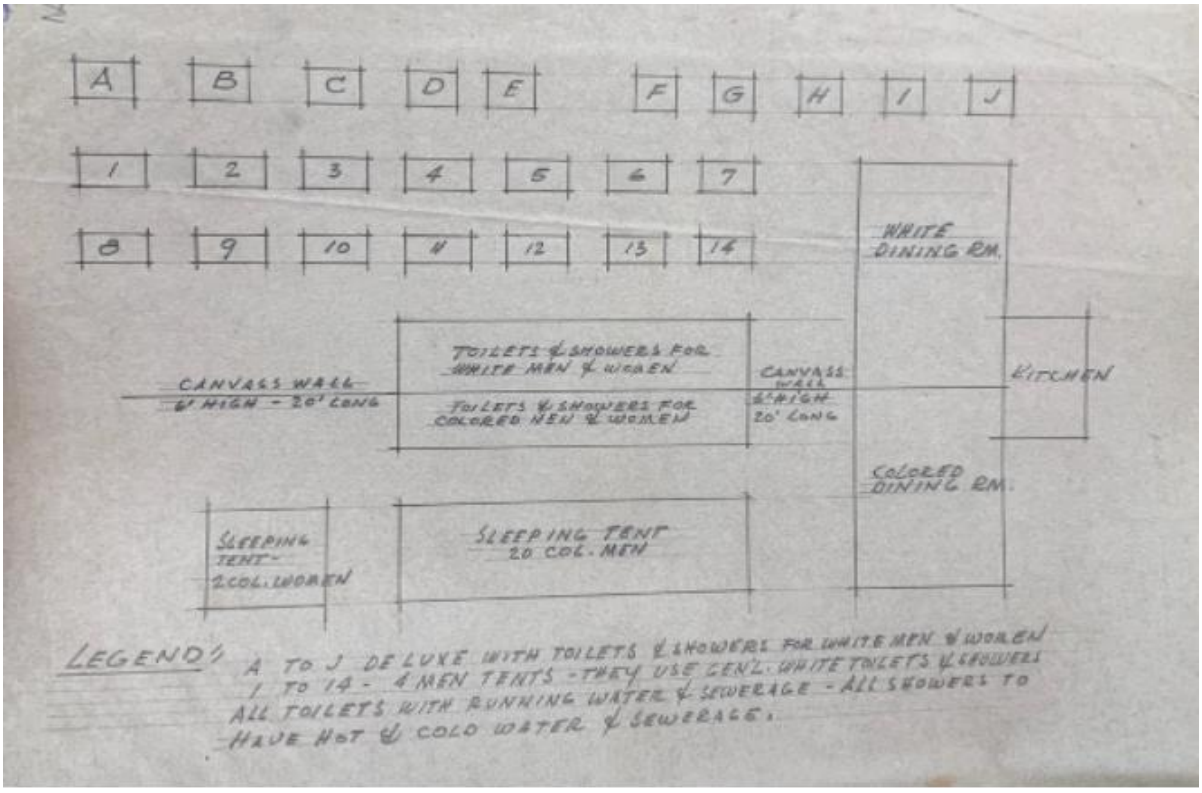


Figure 3.2: Racialized divisions of dining, sleeping, and toilet areas. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 2, Folder 1: Production notes, undated. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.

That way, the population of extras could be managed in-house, without having to navigate discriminatory hotel policies or incur further costs and adjusted rates as a result of the unique occasion. Instead, the production of *Sundown* could sustain its own form of discrimination and population control.

In addition to Wanger's friendship and correspondence with White, as well as the favorable press coverage, the studio appeared to display sensitivity toward cultural representation in its appointment of Prince Modupe as a special technical adviser in the native dance

sequences.[425] Modupe was a member of the So-So tribe in Africa, which, coupled with his study at Oxford University, earned him the reputation as "an authority on tribal customs."[426] *The Chicago Defender* also described him as a "scholarly sepia African."[427] Modupe's father was in fact the chief of the So-So tribe, and Modupe had expressed his plans upon succeeding his father to "build an enlightened culture among his people based on native instincts and traditions [and to] utilize certain types of motion pictures to better interpret white civilization."[428] He claimed that Africans in general were "both amused and confused by the white man, due to the conflicting results of his teaching."[429] While his involvement with the film enabled the studio to gesture toward cultural sensitivity and inclusion, a revealing note in studio meeting minutes clearly states: "Do not accept Prince Modupe as an authority on this picture."[430] The dissonance between the press coverage and publicity regarding Modupe's involvement on one hand, and the ostensibly private correspondence and exchanges between studio officials on the other, is characteristic of the broader treatment of African Americans throughout the production.

From the outset, Keefe viewed the extras as convenient solutions to a representational and logistical problem, in much the same capacity as Acoma rock itself: how to shoot a movie in New Mexico, starring local residents and American actors, while convincing the audience the action takes place in East Africa, and featuring Kenyan villagers and soldiers. Given the lack of African American extras on hand at the studio, the best course of action, for Keefe, was to avoid

[425] "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood," *Los Angeles Times*, August 21, 1941, A11.
[426] "Gene Tierney Plays African Tom-Toms," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 21, 1941, 14.
[427] LaMar, "Race Gets Big Break In This Film About British Rule In Africa."
[428] Hedda Hopper, "Salary Slash Refusal Adds Up to Savings," *The Evansville Courier*, September 4, 1941, 9.
[429] Hopper, "Salary Slash Refusal Adds Up to Savings."
[430] Notes from meeting, June 5, 1941, 2. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 18: Production notes, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.

going through the Service Bureau and Screen Talent agencies, and recruit from the local area.[431] As early as May 1941, he wrote directly to a representative of the Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce asking him "to advise me negro population in Albuquerque available for use in picture."[432] When he received the go-ahead to put out casting calls, more than 300 African-Americans lined up outside the Chamber of Commerce where Gus Schroeder, the film's location director, and Alexander Golitzen, the art director, chose 'types'—old and young men, matrons, belles and children who resembled pictures of African tribal characters they used from a travel book on the continent. 50 were chosen and photographed and about 35 were finalized on the basis of the pictures, however the studio also retained the right to employ hundreds more for crowd scenes on an as-needed basis.[433]

The emphasis on types in many ways foreshadowed the studio's preoccupation with physical condition and appearance, which resulted in a heightened sense of importance being placed on the costume, hair, and makeup of the extras. At the same time, production records indicate costliness and time consumption to be of utmost importance, and a constant source of frustration for the studio. For example, the making up of the Shenzi soldiers by Ernie Westmore proved difficult to execute on location in Red Rock, with 8 makeup men needed to handle hairdressing and body makeup.[434] In order to save time and money, it was decided that the Shenzis would be interviewed, dismissed after being selected, and called back the same

[431] Kate Fortmueller describes the exploitative recruitment and compensation schemes of the Service Bureau and Screen Talent, which for much of the 1910s and 1920s, offered vouchers instead of payment that needed to be redeemed at those agencies for a fee. See Kate Fortmueller, *Below the Stars: How the Labor of Working Actors and Extras Shapes Media Production* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021), 26.
[432] Dan Keefe, Telegram to John P. Murphy, May 7, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 2, Folder 12: Telegrams, 1941 May-July. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[433] "Negroes Rush For Film Jobs," *Albuquerque Journal,* June 4 1941, 9.
[434] "Red Rock Location, Staff and Crew," July 16, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 18: Production notes, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.

afternoon for a wardrobe fitting in order to save paying over-fitting time.[435] The objective, it seems, was to strike a delicate balance between paying the bare minimum of compensation while retaining maximum control over the logistics, and managing the appearance of the performers.

In addition, on several occasions the studio's efforts to cut corners in the management of the extras' appearances were hampered by the input of the Screen Actor's Guild (SAG). Kate Fortmueller has written that "while SAG (and later SEG) helped establish essential contract minimums and safety standards, and occasionally expressed concern for the lack of work for black actors, they did not consistently try to change structural inequities in the Hollywood system or their own union."[436] In one sense, then, the production of *Sundown* represented a rare opportunity for the Guild to intervene on behalf of not just extras, but extras of color specifically. Indeed, Fortmueller notes that for most of Hollywood history, "extras faced the most documented problems in terms of exploitation and underemployment," yet since the formation of SAG, their concerns were "largely marginalized."[437] While the Guild undoubtedly had blind spots and oversights when it came to race, to their credit, they regularly called the Wanger studio out in multiple instances during the production of *Sundown*, in which studio officials seemed determined to test the limits of poor treatment and inadequate compensation under the guise of urgency and contribution to the war effort.

In one such example, the studio was pressed repeatedly to adequately compensate the cast members who agreed to have their heads shaved for the role. A SAG representative recommended that the studio guaranteed a $25.00 bonus to each man who shaved his head for the picture. If, however, any of these men were to receive four weeks work or more in the picture

[435] "Red Rock Location, Staff and Crew."
[436] Fortmueller, *Below the Stars*, 20.
[437] Fortmueller, *Below the Stars*, 43.

then they would waive the $25.00 bonus. In one correspondence Tinsman noted that there was no adjustment for clipping the hair as opposed to shaving it, however, the desire for an authentic representation of Kenyan soldiers and villagers meant the studio continued to bargain with the Guild and the extras.[438] There was a feeling on the parts of the extras that the studio's bonus for shaving heads was not large enough, and so they then appointed a leader from among themselves to discuss this and to negotiate.[439] As a result, Keefe conceded an "agreement with colored boys [of] $50.00 for cutting their hair."[440]

The studio were also pressed to revise their compensation rates for several of the women playing Kenyan villagers in the film because of the decision to do the costume and makeup in-house, even hiring a "colored hairdresser," Addie Baker, at a special rate.[441] Baker's work had "proven quite capable on her tests," but the efforts to cut costs by carrying out makeup and hairdressing in house later backfired with another Guild claim.[442] Keefe wrote to Bill Tinsman with incredulity after receiving a claim requiring studios to pay $11 for character work: "My contention is that I don't quite understand it – if we bring in six colored ladies from Central Avenue and we furnish all the makeup to make them character women, why do we have to pay

[438] Bill Tinsman Letter to Dan Keefe and Artie Jacobson, June 3, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 1: Correspondence RE: Acoma, New Mexico, May-Jun 1941. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[439] Dan Keefe Letter to George Johnson, June 5, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 1: Correspondence RE: Acoma, New Mexico, May-Jun 1941. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[440] Dan Keefe Memo to George Johnson, June 10, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 14: Inter-office communications, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[441] Staff list, 2. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 2: Correspondence RE: Acoma, New Mexico, 1941, July-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[442] Dan Keefe memo to Ernie Westmore, June 7, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 14: Inter-office communications, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.

them additional money for doing so."[443] Keefe went on to acknowledge that striking features and unique physical appearances often incur higher costs, but that because the appearances were being achieved by means of the studio's own creative labor in the hair and makeup department, it should save the production money, not cost more. Keefe continued: "To my knowledge, to command a special price, people either were born with or have acquired some strange attributes, for which we are expected to pay additional for, but when we produce the effect why should we pay additional money for it."[444]

In his response, Tinsman reported that all the major companies paid $11.00 for people "considered 'individual characters'" but that this classification, as contended by the Guild, included anyone sent for "special" wardrobe or makeup work.[445] Indeed, the specific wording by the Guild placed the burden of compensation as relating to the character being performed, rather than the performer's innate characteristics. The Guild ultimately succeeded in claiming overtime and adjustment for a list of women required to wear body makeup, Ubangi ears, and to sing Native songs, which officially changed their classification and thus rate of pay.[446] The studio's efforts to cut costs by directly managing the furnishing of the performers' bodies in-house, however, reflects a protective attitude and reluctance to concede compensation that typifies the production as a whole. The desire to control and manage the bodies of performers of color on an aesthetic, logistical, and economic level—entangling race, labor, bodies, and resources in the

[443] Dan Keefe Letter to Bill Tinsman, cc. Percy Guth, July 22, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 14: Inter-office communications, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[444] Dan Keefe Letter to Bill Tinsman, cc. Percy Guth, July 22, 1941.
[445] Bill Tinsman, Memo to Dan Keefe, July 25, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 2, Folder 5: Screen Actors Guild (grievances), 1941 June-August. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[446] Screen Actors Guild Statement to Walter Wanger, July 14, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 2, Folder 5: Screen Actors Guild (grievances), 1941 June-August. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.

process—is a recurring presence in the film's production records and correspondence between studio employees.

Indeed, the tensions between the studio's desire to furnish and manage the physical appearances of the extras and to maintain their compensation at the lowest level *as extras* resulted in a pattern of Guild claims that pushed back against such treatment, slowing production down in the process. In some cases, the studio attempted to extract additional labor and performance from the extras without adjusting their salaries, particularly related to the music in the film. In addition to the adjustments for the "Native Women" who were asked to wear body makeup and sing "Native songs," SAG also demanded adjustments for 32 men originally classified as extras and whose chants were recorded, because they now met the requirements for "trained voices."[447] In many of the sessions supervised by Prince Modupe, the spontaneous recruitment of dancers and extras to play instruments, and reportedly be recorded without consent, led to a number of complaints. Harold L. Grant, who was initially called out as a specialty dancer, was added to the drummer's list and believed he was recorded without consent as well as working over time without adjustment. In his claim, Grant noted that he had "reason to believe that it was recorded, because a microphone was placed over us. I was told that nothing was recorded and was only payed for 9 hours sideline service."[448] Grant also described being called to interview and for costume fitting on separate occasions by the studio without receiving the regular fee for such work, under the supervision of Modupe.[449] Eventually, Grant received an

[447] Screen Actors Guild Statement to Walter Wanger, July 14, 1941; Bill Tinsman Letter to Dan Keefe and Artie Jacobson, June 3, 1941.
[448] Harold L. Grant, Claim filed against Walter Wanger Productions, July 9, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 18: Production notes, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[449] Harold L. Grant, Claim filed against Walter Wanger Productions, July 9, 1941.

additional $15 plus $2 over time to settle his claim.[450] However, in later correspondence the studio maintained that the sessions were not recorded.[451]

Just as with the recruitment of the extras and its framing in the press as a significant step forward for African American representation and employment in the industry, the lack of coverage these claims received, coupled with the positive treatment of similar labor in the press, relegated the claims to a state of invisibility characteristic of *below* below-the-line labor. For instance, Ben Carter's Plantation Choir, whose work was used in the film, was covered in the black press in ways that praised his success as one of the few African Americans able to survive as a freelancer in the industry. Carter was described by the *Philadelphia Tribune* as having "proven himself one of the shrewdest men in the film colony," and his efforts to improve the employment situation for African Americans also highlighted: "Today he heads the actor's agency that is responsible for the casting of more Negroes in featured and bit parts more than any other Hollywood agency."[452] While Carter's achievements were undoubtedly newsworthy, the image of progress conveyed in such articles unfortunately erased much of the day-to-day mistreatment on set that led to disputes and claims for adjustment.

3.5: Blistered Feet

In the instances I have so far described, the studio expressed a tendency to extract more labor from workers of color than they were willing to compensate for, pushing the boundaries of established union rules before reluctantly conceding adjustments. Yet in other moments, a

[450] Bill Tinsman Letter to Dan Keefe, August 23, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 18: Production notes, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[451] Dan Keefe, Letter to Elmer Fain, August 26, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 18: Production notes, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[452] "Ben Carter Set To Free Lance," *Philadelphia Tribune*, July 31, 1941, 11.

frequently discussed topic was the pain and discomfort of the extras, which highlights in plain sight the studio's elevation of production progress over the safety, comfort, and wellbeing of its temporary employees. From the outset, the studio made it no secret that working on the film–a significant step forward for African Americans in the industry though it may have been–was to entail some degree of physical discomfort, and to require a sufficient amount of resilience from the cast. The provisions for an agreement with extras were described in a memo from Tinsman to Keefe and art director Arthur Jacobson:

> Will work as Native, Soldier, Officer, Dancer, Shifta, Askar, K.A.R., and any other type of atmosphere which the Producer may request at the agreed rate of $55.00 per week. This includes running and running falls that are not deemed to be hazardous, working around gun-fire, animals, airplanes, fire, rain and wind, and will have to carry props, work in bare feet, and work stripped to the waist.[453]

Transparent though it may seem, several of these specifications produced scenarios in which the physical safety of the extras became a matter of concern for SAG. Many of these scenarios demonstrate, one on hand, the studio continuing to cut costs wherever possible and hide behind the assumption that the largely African American cast were happy enough to be employed by the studio and part of a film production that they would hesitate before questioning their treatment or working conditions. Yet on the other hand, the persistent disregard for their wellbeing, and framing of Guild claims as a potential logistical problem that could slow production down, evidence a racialized (and racist) logic towards the extras as expendable resources, whose bodies—just as they were made up and furnished by the studio—were props to be handled as the production saw fit.

[453] Bill Tinsman Memo to Dan Keefe and Artie Jacobson, June 9, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 2, Folder 5: Screen Actors Guild (grievances), 1941 June-August. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.

Such concerns about setting precedents and slowing down production regularly trumped the safety and wellbeing of the extras, culminating in a particularly insidious decision from which the title of this chapter is taken: expressing concern about the severe heat of the sand during the New Mexico summer, a member of the Guild made the suggestion to the production team that they provide sandals painted to match the black skin of the extras in the film to avoid their feet blistering. The recommendation, however, was framed by location managers as not an official claim, but "merely a suggestion for our benefit."[454] Indeed, having become intimately familiar with the details of an official claim from SAG throughout the production, Tinsman in his memo here was careful and deliberate to make this specification. In other words, he effectively reframes the suggestion from one accounting for the comfort and wellbeing of the extras, the one about the progress of production. After all, it would no doubt inconvenience director Hathaway and his crew if the extras were caught limping in the background of a scene, or worse—complaining about blisters on their feet in-between takes.

The film's production records provide little indication that such stoppages or complaints occurred, or that SAG's advice was heeded at all by the wardrobe department. The film itself, upon close inspection, also does not appear to evidence the sandals being made or worn by the extras, who appear in bare feet throughout. Instead, this communication between Tinsman and Keefe, Jacobson, and two staff members not working on the film—costume designer Mickey Meyers and location manager Ralph Slosser—is suggestive of the broader attitude held towards the extras by their employers. As far as the studio officials were concerned, they had made it clear in their advertising of the role, communication to the New Mexico State Employment

[454] Bill Tinsman, Memo to Dan Keefe, Artie Jacobson, Ralph Slosser, and Mickey Meyers, July 18, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 2: Correspondence RE: Acoma, New Mexico, 1941, July-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.

Service, and casting call for each location that "All will have to fire guns, run, fall, work in bare feet and bare to the waist, speak omnies and carry props."[455] And while SAG may have been resigned to just suggesting added measures to avoid blistered feet, other conditions that posed even greater threats to the safety of the extras necessitated more active involvement.

For instance, the inclusion of 'running falls' in the list of services provided by the extras raised some concern in the union. 'Running falls,' an industry term describing the action of running and falling as if shot—very typical of battle scenes—created a gray area when it came to health and safety, given the lack of professional stunt training offered to extras, and of specifications provided to SAG about the surface or terrain the extras were to fall on. It was on this last detail that the Guild questioned the studio on their plans for handling the running falls, and the subsequent correspondence between studio officials provides an insight into the goals and attitudes of the Producers Guild of America during the war. In June 1941 Keefe wrote to George Johnson and reported on his correspondence with SAG about the running falls. At the time, his decision was to shoot them on sand, because "it is hard to hurt a man in sand."[456]

But the Guild, it seems, were not so convinced. As Keefe explained to Johnson, SAG proposed that should the falls take place on "rough or rocky terrain," those men would receive a raise in their daily rates, bringing it to $35.[457] Yet not only would this incur higher wages across the board for those performing running falls, but Keefe also expressed that the Producers Guild were hesitant to allow special prices "for any work that might establish a precedent."[458] The alternative to a special rate would be "to let the scenes work and then have endless meetings and

[455] Bill Tinsman, Memo Artie Jacobson and Ralph Slosser, cc. Dan Keefe, July 17, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 18: Production notes, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[456] Dan Keefe Letter to George Johnson, June 5, 1941.
[457] Dan Keefe Letter to George Johnson, June 5, 1941.
[458] Dan Keefe Letter to George Johnson, June 5, 1941.

discussions at this end in an endeavor to arrive at a decision."[459] Keefe ultimately preferred the certainty of an adjusted rate, but remained hesitant due to the risk of establishing a precedent for subsequent productions.

This exchange captures many of the logistical and financial difficulties of wartime film production, especially present in the reluctance to draw out proceedings in further meetings, potential claims and disputes, and other forms of administrative labor. In addition, the concerns for future productions are representative of the broader industrial culture of intensified efficiency, and a shared focus on resource management as part of the war effort. In this case, the resources in question were the bodies of the performers, and how much pain they could endure on set. Keefe, in his correspondence, seems duly caught between the stakes of his own production of *Sundown* and others he may or may not be a part of in the future. Either way, the concerns of his decidedly above-the-line peers played a substantial role in his decision-making over these ostensibly minor issues, leading him to eventually defer to Wanger himself. Rather tellingly, Wanger's response to this matter was to inform Keefe that these things should be taken up with Fred Pelton.[460]

This remark represents the only direct statement on these issues from Wanger himself in the film's production records. Indeed, it is important to note that the glimpses of working conditions and exploitative treatment that appear in these records cannot possibly tell the true extent or nature of working as an extra on this set. Instead, we have the interests, attitudes, and perspectives of those in charge from which to ascertain the conditions of life on the set of *Sundown*. From their point of view, the studio was giving hundreds of African Americans the

[459] Dan Keefe Letter to George Johnson, June 5, 1941.
[460] Rosemary Foley Memo to Dan Keefe, undated. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 1: Correspondence RE: Acoma, New Mexico, May-Jun 1941. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.

chance to be part of not just a film production, but one directly related to the war effort. On top of that, they offered employment to the local population in Albuquerque and exchange got as close to an authentic representation of Kenyan natives that they considered possible. In a letter of thanks to the employment agency through which the extras were hired, location director Gus Schroeder wrote: "The local colored extras obtained through your agency were a splendid group with which to work. They caused us not the slightest bit of trouble and were most cooperative during their portion of the work."[461] Much of the correspondence between studio officials about managing the various issues that arose from working with these extras tells a different story, however. What is, at the very least, evident from the production records is a pattern of concern from the Guild about the safety and wellbeing of the extras, as well as a preoccupation with their receiving adequate adjustments and compensation for taking on additional labor not initially agreed upon.

As much as SAG expressed concern for the wellbeing of the extras throughout the production, their powers of surveillance and monitoring of daily working conditions were severely limited. The Guild were often restricted to demanding adjustments in the salaries of workers put in unnecessary danger, but this rarely mitigated the danger itself. For instance, in early August, Hathaway and his crew shot scenes in a Cave in which the soldiers fire tear gas bombs at the natives. These bombs were manufactured from one-half titanium tetro-chloride and one-half mineral oil, and covered in a thin class container that shattered when thrown. According to Keefe, these were "thrown in among the people playing natives and produced a smoke

[461] A.D. Schroeder, Letter to A.B. Bets, July 2, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 13: General correspondence, 1941 May-August. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.

effect."[462] Keefe added: "Whereas this might cause some discomfort, there is no serious danger involved."[463] Despite his reassurances, the Guild were concerned about the exposure to potentially toxic chemicals, as well as flailing pieces of glass. Yet in his correspondence Keefe claims that before these scenes were shot, he had agreed an adjustment of $2.50 for the extras, bringing their base pay to $13.50, on top of which they also received overtime. This adjustment was signed for by the extras themselves, and they agreed the same rate for the following day when more cave scenes were scheduled. The Guild, however, felt that a minimum adjustment of $16.50 should be offered to the extras being exposed to broken glass and harmful chemicals. Keefe was reluctant to approve this, given that, as far as he was concerned, he had already agreed and signed an adjustment rate with the extras themselves. So reluctant, in fact, that he suggested denying this claim altogether and going before the Standing Committee.[464]

At no point in the correspondence between Keefe and Guth about the cave scenes is the safety and wellbeing of the extras discussed. Instead, Keefe seemed determined to uphold the existing agreement he had with the extras, paying them what he considered a reasonable adjustment for their services. SAG, on the other hand, clearly had some concerns about the safety of the cave scenes, but could not (or would not) intervene beyond suggesting a higher rate of compensation. Examples like these highlight the limits of their jurisdiction and ability, or willingness, to advocate for those working *below* below-the-line and putting their bodies at risk in service of the production. This racialized treatment is doubly inflected by both the surrounding geopolitical context of war, the sensationalization of the production and its labor in the press, and

[462] Dan Keefe Memo to Percy Guth and George Johnson, August 6, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 2, Folder 5: Screen Actors Guild (grievances), 1941 June-August. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[463] Dan Keefe Memo to Percy Guth and George Johnson, August 6, 1941.
[464] Dan Keefe Memo to Percy Guth and George Johnson, August 6, 1941.

also the representational burden placed upon these local Albuquerque citizens to uphold an image of African courage and Allied support. Disturbingly, the treatment of the natives in the text itself as ready and willing servants of the Allies, whose death is rewarded with a British funeral, resembles the treatment of the extras on set, pushed to dangerous limits without adequate compensation in service of the war effort. The production of *Sundown* thus represents both an indicative example of the industry at work during the war, revising and reworking contemporary material to contribute positively to the Allied effort, while also evidencing an attitude towards race, labor and resources that had long already existed, but which crystallized and intensified in the war climate.

3.6: Soft Hands

It is likely unsurprising that the treatment of above-the-line personnel—specifically, the leading actors such as Bruce Cabot and Gene Tierney—differed wildly from that of the extras, both in press coverage and in the film's production records. Yet in the case of *Sundown,* the framing of the stars' work and effort throughout the shoot not only informs our understanding about labor divisions in wartime Hollywood but also contributes to the fundamental erasure of those working *below* below-the-line. Focusing on the press coverage (including local, popular, and trade) of Gene Tierney's contributions to the film as Zia, in conjunction with how she impacted the progress of production from a logistical perspective, this section, by way of contrast, offers an account of how above-the-line labor was discursively produced, managed, and understood in the industry at the time.

Coverage of Tierney's burgeoning stardom in 1941 drew substantially on well-documented contemporaneous notions of glamor and beauty. In his work on glamor and the film

industry, Stephen Gundle demonstrates how, in the 1920s and 30s, Hollywood reshaped and engineered glamor as a "cinematic phenomenon."[465] Arguing that the studio system actively worked to construct star images as glamorous, Gundle highlights how studios such as MGM effectively "turned glamour into a corporate product."[466] The intertwining of the studio system with advertising, and the beauty industry especially, rendered the notion of glamor as both a discursive and material commodity.[467] However, the outbreak of the Second World War problematized these established notions of glamor and femininity in relation to the war effort. After all, the construction of a glamorous image was dependent on necessarily invisible labor on the part of the woman herself, and—certainly in the case of studio Hollywood—a labor force comprising costume designers, make-up artists, assistants, and several others. Fashion scholar Elizabeth Wissinger describes this notion as "glamour labor," the work that is subsumed and rendered invisible by the very construction of effortlessness as an affect.[468] Yet the political efforts during the war to invite women to hold fort on the domestic front (and later enter the workplace itself) offered often contradictory messaging with regard to the sustenance of a glamorous image. As Mary Anne Schofield describes:

> The conundrum of glamour and grime, of Miss America and Rosie the Riveter, defines the America of 1941 to 1945 with its conflicting worlds of beauty pageants, defense factories, cosmetic advertising, and scrap drives. How and why was it possible, almost imperative, for the World War II ideology of the United States to support both the glamour girl of the beauty pageant and the grimy girl of the factory swing shift?[469]

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[465] Stephen Gundle and Clino T. Castelli, *The Glamour System* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 62.
[466] Stephen Gundle, *Glamour: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 176.
[467] For an account of the relationship between the beauty industry and studio-era Hollywood, see Marissa Spada, "Camera Beauty: Makeup and the Art of Image Making in Studio Era Hollywood," PhD Dissertation (University of Michigan, 2022).
[468] Elizabeth Wissinger, *This Year's Model: Fashion, Media, and the Making of Glamour* (New York: NYU Press, 2015), 10.
[469] Mary Anne Schofield, "Miss America, Rosie the Riveter, and World War II," in *"There She Is, Miss America": The Politics of Sex, Beauty, and Race in America's Most Famous Pageant*, edited by Elwood Watson and Darcy Martin (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 54.

Other scholars have touched on this tension in their discussion of women's contributions to the war effort in the United States, with many highlighting the complicated evolution that notions such as glamor and beauty necessarily underwent to accompany the changing roles of women.[470]

For Hollywood—the chief propagator of glamorous images—the tension between effortless beauty and visible commitment to the war effort for its stars would take many forms. As Wanger described in his editorial, numerous Hollywood actresses made "star appearances at army camps, as auctioneers, flower girls, ushers, and waitresses to entertain soldiers and sailors."[471] In other instances, actresses undertook volunteer work, collaborated with the nurse cadets and The Red Cross, or moved more actively into production and distribution. Mary Pickford, for example, compiled extracts from her silent work to be released as a feature in support of Britain. The feature included scenes from her Biograph, Paramount, Artcraft, and other starring roles, exhibited together in Britain with proceeds going to the Allied War Relief and the Canadian Red Cross.[472] Yet one star in particular was deployed by the industry for her capacity to sustain a glamorous image while simultaneously contributing in substantive ways to the war effort: Gene Tierney. Indeed, according to Will Scheibel, Tierney was actually considered one of Fox's female "war workers" and played her part both in selling war bonds, as well as appearing at the Hollywood Canteen in front of uniformed servicemen to provide a night of free entertainment.[473] Her ability to occupy both spaces made her an increasingly valuable asset in Hollywood's aiding of the war effort.

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[470] For instance, see Karen Anderson, Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); Maureen Honey, Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender and Propaganda during World War II (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Mixed Messages: Women and the Impact of World War II," Southern Humanities Review 27 (Summer 1993): 235-245.
[471] Wanger, "Walter Winchell On Broadway."
[472] Philip K. Scheuer, "Mary Pickford Feature Will Aid War Relief," *Los Angeles Times*, October 5, 1940, 9.
[473] Will Scheibel, *Gene Tierney: Star of Hollywood's Home Front* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2022), 4.

Yet Tierney's coverage during the early war period was also heavily inflected by an orientalist fascination with both her racial ambiguity, and that of her character in *Sundown*, Zia. Of Tierney's stardom during this period, Scheibel writes, "the adaptability of her image as a star discursively framed by ethnicity and whiteness allowed the studio to make (and then remake) that image in accord with changing fashions into the war years."[474] This was especially palpable throughout the production of *Sundown*, and often in ways that seemed at odds with the sense of journalistic timeliness of the film, and the production culture of intensified efficiency. Indeed, the press's preoccupation with Tierney's beauty and mystique at times actively contradicted the broad messaging or urgency that characterized the production. Tierney's transformation into the character of Zia was, for the most part, playfully lauded by critics and commentators, undercut by a safe reassurance for readers that such race playing was ultimately temporary—a costume to be taken off at the end of the day, darker makeup to be removed. More broadly, there was a notable sense of undercutting the potential seriousness of her dabbling in Orientalist imagery and visual culture, while at the same time commending her actorly efforts and labor as secondary feats.

Indeed, in an announcement of the casting decision, the *State Journal* wrote "She will play the role of Zia, a supposedly half-caste girl who owns and operates a chain of trading posts across the most desolate and treacherous section of Africa. Her role demands not only extraordinary physical attraction but dramatic ability as well."[475] The emphasis here is clearly on beauty and physical allure as the primary driving force behind her casting, with actorly effort a necessary but secondary component. In further promotion for the film, including interviews with Tierney, there were frank discussions about how she had been type-cast in her career and what

[474] Scheibel, *Gene Tierney*, 44.
[475] Hayden R. Palmer, "Filmmakers Have a Habit," *State Journal*, July 3, 1941, 5.

implications the role of Zia posed for her image. She narrates her arrival in Hollywood as being "'typed' as a petticoat girl," but explicitly frames *Sundown* as having the potential to liberate her from such constraints.[476] According to the same interview, Tierney got the part of Zia by catching the attention of Wanger while attending a social function, to which she wore "a semi-Arabian costume." Wanger apparently remarked to her that she'd "make a perfect Arabian girl" and, sure enough, days later she received a call requesting her services on a loan from Fox to star in *Sundown*.[477] Assuming this anecdote to be true, Wanger evidently envisaged a similarly careful appropriation of Arabian clothing and imagery in the character design for Zia as he saw in Tierney's outfit for the social function.

Coverage of Tierney's attire for the film, for instance, was keen to clarify that, despite the adoption of Arabian fashion, Tierney's beauty was to be unaffected by modesty customs. One article captures this dynamic in its description of Tierney's donning of an Arabian Sari:

> After having seen the little actress in 'The Return of Frank James,' 'Hudson's Bay,' 'Tobacco Road' and the yet to be released 'Belle Starr,' even Hollywood would not recognize her as the same person today when she appeared on the Wanger sound stage clad in an Arabian Sari. A Sari, in case you are not familiar with the garment, consists of a brassiere-like affair with a skirt and nothing between them. Arabian modesty calls for a silk shawl which drapes over the head and the torso but in the movies the shawl is mostly a headdress. 'Yes I'm the same Gene Tierney,' the blue-eyed, 20-year-old actress laughed as we entered her dressing room on the stage. 'But now I'm a glamor girl. How do you like it?' We liked it fine.[478]

Here we find a careful stipulation that Tierney's headwear was *not* following Arabian modesty customs but instead retained her capacity to titillate and show skin by wearing the Sari as a shawl that functioned as "mostly a headdress." The author also provides a strikingly racialized sense of reassurance that the blue eyed, *white* Tierney is still present—a reminder that this is performance

[476] Alexander Kahn, "G. Tierney To Appear As Arabian," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, July 9, 1941, 27.
[477] Kahn, "G. Tierney To Appear As Arabian."
[478] "Gene Tierney Wears a Sari," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, July 8, 1941, 8.

and costume, and that the orientalism on display is temporary and playful, rather than substantial. Other articles expressed similar sentiments: in one describing her as "our Gene Tierney," the author catches Tierney wearing "a filmy black veil costume that permits pleasant revelations and a bare midriff." This account of the Sari provides similar stipulation that Tierney is *not* following modesty customs, yet when the author asks her about the costume, Tierney certifies it as "authentic African…but I think it makes me look like a Petty girl."[479] Again, coverage here carefully balances an attention to the adoption of ostensibly authentic costume, a dabbling in Orientalist imagery, and a playful reassurance that Gene Tierney *is still Gene Tierney*.

While the authenticity of Tierney's costume was debated and trivialized, there was a general understanding of it as a temporary garment, and something fashionable. This was taken to extremes when reports emerged of Dominican Actress Maria Montez, also known as the Queen of Technicolor, adopting Tierney's "'native' hair-do" for the film.[480] Yet discussion around Tierney's ethnicity continued the trend of gesturing toward exoticized notions of the Orient, but with a similar sense of fluidity to costume and makeup. One article promoting *Sundown's* opening in Atlanta described Tierney as a "lovely dark beauty," while simultaneously undermining her actorly transformation into the character of Zia by calling her "supposedly the half-case daughter of a rich Arab trader."[481] Another article, perhaps more intriguingly, took pains to specify that "her deep tan was produced by the make-up artists rather than the blazing New Mexico sun."[482] Here the same reassurance for readers that Tierney's racial transformation is temporary is present again, with below-the-line labor firmly implicated in her dabbling in

[479] John Chapman, "Looking at Hollywood," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 12, 1941, 9.
[480] "Jimmy Fiddler," *Carlsbad Current-Argus*, October 24, 1941, 8.
[481] "'Sundown,' In Africa, Next Film At Grand," *The Atlanta Constitution*, October 26, 1941, 6.
[482] "New Mexico Weather Pleases Wanger."

orientalist imagery, yet somehow detached from the broader rhetoric surrounding the production as a timely (and time-sensitive) contribution to the war effort.

On a logistical level, Tierney's on-set contributions and extratextual activities impacted production progress in numerous ways. Because Tierney was contracted to Twentieth Century-Fox, the Wanger studio were only allowed to borrow her for an 8-week period, since she was slated to start filming *The Shanghai Gesture* (1941) on August 25, meaning that all retakes and added scenes for *Sundown* had to be wrapped-up by then.[483] She also arrived on set after filming had began, due to having to finish scenes for *Belle Star* (1941).[484] In addition, Tierney was allowed to leave the set to attend a convention organized by Twentieth Century-Fox at which her and George Sanders were introduced.[485] Of more consequence to the shooting schedule was Tierney having to travel back to Hollywood for a wisdom tooth operation, which meant the production company stayed in New Mexico for 10 days longer.[486] While, of course, it was not Tierney's fault that production was halted for her tooth operation, press coverage of the stoppage and the widespread impact on production of the physical discomfort of one crew member highlights the vastly different treatment and status enjoyed by those above-the-line. Indeed, a lengthy investigation was launched when a red and black, diamond-designed rug that Tierney used for comfort in one of the rental cars when traveling from Acoma to Ship Rock went missing. Studio officials frantically reached out to the Albuquerque Hilton Hotel manager and

[483] George Johnson memo to Walter Wanger and Dan Keefe, August 11, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 18: Production notes, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[484] Louella O. Parsons, "Gene Tierney Goes On Location Soon," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 12, 1941, 28.
[485] Miss Lemke memo to Dan Keefe, July 14, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 18: Production notes, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[486] "Gene Tierney Forced to Quit Picture In New Mexico for Operation on Tooth."

asked him to call the cab company to inquire if the rug was handed in.[487] Yet because the production used their own drivers and not the cab company's, the studio resorted to inspecting their own time cards to identify which driver transported Tierney to Shiprock and reached out to him directly.[488] Such anecdotes provide a sense of the treatment and consideration the livelihood and bodies of above-the-line stars were regularly afforded, even during the war and in the context of a production explicitly designed to aid the war effort.

Despite some of the headaches Tierney might have caused the studio during the production of *Sundown*, in return she offered commercial appeal, which the studio actively weaponized in extratextual promotion. Several of these campaigns and advertisements explicitly drew from the orientalist aesthetic produced and established in press coverage of Tierney's casting, costume, and makeup. For instance, one tie-in with department stores involved the development of a new fashion color shade called "Sundown" which featured in publications such as *Women's Wear Daily* to coincide with the film's fall release.[489] This especially tone-deaf effort to capitalize on what was supposed to be a journalistic war film about British soldiers in Kenya highlights both the preoccupation with Tierney's beauty and glamor, as well as the profitability of Orientalist imagery and visual culture during the war. It also captures the discursive tensions surrounding labor and femininity during the war—how could the studio reconcile Tierney's status as one of Fox's female "war workers" while simultaneously profiting from her glamorous star-image and orientalist appeal?

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[487] Lewis Leary letter to George Lusk, August 28, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 18: Production notes, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[488] George Lusk, letter to Lewis Leary, September 1. 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 18: Production notes, 1941 May-September. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[489] "New Fashion Color Named for 'Sundown,'" *Motion Picture Herald*, August 9, 1941, 61.

Such a contradiction was perhaps best encapsulated by Tierney's appearance in a Jergens lotion tie-in, which featured the actress in costume as Zia alongside co-star Bruce Cabot, with her "serenely-smooth, soft hands" on display.[490] The copy informs readers that "You, too, can have soft hands" just like Tierney. Of course, star appearances in advertisements for cosmetic products were bountiful during this period, but the explicit emphasis on Tierney's hands captures the fundamental juxtaposition of labor divisions during wartime film production culture. Gundle writes of how "constructed femininity provided a resource for store display and the periodical market photographers and the nascent advertising industry."[491] In such paratexts, Tierney's entanglements with ancillary industries related to beauty and cosmetics can be said to complicate her broader discursive role in the Allied war effort. At the very least, the rhetorical framing of her soft hands as a crucial commodity both for her romantic endeavors and career success as an actress paints a contrasting image with those working *below* below-the-line, for whom such soft hands were routinely at odds with their occupation. For the above-the-line personnel, paratextual materials such as press coverage, interviews, and promotional tie-ins created a perception of labor's absence, which is itself gendered and intertwined with discourses of femininity and glamor. In other words, Gene Tierney rarely had to worry about her feet blistering in the New Mexico sun, but was more likely preoccupied with the softness of her hands. Both of these dynamics are predicated on a racialized logic of the human body as commodity and raw material, yet with markedly different valuations.

[490] Jergens lotion commercial, *Modern Screen*, October 1941, 91.
[491] Stephen Gundle, *Glamour: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 127.



Figure 3.3: Jergens lotion commercial, *Modern Screen*, October 1941, 91.

3.7: Conclusion

Thinking about these processes by complicating the above- and below-the-line distinction can help to unpack the ways in which the film industry valued different types of labor, especially during the war, when labor and resources were at a shortage. The production culture of intensified efficiency that characterized *Sundown* brought numerous issues to the fore but also put discursive strain on existing definitions of femininity and glamor. The decision to shoot on location in New Mexico necessitated that the Wanger studio consulted the local areas for labor, circumventing the traditional infrastructure in Los Angeles. As a result, the treatment and exploitation of the precariously employed, temporary workforce revealed and exacerbated industrial priorities and predispositions. One article attempted to describe a trend of actors finding success by starring in films set in Africa, and highlighted Tierney's breakout turn in *Sundown* as a recent example. The author writes:

> Africa may be the Dark Continent to a lot of people but it is a bright spot in the careers of many movie stars. It was 'The Shiek' which made the late Rudolph Valentino a screen immortal. 'Beau Geste' did much to help Gary Coper, 'Algiers' made Hedy Lamarr a star overnight. 'Under Two Flags' and 'The Desert Song' brought fame and fortune to a number of stage stars and producers before winning international recognition as screenplays. Now the man who made 'Algiers' has brought independent stardom to Gene Tierney in 'Sundown'—her fifth picture. The trek across the hot sands has lead to golden opportunities again.[492]

After mentioning Tierney's casting in *Sundown*, the author deploys the metaphor of trekking across the hot sands to describe the above-the-line labor of the soft-handed stars, while the Screen Actors Guild were expressing concern about the blistering feet of the African American extras who were literally trekking across the hot sands of the New Mexico desert. Not only is their labor somehow mocked by this evocation, but also necessarily erased—rendered a kind of

[492] "'Dark Africa' Isn't to Many," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 18, 1941, 21. Spelling and grammatical eras are reproduced verbatim from the original article.

rhetorical collateral damage in the praise and elevation of the comparatively comfortable star labor.

Part of the irony, of course, is that despite the author's metaphorical intentions, the article makes little of the fact that several of the films it mentions—including *Sundown*—were shot on location in the United States (not in Africa).[493] *The Sheik* was shot just outside of Los Angeles on "a stretch of barren sand" twenty years prior, and featured similar efforts to faithfully recreate the Sahara in Southern California as those in *Sundown* to recreate the Kenyan landscape.[494] *Beau Geste* (1939) was shot on the same site as the 1926 version in Yuma, Arizona, with a tent city constructed to house the cast and crew for the shoot.[495] Yet what set *Sundown* apart was the industrial and geopolitical context of its production; from Wanger's interventionist rhetoric in the press, and defense of the industry against the Senate Hearing of 1941, to the sense of journalistic timeliness and desire to wrap up production as soon as possible, and its impact on labor divisions and relations. Wanger's decision to shoot on location doubtless posed its own logistical challenges, but the narrative I have presented in this chapter emerging from the film's production records reveals the myriad ways the studio ultimately benefited from the decision to shoot in New Mexico. Whether it was the availability of cheap and fluid labor from Native Americans on the pueblo, or the exploitability of the African American extras as a malleable workforce, studio officials capitalized on the unique and novel conditions of wartime production culture to circumvent labor strife altogether. In the process, the culture of intensified efficiency helped to

[493] The only one of these to include any footage actually shot in Africa was Wanger's *Algiers* (1938), for which London-based cinematographer Lloyd Kechtel was sent to Algeria to obtain background and exterior footage. The crew obtained special permission from the French colonial office and co-operated with the local government upon arrival. See "Boyer to Star in 'Algiers,'" *The Daily Film Renter,* April 11, 1938. 2.
[494] Paramount hired a technical expert and a staff of carpenters and laborers to artificially construct date palms from strips of lumber. See "Realistic Bit of Sahara Desert Transplanted in Sunny California," *Detroit Free Press*, November 27, 1921, 10.
[495] "Paramount Erects Tent City For 'Geste' Locale," *The Hollywood Reporter*, January 11, 1939, 5.

set a precedent for other productions during the war, which similarly sought to recruit labor locally on location in the United States to avoid both the jurisdictional disputes between craft guilds in Los Angeles, and the dwindling availability of unionized craft labor due to the draft and the more financially appealing defense industry.

Chapter 4

Walkaway Productions

Local Labor and Location Shooting

4.1: Introduction

In the previous chapter, most of the logistical and laborious challenges faced throughout the production of *Sundown* were related to Walter Wanger's choice to shoot the film on location in New Mexico. The decision impacted the production in both positive and negative ways: although large amounts of materials and crew had to be transported from Hollywood to the site, in return, the studio had greater access to more 'authentic' locales and scenery, as well as to cheaper local labor which—despite the best efforts of the Screen Actors Guild to advocate for them—was still solicited and managed largely beyond the purview and jurisdiction of Los Angeles-based labor organizations. The same special circumstances that were used to justify the production culture of intensified efficiency also motivated the Wanger studio to shoot the film on location; indeed, several wartime productions made similar decisions under the guise of the unique circumstances of the war itself. As the war progressed, a trend emerged of films being shot on location in the United States which often took advantage of logistical loopholes as a way of circumventing some of the restrictions on shooting and materials in Los Angeles, as well as the labor disputes continuing to affect the city. This chapter focuses on that trend.

Many scholars have written about location shooting in the context of postwar 'runaway' productions, which took place almost exclusively overseas, and were typically large in their scale and budget. Yet the culture of domestic location shooting during the war has received comparatively less attention, despite the groundwork—I argue—that it laid for the postwar period. Studios learned a great deal about the affordances and pitfalls of location shooting during the war, and those experiences changed and shaped the industry in the following years. In particular, studios learned the benefits of hiring local labor while on location, which enabled them to circumvent the jurisdiction of Hollywood unions and pay-scales while equally enjoying greater freedoms and flexibility in terms of job responsibilities and duties. And while these benefits later became more pronounced in the context of runaway productions overseas, domestic location shooting helped to establish studios' knowledge and capacity for cheaper and more cost-effective productions. In this chapter, I consider what precedents for postwar runaway productions were set during the war, paying particular attention to the sourcing of cheaper labor to offset production costs. I call these domestically shot films 'walkaway productions.'

In the first section, I observe and describe the overall trend toward domestic location shooting in the early years of World War II, and to what extent these productions were both different from but also resembled later runaway productions. Then, I focus on Paramount's *North West Mounted Police* (1940) as an example of an enforced hybrid approach to location shooting, in which the studio exhausted its budget and resources shooting on location, and had to bring the production crew back to the studio to complete photography. Focusing on the use and treatment of Native American extras as an additional labor supply, I argue that the production brought together two traditions of racialized labor within the industry: the hiring of unionized Native American extras in a studio context, and the sourcing of 'authentic' Native Americans

from reservations on location. Such a clash, I claim, highlighted the significance of labor to location shooting decisions.

Indeed, during this period rife with jurisdictional disputes and labor unrest in the studio system, executives and producers were especially on the lookout for alternative sources of below-the-line labor. This demand was, on some occasions, met with a timely supply, in the form of military collaboration. In the remainder of the chapter, using the aviation genre as an example, I look at Paramount's production of *I Wanted Wings* (1941) in conjunction with the Army Air Corps and the War Department as a symbiotic agreement which enabled the studio to circumvent the financial and logistical challenges of location shooting. The expertise, materials, and personnel provided on site at Randolph, Kelly, and March Fields by the Air Corps made what was already a challenging production considerably smoother and more achievable. Meanwhile, hundreds of studio employees were left bereft of employment in Hollywood itself, and real-life cadets were given the chance to feature in the film as extras. At the same time, those excluded from representation and employment on the grounds of race and gender were afforded no role in proceedings, even under the uniquely time- and resource-sensitive conditions of what became an important wartime production.

4.2: "Off the Sound Stage and Back to Nature": Wartime Location Shooting

'Runaway productions'—films shot on location overseas, normally recruiting labor locally—flourished in the late 1940s and into the 1950s. Although studios would often cite authenticity as a principal reason for shooting on location, in actuality a number of factors both during and after World War II contributed to and facilitated the normalization of runaway productions. In his book *Runaway Hollywood* (2019), Daniel Steinhart provides a detailed

overview of the trend which broadly argues that a constellation of industrial factors contributed to movie studios opting to leave the 'thirty-mile zone' (or TMZ) of Los Angeles to shoot on location.[496] Among these factors, Steinhart claims, were the 1948 Paramount Antitrust case, which forced the major studios to cut overhead and sell their backlots; the shift toward new widescreen technologies leading to an interest in exotic and authentic locales in response to the rise of television in the 1950s; technological changes such as faster film stock processing and portable cameras and sound equipment; and, crucially, the ability to recruit cheap labor from the locale itself.[497]

In fact, the term 'runaway productions' was coined by studio unions, who felt that the principal motive for studios was to "avoid paying union wages, hiring cut-rate foreign labor instead."[498] Indeed, as Camille Johnson-Yale argues, "In almost all cases, key actors, directors, and writers are considered irreplaceable labor that must travel with productions, while below-the-line labor have more often been considered interchangeable, with most set labor hired on location."[499] By the time runaway productions were in full swing after the war, the appeal of cheap labor—particularly in foreign countries—had changed the industry's perspective on cost-effective filmmaking and location shooting.[500] Sheri Chinen Biesen summarizes this shift, writing that by the 1940s, "the advent of new filming strategies changed location filming from

[496] As Jennifer Peterson explains, the TMZ or 'studio zone' refers to the area "in which most studio filmmaking occurs; outside this zone, permitting is different and production costs are higher." Jennifer Peterson, "The Silent Screen, 1895-1927," in *Hollywood on Location: An Industry History,* edited by Joshua Gleich and Lawrence Webb (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 31.
[497] Daniel Steinhart, *Runaway Hollywood: Internationalizing Postwar Production and Location Shooting* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2019), 5-6.
[498] Steinhart, *Runaway Hollywood*, 26.
[499] Camille Johnson-Yale, *A History of Hollywood's Outsourcing Debate: Runaway Production* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2017), 6.
[500] According to Drew Casper, foreign crews worked from between 20-50% below the payscale of unionized employees in Hollywood. See Drew Casper, *Postwar Hollywood: 1946-1962* (Malden: Blackwell, 2007), 50.

being a cost multiplier to a potential cost saver."[501] Studios could aim for higher production values in big budget productions while saving on labor costs.[502] One of the most appealing aspects of shooting on location from a labor perspective was the ability evade the jurisdictional disputes that plagued Hollywood during the war. According to Gerald Horne, after the war a Paramount executive claimed that 28 combinations of craft unions still had jurisdictional differences.[503] While studio executives often tried to play up the conflict between unions as part of a "divide and conquer" strategy, given the numerous other challenges faced by film production during the war, the studios "increasingly viewed jurisdictional warfare as draining."[504] This provided sufficient motivation to look elsewhere for labor.[505]

The ideal location would offer a comparatively relaxed union system that did not enforce such strict jurisdictional boundaries, which would enable studios to pay workers less for more work—and not just total volume of work, but more *types* of work. Runaway productions often featured a more fluid division of labor in which onset roles and titles mattered less than getting the job done; it was common, for instance, for extras to pitch in with additional work where required in ways that would not normally be permitted in Hollywood. Indeed, hiring local extras enabled studios to circumvent potential claims and salary adjustments requested by the Screen Actors Guild at the time—much to the chagrin of character actors and extras based in Los Angeles. Kate Fortmueller describes the "demonstrable negative impact" of runaway productions

[501] Sheri Chinen Biesen, "The Classical Hollywood Studio System, 1928-1945," in *Hollywood on Location: An Industry History,* edited by Joshua Gleich and Lawrence Webb (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 46.
[502] Steinhart, *Runaway Hollywood,* 146.
[503] Gerald Horne, *Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930-1950: Moguls, Mobsters, Stars, Reds, & Trade Unionists* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 156.
[504] Horne, Class Struggle in Hollywood, 157.
[505] Johnson-Yale considers the postwar shift toward runaway productions emblematic of a broader industrial trend of de-territorialization and mobilization of production processes, as a response to the establishment of the New International Division of Cultural Labor (NICL). Johnson-Yale, *A History of Hollywood's Outsourcing Debate*, 19-20.

on Hollywood extras, who were largely considered "not worth transporting to foreign locations."[506] At the same time that studios would consistently frame the chance for local residents in different countries to feature in a Hollywood film as once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, on several occasions this rhetoric was weaponized in order to extract cheap and easy labor from extras standing by on set. In her article on the runaway production *Bhowani Junction* (1956), Fortmueller characterizes Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's attitude toward the film's Pakistani extras as "paternalistic" which enabled the studio to justify the low wages as "better than no wage at all" and ultimately something altruistic.[507] In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how a similar attitude was expressed toward the African American extras in *Sundown* (1941), and the reception of their casting portrayed as similarly progressive and altruistic despite the abusive treatment they were subjected to on set.

The enlisting of extras to perform a variety of spontaneous, often menial tasks on set that normally would be prohibited by the Screen Actors Guild epitomized the allure of runaway production culture, especially amidst the jurisdictional tensions the industry experienced during and immediately following the war. For instance, capitalizing on the investments the likes of RKO made to Mexican film studios such as Churubusco, shooting on location in Mexico, according to Colin Gunckel, "emerged as an alternative to the labor strife besieging Hollywood during these years."[508] The Mexican film industry, Gunckel goes on, "was described repeatedly as being blissfully free from the jurisdictional conflicts at the heart of union clashes in

[506] Kate Fortmueller, *Below the Stars: How the Labor of Working Actors and Extras Shapes Media Production* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2021), 66.
[507] Kate Fortmueller, "Encounters at the Margins of Hollywood: Casting and Location Shooting for Bhowani Junction," Film History 28, no. 4 (2016): 109.
[508] Colin Gunckel, "A Cinema Between Mexico and Hollywood: What We Can Learn from Adaptations, Remakes, Dubs, Talent Swaps, and Other Curiosities," in *Cinema Between Latin America and Los Angeles: Origins to 1960*, edited by Colin Gunckel, Jan-Christopher Horak, and Lisa Jarvingen (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 130.

Hollywood."[509] Filmmakers found that recruiting locals to help with carrying equipment, cooking, performing as extras, and whatever else was needed was remarkably cheaper and easier than navigating the rules and restrictions of craft guilds in Hollywood. Countries like Mexico afforded studios with a production culture that actively blurred boundaries between job descriptions and responsibilities, resulting in a more fluid system in which everyone involved chipped in with whatever needed to be done.[510] Of course, in reality this manifested in a highly exploitative production culture which preyed on the perceived naivete of foreign populations, who, according to the studios, were simply happy to be involved at all.[511]

Observing some of the coverage of early runaway productions provides insight into how local labor saved the studios money while exploiting local populations. In a 1947 *New York Times* article reporting on the production of *The Fugitive* (1947) on location in Mexico, author Frank Nugent pays ample attention to the quotidian aspects of the film's production culture, and how the company of 300 "lived off the land" for the duration of the shoot. After remarking on the frequent boundary-crossing and lack of jurisdictional rigidity in the Mexican film industry, Nugent documents the division of labor of the Tepoztecos on location:

> Some of them were drafted as extras at the unheard-of wage of twelve pesos a day—roughly $2.50—which is half again as much as a good carpenter makes. A dozen of the villager matrons were hired as cooks, while their daughters—down to the age of 5—washed dishes at open-air sinks (give gallon gasoline tins filled at the same old fountain). Small boys made the rounds with bottles of water certified as sufficiently pure for the

[509] Gunckel, "A Cinema Between Mexico and Hollywood," 130.
[510] As Bordwell et al. explain: "The effect of such joint productions on the division of labor was to alter the number of people on crews, to redefine labor responsibilities, and to change the general work conditions." David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960* (London: Routledge, 1985), 333.
[511] For instance, in a "making of" segment for the 2003 DVD release of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*—Disney's first runaway production—actor Kirk Douglas fondly recalls frolicking around with the Jamaican women while shooting in Montego Bay in 1954. Douglas remarks that he likes "all people that have a certain amount of naiveté" while director Richard Fleischer claims the Jamaican natives took everything "in good spirit," despite that the documentary shows them carrying equipment and helping out with production in ways that clearly extend beyond the scope of simply being an extra. See *The Making of 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Inc., 2003). For more on this, see Joshua Schulze, "Working *Below* Below-the-Line: The Rhetoric of Racialized Labor in Disney's Postwar Promotional Media," forthcoming.

> delicate alimentary tracts of the gringos. The stray dogs handled the garbage detail. And when the assistant directors bawled 'Silencio!' even the babies stopped crying."[512]

Here, Nugent gives the sense that effectively every willing and able body in the vicinity would play their part, including children. The final quip ultimately reinforces the authority of the above-the-line personnel; indeed, the flagrantly colonialist language recurs when Nugent describes director John Ford's exercising total control over the shoot: "There is evidence already that Ford's trail-blazing has encouraged other pioneers."[513] While the frontier language, racialized notions of docility and servitude, and rhetoric of authenticity dominated coverage of early runaway productions, labor groups and unions back in Hollywood felt strongly that cheaper labor costs and a less restrictive division of labor were greater motives for shooting on location.

Although this practice had become firmly established by the 1950s, as Steinhart and other scholars have pointed out, much of the precedent for runaway productions was established during the war itself. Before studios began to move productions abroad, during the war, a number of films produced amidst the restrictions imposed by the War Production Board were shot on location inside the United States, but outside the TMZ. Restrictions on set construction and theater building were imposed by the War Production Board, which forced studios to either recycle old sets, or take productions out of Los Angeles entirely.[514] But the most significant factor which contributed to the rise of location shooting during the war was the labor shortage. While hundreds of below-the-line personnel were either drafted, on strike, or had their pay cut as a way of lowering costs, producers and executives soon found that recruiting labor outside

[512] Frank S. Nugent, "Hollywood Invades Mexico," *New York Times*, March 23, 1947, 17.
[513] Nugent, "Hollywood Invades Mexico," 17.
[514] Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 144.

California could prove cheaper than hiring studio employees.[515]

In addition, in several cases only part of the film was shot on location, and the rest back at the studio. While second units had long been sent to various locations in order to capture background images, either for use as establishing shots or for rear projection in the studio, the hybrid approach of splitting principal photography between the studio and a location was something that rose to greater prominence as a consequence of wartime production culture.[516] Until the special circumstances of the war, location-shooting was generally reserved for either large-scale and large-budget productions, or low-budget B movies.[517] Indeed, contemporary press coverage noticed the uptick in location shooting as early as November 1940, with one *Washington Post* article, reflecting on a recently conducted survey, beginning: "In the eternal quest for realistic backgrounds, Hollywood motion picture producers are getting off the sound stage and back to nature."[518] According to the author, more companies were being sent on location than at any other time in industry history; however, with authenticity cited as the only reason for the trend, the article glosses over the logistical and practical motives some studios had, in favor of portraying the industry as nobly pursuing realism at all costs.

Among the productions cited by the article is *Reaching for the Sun* (1941), which typified the trend of location shooting from 1939-40. In Chapter 2, I described how Paramount's decision to shoot the factory scenes inside the Packard plant in Detroit represented an important collaboration between the film and auto industries. The hybrid approach to location shooting—

[515] As Biesen explains, "Studio executives initiated across-the-board pay cuts for personnel to support the war effort." Biesen, *Blackout*, 66.
[516] Biesen, "The Classical Hollywood Studio System, 1928-1945," 46.
[517] After hefty investment in studio back-lot and sound stage construction during the studio-era, many executives were determined to stick with their investments in studio space rather than shoot on location. For instance, Nicholas Schenk of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer built around twenty-two sound stages and felt that "location shooting was a waste of money." Douglas Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System: A History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 104.
[518] "Film Companies Make Big Treks To Get Realism Into Movies," *The Washington Post*, November 17, 1940, L2.

with some scenes also shot in Northern Michigan, Chicago, and Lake Arrowhead—necessitated various agreements being made and collaborative solutions sought regarding labor, with local support often solicited (such as the hiring of Packard employees as extras). While this was likely cheaper than transporting equipment and crew to each location, it still required hiring unionized setups and working within union restrictions, which is something international runaway productions ultimately sought to evade.[519] Yet there was clearly a concerted effort to shoot principal photography outside the studio, but still domestically, during this period, typifying walkaway production culture.

4.3: "Bring the scenery to the people": *North West Mounted Police* and the Hybrid Approach to Location Shooting

As *Reaching for the Sun* demonstrated, Paramount were especially enthusiastic in their production of walkaway films—so much so that their motivations for doing so, as well as the financial and logistical consequences, could vary wildly from one production to the next. Although other studios dabbled in the practice—for instance, RKO took the company for *They Knew What They Wanted* (1940) to Napa Valley, California for two weeks; Warner Bros. shot outdoor scenes for *Santa Fe Trail* (1940) in Lasky Mesa, California; and 20th Century-Fox had moved the entire cast and crew for *Jesse James* (1939) to Pineville, Missouri, where locals were recruited as extras—none could match the gusto with which Paramount engaged in shooting outside Hollywood in the early war years.[520] After announcing a $25,000,000 investment with an

[519] As cited in Chapter 1, the production team in Chicago for *Reaching for the Sun* reported back to the studio with the verdict "union boys from here very good workers." See Daily production report, October 18, 1940. File 3809: "REACHING FOR THE SUN – production, reports" Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[520] "RKO To Host Scribes On 'Wanted' Location," *The Hollywood Reporter*, July 5, 1940, 9; Marjory Adams, "Why They Dislike Handsome Errol," *Daily Boston Globe*, September 1, 1940, D8; "Prosperity Comes to Pineville, Mo., As 'Jesse James' Starts," *Variety,* August 31, 1938, 35.

emphasis on "laughter, music, romance and thrills" for 1940-41, Paramount prioritized large-scale Technicolor productions with ample location shooting.[521] Among these was *Virginia* (1941), for which the entire cast and crew spent substantial time on location in the eponymous state; *The Shepherd of the Hills* (1941) which had scenes shot in Big Bear, California; *The Hard-Boiled Canary* (also known as *There's Magic in Music*, 1941), required time in Lake Arrowhead; *Victory* (1940) used Baldwin Lake for its Samburan Island scenes; as well as *Rangers of Fortune* (1940) and *Comin' Round the Mountain* (1940).[522] Paramount were so ambitious in shooting on location that prior to the summer of 1940, the studio spent $6000 renovating three 21-passenger buses to transport personnel to each location as required.[523] Because of Paramount's unrelenting ambition, the overall costliness, efficiency, and box office returns of these productions varied considerably.

Indeed, before full-swing international runaway productions, when studios were navigating wartime restrictions and working with unionized labor outfits in domestic location shoots, oftentimes individual walkaway productions seemed caught between two minds of shooting in the studio versus on location. A key example of this from a labor perspective, and one of Paramount's biggest Technicolor productions during this period of heavy location-shooting activity, was Cecil B. DeMille's *North West Mounted Police.* Based on the Northwest Resistance of 1885, during which the Indigenous Métis peoples rebelled against the Canadian government in what is now Saskatchewan and Alberta, the production typified what DeMille had become renowned for in its scale and ambition. Recent scholarship has described DeMille's popular perception as an "epic film maker" and "Hollywood's first auteur," as well as pointed

[521] "Paramount Lists $25,000,000 Budget," *New York Times*, May 25, 1940, 23.
[522] "Tailor-Made for the Box Office," *Kinematograph Weekly*, August 22, 1940, 9.
[523] "Para. Renovates Busses For Location Pictures," *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 23, 1940, 3.

out the extensive press coverage his productions garnered.[524] As one review of his 1938 film, *The Buccaneer*, affectionately put it: "Cecil B. deMille has always insisted on having 10,000 men, 5,000 horses, an elephant and an ibis in order to tell a story about a boy and a girl."[525] In its scale, *North West Mounted Police* was no different, and its location shooting amassed a particular degree of fascination—especially the decisions of when to shoot in the studio, and when to scout for an authentic locale.

The logistical challenges faced by DeMille and his crew in trying to recreate the Canadian mountains in California and its surrounding states were well documented, and certainly point to the director's penchant for uncompromising ambition as opposed to finding a cheaper solution. In March 1940, a company of six cars, six buses, and twelve trucks carrying 190 actors and technical workers left for the location headquarters at Tahquitz Lodge, Keen Camp in the San Jacinto mountains.[526] Just weeks earlier, Associate Director Arthur H. Rosson, Business Manager Charles Woolstenhulme and Camerman G. E. Richardson were sent on a 2000 mile expedition through Arizona, Texas, and Arkansas by DeMille to scout for a flat river site that could serve as a location for the Canadian plains in the spring time.[527] And before that, the same trio surveyed Oregon, Washington, Idaho, and Montana to look for location sites.[528] DeMille had long desired to shoot a Western in the Canadian mountains—years before *North West Mounted Police*, he had begun plans with Paramount for a film about the Hudson Bay Company starring Fred MacMurray. Eventually, Twentieth Century-Fox obtained the rights to what would become *Hudson's Bay* (1941). But DeMille had planned to "take Fred and the entire company on a long

[524] Kevin Brianton, "Hollywood's First Auteur: Cecil B. DeMille and the Battle for Reputation," *Film & History* 50, iss. 2 (2020): 20.
[525] L. S. B. Shapiro, "Lights and Shadows of Manhattan in Hollywood," *The Gazette-Montreal*, October 2, 1937, 2.
[526] "'Police' On Location," *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 25, 1940, 11.
[527] "Scouts For 'Mounted' Picture Travel Far For Locations," *Los Angeles Times*, March 3, 1940, C4.
[528] "Rosson Seeks Tribe of Indians for 'Police,'" *The Hollywood Reporter*, February 24, 1940, 4.

location trip up into the wilds of Canada for authentic backgrounds."[529] For that reason, DeMille was especially aggrieved when, despite the extensive location scouting for *North West Mounted Police*, the cast and crew encountered severe weather difficulties that hampered the efficiency of the production.[530] The consequences of DeMille's ambition led to a significant decision in the early history of walkaway productions.

DeMille had originally planned to take the principal cast, in addition to fifty extras and a technical staff of 250, to Pendleton, Oregon for a three-week shoot. Yet the accounting department, upon reviewing the shooting schedule and estimated budget, made the recommendation that it would be cheaper to build the entire mountain in the Paramount studio back lot. As one reporter wrote, "it was discovered that this would involve far greater expense in taking the people to the scenery than it would to bring the scenery to the people."[531] The result—one of the biggest and costliest sets in Paramount's history, totaling around $150,000—was an artificial mountain decorated with over 300 pine trees, felled in the San Bernadino range. Between 5000 and 6000 tons of earth was used to replant the trees, and the total set covered an area of 400 by 650 feet, necessitating the removal and destruction of several existing sets in the lot to make space.[532] When the trucking firm that delivered the felled trees attempted to make the delivery, they were unable to get the trees in the studio, and so a large derrick was constructed just to be able to swing them over the wall and into the lot.[533] Paradoxically, then, while subsequent location shooting in runaway productions facilitated the capturing of natural landscapes and locales as part of a desire for greater authenticity, *North West Mounted Police*

[529] "De Mille to Produce 'Hudson Bay,'" *The Philadelphia Inquirer,* November 11, 1937, 17.
[530] "Huge Film Sets Show Industry Has Confidence," *The Washington Post*, December 8, 1940, A3.
[531] Roly Young, "Rambling with Roly," *The Globe and Mail*, October 7, 1940, 17.
[532] "So—The Mountain Comes to Para.," *The Hollywood Reporter*, April 4, 1940, 6.
[533] "Rambling with Roly," 17.

represented an instance where the this very desire was eventually confronted with the financial reality of wartime location shooting, forcing Paramount to finish the film in the studio by building what they had previously had legitimate access to.

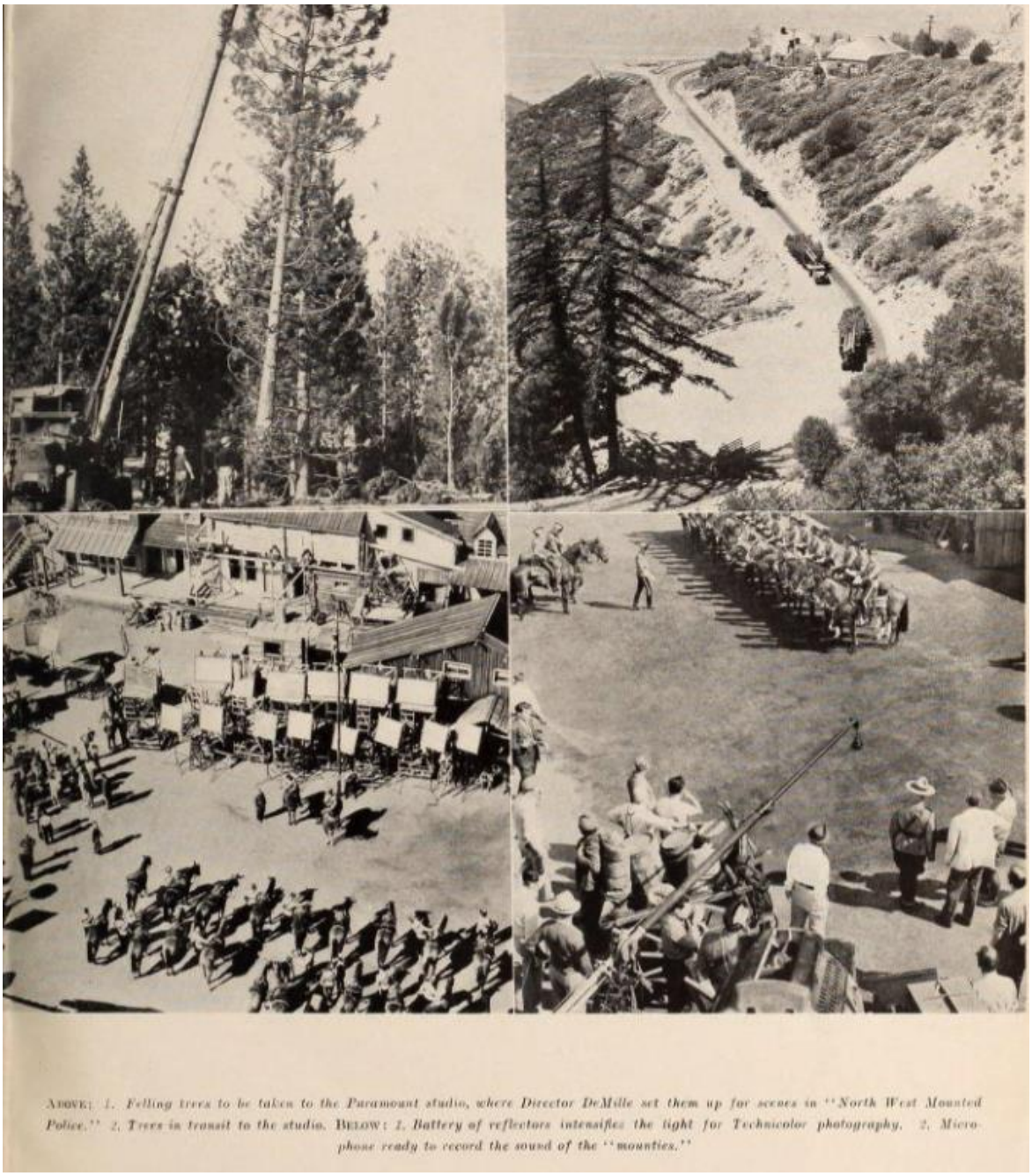


Figure 4.1: Felling trees to be taken to the Paramount studio for *North West Mounted Police*. *Photoplay Studies* VI, no. 23 (November 1940), 10.

As a result, the production's retreat to the studio for financial reasons served as a cautionary tale for future films—namely, that they would be better served if the motivation for location shooting was to take advantage of the labor and logistical loopholes runaway productions would become renowned for. An example that demonstrates how the industry learned from *North West Mounted Police* is MGM's *Battleground* (1949), a war film dramatizing the siege of Bastogne. Originally, MGM and director William Wellman had planned to shoot at least half the film on location in Northern California, Washington, and Oregon.[534] Howard Horton of MGM's location department traveled to Fort Lewis in Washington to scout for locations in May 1949, and Wellman took the principal cast members to the army camp to shoot heavy artillery and tank sequences.[535] Yet in the end, only the opening scenes, which were shot at Sawtelle General Hospital in Los Angeles, and the film's ending, which was shot at Fort McArthur, were made on location.[536] The rest was shot on MGM's Stage 15, on which 25 different sets were constructed and repurposed for the film. Art director Hans Peters designed each set to enable 360-degree cinematography. Likely learning from *North West Mounted Police*, Peters had pine trees imported from Arrowhead and Tarzana to match those from the Ardennes. The trees were then dowsed with fake snow made from the liquid in foam fire-fighting apparatus, as one of many artificial weather recreations (others included fog and rain). In total, it was reported that Peters' pragmatism and studio expertise saved the production fifty percent of its total budget, and the film was wrapped up two weeks ahead of schedule.[537] Like DeMille, Wellman initially wanted to shoot *Battleground* on location, but rather than (in DeMille's case) exhaust the budget on location before retreating to the familiarity of the studio, MGM had the

[534] "MGM Slates Heavy Lensing Schedule On Location Sites," *The Hollywood Reporter*, October 14, 1948, 13.
[535] "MGM 'Battle' Shifting To Fort Lewis, Wash.," *The Hollywood Reporter*, May 5, 1949, 12.
[536] Paul Vogel, "Different and Difficult," *American Cinematographer* 30, iss. 12 (December 1949): 437.
[537] "'Battle' Draws To End With MGM The Victor On Cost Front," *The Hollywood Reporter*, June 2, 1949, 4.

foresight to shoot ninety percent of the production on Peters' sets. The industry seemed to have learned that location shooting thrives under specific circumstances which, in this case, were not present.

While the studios acknowledged that for certain types of productions, shooting in the studio was more cost-effective, one consideration remained an issue: labor. At the same time as missing out on the potential shortcuts afforded to location shooting, the studios had to source the labor power to pull off such extravagant set designs. In the case of *North West Mounted Police*, the extraordinary amount of labor required for construction of the mountain extended beyond the set department and the trucking firms, but to the Native American performers themselves. The artificial mountain project in fact resulted in a rare occurrence in which reservation-recruited Native American extras were brought to the studio to supplement Los Angeles-based, Screen Actors Guild card-carrying Native American actors and extras. Hollywood was used to recruiting Native American talent from both sources, although the unique circumstances of *North West Mounted Police* meant that the groups actually interacted and collaborated in the studio. Until budgetary constraints led to the mountain construction, DeMille and his crew continued a trajectory they began in their search for 'authentic' Native American extras; when DeMille sent Rosson, Woolstenhulme and Richardson to scout locations, for instance, they were also instructed to "to sign up a whole tribe of Indians"—at least 1000, it was reported.[538] Then, while the forest was being constructed at the Paramount lot, two members of DeMille's staff were sent to scout Northeastern California for 300 "rugged-looking Indians" to supplement the 200 they already recruited through the Central Casting Bureau.[539] According to Jacob Floyd, it is likely that the location-based extras were not paid SAG wages, due to the lack of documentation in the

[538] "Rosson Seeks Tribe of Indians for 'Police,'" *The Hollywood Reporter*, February 24, 1940, 4.
[539] "Rambling with Roly," 17.

accounting ledgers which were otherwise thoroughly detailed.[540] This represented a curious culmination of the production's (forced) hybrid approach to location shooting: a messy combination of real mountains and artificially designed ones, as well as 'real' Native Americans from reservations along with 'actors' living in Los Angeles. Such were the impractical growing pains, it could be said, of walkaway productions.

Because of the Western genre's history of location shooting, hiring local Native Americans as extras was hardly a new phenomenon; John Ford, for instance, frequently relied on hiring the Navajo of Monument Valley as extras in his films.[541] There were also numerous Native American actors living and working in Los Angeles during the studio era, though they usually earned lower pay than non-Natives and had substantially less job security.[542] In 1926, a number of Native American actors living in Hollywood formed a casting organization called the War Paint Club. Led by a Cherokee by the name of White Bird, one of the explicit goals of the War Paint Club was to provide producers with easier access to genuine Native Americans, to avoid Mexicans and other ethnic minorities with darker complexions from being cast as Native Americans.[543] Yet Hollywood studios still routinely visited Native American reservations to recruit *extras,* whom they viewed as distinct from Native American *actors*. Studio heads valued both Native American and non-Native performers for their theatrical training and acting skills,

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[540] Jacob Floyd, "DeMille Indians: The Native American Experience in Classical Hollywood," PhD diss., (Oklahoma State University, 2018), 131.
[541] J.P. Telotte, "'A Little Bit Savage': *Stagecoach* and Racial Representation," in *John Ford's Stagecoach*, edited by Barry Keith Grant (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 114; see also Anthony Slide, *Hollywood Unknowns: A History of Extras, Bit Players, and Stand-Ins* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2012), 190.
[542] Nicolas G. Rosenthal, "Representing Indians: Native American Actors on Hollywood's Frontier," *The Western Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (2005): 330. For more on the lives, experiences, and community-building of Native American performers in Hollywood, see Jacob Floyd, "On Hollywood Boulevard: Native Community in Classical Hollywood," *Journal of Cinema and Media Studies* 60, no. 2 (2021): 163-168. For histories of individual Native American actors in Hollywood, see Linda M. Waggoner, *Starring Red Wing! The Incredible Career of Lilian M. St. Cyr, the First Native American Film Star* (University of Nebraska Press, 2019); Amy M. Ware, *The Cherokee Kid: Will Rogers, Tribal Identity, and the Making of an American Icon* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015).
[543] Anthony Slide, *Hollywood Unknowns*, 189.

but sought in extras a pronounced proximity to Native American history and culture. As Liza Black explains:

> From the studio perspective, Indians were people living on reservations who did not possess the skills or experience of actors; they worked strictly as extras. Thus, studios considered the very idea of Indians acting as contradictory. Filmmakers thought reservation Indians were Indian by virtue of their physicality and their proximity to a reservation. They did not need to act Indian: they had to be Indian.[544]

Moreover, as Floyd has argued, Native American actors during studio-era Hollywood regularly performed additional, spontaneous labor without credit or compensation, in a manner resemblant of the fluid labor systems later afforded by international location shooting. As Floyd puts it, "while the majority of Native film workers were actors, many also worked in other jobs, both credited and uncredited, as stunt performers, technical advisers, unit directors, and in music, props, and costume departments."[545] One might assume that such broad participation in the filmmaking process would lend Native Americans greater agency in their own representation and the production of cultural images, but, on the contrary, studios regularly deferred to the authority of on-set technical directors—normally white—who were hired and consulted to assess the authenticity of the representation. For instance, C. Bland Jamison received steady employment as an "Indian expert" and provided services for *Hudson's Bay*—for which he was tasked to "see that the Indians appearing in the picture accurately follow the customs and manners of the Iroquois, Nascopies, Algonquin and Cree tribes"—in addition to numerous other productions over a several decades in Hollywood.[546] Jamison's career began as a hobby, after his extensive collection of Native American artifacts from growing up in a ranch in Montana caught the

[544] Liza Black, *Picturing Indians: Native Americans in Film, 1941–1960* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020), 70.
[545] Jacob Floyd, "Negotiating Publicity and Persona: The Work of Native Actors in Studio Hollywood," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 42, iss. 3 (2018): 126.
[546] "Jamison Checks Up On Indian Extras in Motion Pictures," *The Port Huron Times Herald,* October 20, 1940, 5.

attention of studios who rented some of his materials for use in films. As a technical director, Jamison assisted with scriptwriting and advising on Native American languages and dialects, as well as ensuring that costumes worn by actors and extras matched with the particular tribe and time period they were supposed to represent.[547]

It could be suggested that the very existence of Jamison's profession was at odds with the perception among many studio heads that hiring Native Americans from reservations all but guaranteed an authentic representation, but the otherwise exploitative treatment, lower wages, and blurred lines with labor divisions (and frequent solicitation of additional, spontaneous work) was broadly concurrent with the industry's racializing logic. A walkaway production like *North West Mounted Police* typified this dynamic in its enforced hybrid approach to 'real' and 'constructed' locations and personnel, and it was from these types of productions that the industry no doubt learned from in the postwar period. One might say that walkaway productions walked so that runaways could run.

4.4: Location Shooting and Local Labor in The Aviation Genre

In his essay on domestic location shooting, Joshua Gleich unfavorably compares the conditions of shooting on location internationally as opposed to within the United States in the postwar period:

> Shooting abroad, Hollywood took advantage of frozen funds in Europe and coproduction deals that could compensate for the additional expenses of location shooting in historic locations. No such opportunities existed domestically. Local and state filmmaking incentives amounted to the willing support of local elected officials and starstruck residents.[548]

[547] "Jamison Checks Up On Indian Extras in Motion Pictures," 5.
[548] Joshua Gleich, "Postwar Hollywood, 1947-1967, Part 1: Domestic Location Shooting," in *Hollywood on Location: An Industry History,* edited by Joshua Gleich and Lawrence Webb (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2019), 74.

While Gleich's argument that the financial viability of domestic location shooting historically depended on local 'support'—broadly considered—certainly carries weight in the context of productions like *North West Mounted Police*, and even those I explored in previous chapters such as *Sundown* and *Reaching for the Sun*, it is not accurate to say that no compensatory opportunities existed which might have incentivized shooting domestically. Gleich's argument is that the semi-documentary mode was the principal cost-effective way to shoot on location and actually save money before the advent of new technologies that made it easier in the 1950s.[549] Yet the conditions of the war actually facilitated this practice at a lower cost which, I argue, helped to set the precedent for runaway productions in the postwar years. Indeed, the explicit collaborations with the military resulted in a number of productions, shot on location, with sufficient support to substantially offset the costs of labor and resources. Focusing on the aviation genre in particular, in what remains of this chapter I explore the affordances of Hollywood's collaborations with the Air Force from a labor perspective, and consider what consequences these productions had for the industry going forward. As the following case studies suggest, the hit-and-miss growing pains of wartime walkaway productions gave the major studios a taste of the benefits of industrial collaboration, compensation, and labor loopholes, meanwhile displacing many of the traditionally below-the-line studio employees who suddenly found themselves without work.

As scholars and historians have pointed out, the aviation genre—and aviation itself—is in

[549] Gleich, "Postwar Hollywood, 1947-1967, Part 1," 74. R. Barton Palmer argues something similar, namely that wartime newsreels and documentaries had a profound influence on what he calls "the postwar turn toward the real." R. Barton Palmer, *Shot On Location: Postwar American Cinema and the Exploration of Real Place* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016), 53.

many ways as old as cinema.[550] Indeed, the 'golden age' of aviation, according to Michael Paris, "coincides almost exactly with the 'golden age' of cinema."[551] As a result of this parallel, much of the engagement with the aviation genre has taken a theoretical approach to account for the synergy between film and flying.[552] Paula Amad, for example, has argued that film and aviation share a markedly twentieth-century sense of mass spectatorship, and an aesthetics of speed, modernity, and mechanized warfare.[553] For this and many other reasons, the genre became financially reliable for the industry throughout the studio era. Following the success of Paramount's *Wings* (1927), the interwar period saw the genre enjoy its most sustained spell of success, with the production of several cheap films capitalizing on the novelty of aviation and its prevalence in the public eye throughout the decade.[554] A large amount of these productions focused on female protagonists—such as *Christopher Strong* (1933), *Flying Hostess* (1936), *Wings in the Dark* (1935), *Tail Spin* (1939), and *Women in the Wind* (1939)—due in part, according to Stephen Neale, "to the promotion by the aviation industry of an association between women and flying as a means of assuring the public that flying was safe."[555] Technically, *Wings* long served as a benchmark for aerial photography, though developments in sound technology

[550] For some representative works, which tend to offer broad surveys of the genre at the expense of deeper investigation, see Stephen Pendo, *Aviation in the Cinema* (Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press, 1985); Bruce W. Orris, *When Hollywood Ruled the Skies: The Aviation Film Classics of World War II* (Hawthorne: Aero Associates, 1985); James H. Farmer, *Celluloid Wings: The Impact of Movies on Aviation* (New York: TAB Books, 1984); Michael Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to Top Gun: Aviation, Nationalism, and Popular Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995); Shawna Kelly, *Aviators in Early Hollywood* (Mount Pleasant: Arcadia Publishing, 2008).
[551] Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to Top Gun*, 1995), 7.
[552] For instance, on the synergy between cinema and aviation, see Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception*, translated by Patrick Camiller (London: Verso, 1989), 11-30; Teresa Castro, "Aerial Views and Cinematism, 1898–1939," in *Seeing from Above: The Aerial View in Visual Culture*, edited by Mark Dorrian and Frédéric Pousin (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), 118–33; Paula Amad, "Affective Cin-aereality: Women and Aviation in Silent Cinema," *Feminist Media Histories* 7, no. 2 (2021): 145-187; Kevin L. Ferguson, "Aviation Cinema," *Criticism* 57, no. 2 (2015): 309-331.
[553] Paula Amad, "Affective Cin-aereality."
[554] Robert Wohl, *The Spectacle of Flight: Aviation and the Western Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 113; Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to Top Gun*, 57.
[555] Stephen Neale, *Genre and Hollywood* (London: Routledge, 2000), 51.

were also key to the genre's pervasiveness in the 1930s.[556] Yet thematically, the genre underwent a transformation as the decade drew to a close and war broke out in Europe. Indeed, Robert Wohl identifies a shift from focusing on individual exploits, which arose from the cultural fascination with figures such as Charles Lindbergh and Amelia Earhart, to an emphasis on collective action "in which the individual learns how to subordinate himself to the group."[557] Incidentally, this shift toward collective action also paralleled developments in production practices.

From a labor perspective, two features of the aviation genre in particular contributed to its renewed significance and utility during World War II: location shooting and collaboration with the Air Force. The precedent set by early classics of the genre paved the way for the industry to capitalize on tried-and-tested practices in the interest of making and distributing films in service of the war effort as quickly as possible. For instance, *Wings* would not have been possible without the direct support it received from the War Department; Secretary of War Dwight F. Davis offered the army's full cooperation on the condition that Paramount pay to insure the men featured in the film, and to keep the army's involvement away from the press.[558] The War Department helped director William Wellman set up the cast and crew at Old Camp Stanley, the Air Service Ground School at Brooks Field, as well as the advanced flying school at Kelly Field near San Antonio, Texas.[559] Years later, when Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer produced *West Point of the Air* (1935) on location in Randolph Field (also in San Antonio), base officials

[556] For more on the symbiotic relationship between the aviation genre and the evolution of sound recording and playback technologies, see Masha Shpolberg, "Lindbergh's Engine: Hollywood's Transition to Sound and the Aviation Film," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio, and Television* 39, no. 4 (2019): 663-686.
[557] Wohl, *The Spectacle of Flight,* 154. More broadly, Schatz argues that the war forced Hollywood to revise its classical narrative emphasis on individual pursuits and romantic couplings in favor of the collective. See Schatz, *Boom and Bust,* 204.
[558] Wohl, *The Spectacle of Flight,* 114.
[559] Wohl, *The Spectacle of Flight,* 115.

provided office space for studio representatives, such as director Richard Rossyn, and gave producer Monta Bell access to Lieutenant J. M. Bevans in order to study the life and activity of the cadets. Aviation cadets and field staff also appeared in the film as extras.[560] In other words, there was an existing infrastructure and a precedent of military collaboration baked into the aviation genre long before Hollywood began paying attention to the war.

In addition to the genre's penchant for location shooting and collaboration with other industries, its peculiar relationship to labor was also signaled by the formation in 1932 of the Associated Motion Picture Pilots, a union for Hollywood stunt pilots. The union was established by pioneer female aviator Pancho Barnes, who served as a stunt pilot in Howard Hughes's *Hell's Angels* (1930), to ensure safer working conditions and fair compensation for the industry's regular fliers. Before the union's formation, these stunt pilots were known as the "Squadron of Death," the "Suicide Club," and the "Thirteen Black Cats of Hollywood" and would perform such death-defying tasks as hanging from the tip of an airplane wing, changing planes midair, and sustaining multiple bodily injuries in the process.[561] Captain E. H. Robinson, president of the union, explained in 1935 that the industry had begun shifting away from dangerous stunts, while stunt pilots had become more valuable in their provision of technical advice to studios, all of which contributed to the initial formation of the AMPP.[562] Yet one of the consequences of the stunt pilots organizing was that, before the Second World War, the backend of the 1930s saw studios rely more on miniatures and process shots to circumvent the higher pay and safety restrictions imposed by the union as conditions of employing the pilots. A *Los Angeles Times* article reported that during the filming of *Hell's Angels*, the then-unofficial and unnamed AMPP

[560] Bruce A. Ashcroft, "Why We Wanted Wings: American Aviation and Representations of the Air Force in the Years before World War II," PhD Dissertation (University of Texas at Austin, 2003), 226-227.
[561] Speed Kendall, "Straight From the Studios," *The Washington Post*, January 13, 1935, 2.
[562] Kendall, "Straight From the Studios."

had sixty members, but by 1938 the number had dropped to just twenty-five.[563] William Wellman's *Men With Wings* (1938) was by then a rare working opportunity for the union's members, the majority of whom contributed to the film in some capacity. And in many cases, it would be among their last jobs in Hollywood for some time. While high-profile members like Paul Mantz, the most famous stunt pilot in Hollywood, continued to consult and serve on wartime productions, for a large portion of union members the industry's collaborations with the Air Force marked a substantial loss of work.

It is for this reason that Paramount's *I Wanted Wings* (1941) provides a valuable case study. Considering the scale of the film, and its serendipitous timing, it occupies a surprisingly marginal place in film history. Yet the circumstances of its production in the context of wartime Hollywood, location shooting, and military collaboration make it a key example of broader industrial shifts. Although pre-production began before the war, the rapid unfolding of events in Europe prompted Paramount to expedite proceedings and seek urgent collaborative support for the film. The script was based on the 1937 autobiographical book by Bernie Lay Jr. about his time training as a cadet at the Randolph Field Air Base, which was praised for its broader human interest appeal beyond the specifics of aviation, which no doubt contributed to its being picked up by Paramount for exhibition to a wide audience.[564] In addition, the biographical basis of the story, which takes place in the early 1930s, enabled Paramount to circumvent accusations of warmongering and actively preying on the situation in Europe. Instead, the studio could firmly maintain that it was simply an adaptation of a 1937 book. Despite Paramount's claims, by the time the production was in full swing and collaboration with the Air Force established, it had

[563] Philip K. Scheuer, "Town Called Hollywood," *Los Angeles Times*, May 8, 1938, 1.
[564] "Miscellaneous Brief Reviews," *New York Times*, April 4, 1937, 108.

become an explicit vehicle for Air Corps recruitment.[565]

Indeed, the film was originally slated to begin shooting in the fall of 1940, but a number of factors influenced the decision for Paramount to push things forward. Contemporary critics highlighted the subject matter of the Air Force and general patriotism as obvious contributors, but federal intervention drastically impacted the production schedule.[566] The Selective Service and Training Act of 1940, the first peacetime conscription in the country's history, required that all men from 21-35 years old register with local draft boards. In May 1940, Roosevelt addressed Congress asking for $1.18 billion in defense appropriations, reiterating in particular the importance of air power; Roosevelt called for the construction of 50,000 planes for the Allied Powers, and implored Congress to avoid actions "which would in any way hamper or delay the delivery of American-made planes."[567] Shortly after, Paramount rushed *I Wanted Wings* into full production.[568] Some journalists even speculated that, following Roosevelt's speech, Paramount's acceleration of production was activated in exchange for Army assistance in the making of the film, with the assumption that an uptick in enlistment would justify the cost in labor and resources.[569] In addition to directly encouraging enlistment in the Air Corps, *I Wanted Wings, Flight Command* (1940), and other "cinematic recruitment posters" aimed to portray the virtues of military service and inform the American people of how the armed forces would defend the nation against an attack.[570] The speed of Paramount's response to these developments, in

[565] Paris, *From the Wright Brothers to Top Gun,* 122; Pendo, *Aviation in the Cinema*, 246.
[566] Edwin Schallert, "Timely 'I Wanted Wings' Set for Early Shooting," *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 1940, 10.
[567] Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 221.
[568] Lewis Jacobs, "World War II and the American Film," *Cinema Journal* 7 (1967): 8-9; Orris, *When Hollywood Ruled the Skies*, 19.
[569] As *New York Times* author Thomas Pryor wrote, "President Roosevelt's campaign for 50,000 airplanes and pilots to fly them will get a helping hand from Paramount, and the studio expects in turn to get some assistance from the Army when it sets about filming 'I Wanted Wings.'" Thomas M. Pryor, "Pot Shots at the News," *New York Times*, June 2, 1940, 123.
[570] Orris, *When Hollywood Ruled the Skies*, 2.

combination with its being based on a book unrelated to the unfolding war, contributed substantially to its particular production context.[571]

In contemporaneous journalism covering the film's announcement, *I Wanted Wings* was at times described as one of the few Hollywood productions dealing with war at all. A *Los Angeles Times* article from October 1939 argued that producers were actively avoiding the subject of war on the basis of surveys which suggested that war films did "not fare too well in great numbers during such a period of international stress as the present."[572] The article distinguishes between films "dealing with the activities of the Army or the Navy" and films about the Second World War itself, and situates *I Wanted Wings* within the former category as a peacetime aviation picture.[573] Yet by Autumn of the following year, when the film was in full production, it was described as a leading example of the industry's "preparedness campaign."[574] In particular, some reporters suggested that the Senate's passing of the civilian conscription bill, in conjunction with the rumor that the film industry's labor force and resources were subject to a "polite draft," led directly to the explosion of military films in pre-production at the time.[575] Aviation films were highlighted as an especially timely genre that appealed to Hollywood's preferences and preoccupations with spectacle during this period, which again marked *I Wanted Wings* as ahead of the curve in many respects.[576]

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[571] The eagerness of the Air Force to lend a helping hand was also a contributing factor, something Thomas Patrick Doherty claims was typical of Hollywood's military collaborations: that they benefited Washington more than the film industry, given the former's lack of filmmaking expertise. Doherty writes, "Unschooled in production realities and cinematic techniques, civilian bureaucrats and uniformed 'brasshats' often just didn't know how to deploy the talent at their command. Unlike the moguls, they had little eye for technical quality and visual invention." Thomas Patrick Doherty, *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 61.
[572] Edwin Schallert, "Army Aviation Story Slated at Paramount," *Los Angeles Times*, October 26. 1939, 11. See also Douglas W. Churchill, "Screen News Here and in Hollywood," *New York Times*, October 26, 1939, 31.
[573] Schallert, "Army Aviation Story Slated at Paramount."
[574] Thomas Brady, "Hollywood's Preparedness Campaign," *New York Times,* September 8, 1940, 129.
[575] Brady, "Hollywood's Preparedness Campaign."
[576] "Preparedness Pictures in Prospect," *Detroit Free Press*, October 27, 1940, 43.

Once the production process had been expedited internally, Paramount began their pursuit of both approval from the War Department, but also material support for the film. In June 1940, producer Arthur Hornblow Jr. and director Theodore Reed traveled to the capital in order to seek approval of the script from the War Department. Their hope was that a positive account of the Army training new pilots would "be in the public interest," and that permission would be granted to shoot on location at Randolph and Kelly Fields.[577] Drawing from an existing War Department policy document outlining the conditions of military cooperation of commercial motion pictures from February 1939, the studio made the case in Washington, D.C. of the vitality of the production to the Allied war effort. Some of the conditions specified by the policy included the truthful depiction of Army life; that production without Army cooperation was impracticable; that military servants would not provide labor in excess of the normal requirements for military duty, except voluntarily; that no additional compensation may be given to officers except as reimbursement for actual expense, injury, or property loss.[578] The War Department evaluated the script on the basis of these criteria, in addition to the accuracy of aviation training backgrounds, and even dialogue between cadets—especially when in flight.[579] It was announced in July 1940 that the War Department had granted full cooperation and assistance with the film, following which Reed and a technical crew spent a week in Randolph Field surveying the site.[580] As long as the conditions of cooperation would be met, the Air Force agreed to supply the location itself, personnel, expertise and consultation, equipment, planes, and anything else deemed reasonable for production. In return, the Air Corps received free

[577] Pryor, "Pot Shots at the News."
[578] War Department policy concerning cooperation in the production of commercial motion pictures, February 3, 1939. 1. File 2344: "I WANTED WINGS – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[579] "I Wanted Wings," *The High School Thespian*, April 1941, 16.
[580] "War Department Support For 'I Wanted Wings'," *Boxoffice*, July 12, 1940, 18; Darne Maverick, "So This Is Hollywood," *The Kilgore News Herald*, July 8, 1940, 6.

advertising to help recruitment, including an unprecedented screen credit for the US government.[581]

Ostensibly a producer's dream from a labor and logistics perspective, there were of course certain details to iron out. Still, the overall production culture and the interactions between the Paramount crew and those at Randolph and Kelly Fields in San Antonio both resembled and anticipated the conditions of later runaway productions. For instance, by the end of the scouting trip, during which time Reed and the technical crew inspected the field and made preliminary preparations, a profound impact had already been made on the local community of San Antonio. This was reflected and avidly conveyed in the Texas press. One newspaper reported that the Paramount crew had begun "setting local movie fans and autograph hunters in a frenzy of excitement."[582] When 110 cast and crew members arrived for production in August, they were "swamped" by the city's movie fans seeking autographs and a chance to perform as extras in the film.[583] It had been rumored that thousands were required for the film's graduation scenes, and the film's production records suggest this was in fact the case. In typical fashion for a film shot on location, assistant production manager Frank Caffey wrote to talent agent William Meiklejohn informing him of the intention to "possibly use local standins while in Texas in order to avoid taking them from the studio."[584] In the letter, Caffey goes on to explain that "we should

[581] The final screen credit used in the film reads, "This production was actually filmed at Randolph, Kelly and March Fields. The splendid collaboration of the United States Army Air Corps is gratefully acknowledged," though one of Hornblow's draft credit-lines placed more emphasis on the unprecedented nature of the collaboration: "Full co-operation of the Gulf Coast Army Air Corps Training Bases at Randolph and Kelly Fields were extended, a co-operation never before extended the motion picture industry." See "Screen Credit Given Government for Aid In 'I Wanted Wings,'" *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, June 8, 1941, 36.
[582] Ida Belle Hicks, "Movie Makers Return to First Love; Horse Operas," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, July 26, 1940, 5.
[583] "Randolph Fields Aids in Movie," *The Kilgore News Herald*, August 26, 1940, 1.
[584] Frank Caffey Letter to Mr. Meiklejohn, July 29, 1940. File 2344: "I WANTED WINGS – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

keep out of any contracts, if possible, the necessity of utilising any particular standins."[585] Here, Caffey is both circumventing the need to transport stand-ins from the studio—displacing the employees who normally would perform stand-in labor—while also maintaining flexibility and pragmatism in his stipulation that contractual language should avoid tying the studio to the use of any one particular stand-in.[586] Such loopholes and adaptability were hallmarks of what would become runaway productions, here put to use in the context of a wartime collaboration with the military.

Indeed, while the Air Force supplied numerous materials, resources, and personnel, the crew's interactions with and use of the local community in San Antonio were key components of the production that helped to set a precedent for the years that followed. Separate to the requirements and conditions of army personnel appearing in the film as extras, the studio's talent scouts arranged for twelve applications for Screen Actors Guild membership to be available for townspeople employed at the location to speak lines or perform bits as needed.[587] This sparked some debate among the production team, who contemplated whether it would be cheaper to pay the $50 initiation fee for joining the Guild, in addition to membership dues of $5, or to recruit a stand-by locally.[588] It was suggested that one instance in which it would make more sense to pay for Guild memberships and fees would be "when there is 'carry' involved."[589] 'Carrying' was an industry term referring to the hiring of extras or background actors for a consecutive number of days, regardless of if they work all of those days or only some. The implication, then, was that in

[585] Frank Caffey Letter to Mr. Meiklejohn, July 29, 1940.
[586] As Anthony Slide explains, a stand-in was "someone who would 'stand in' for an actor or actress when a scene was not actually being filmed—for example when the lighting of the shot was being determined." Anthony Slide, *Hollywood Unknown*, 117.
[587] John Zinn Letter to Frank Caffey, August 13, 1940. File 2344: "I WANTED WINGS – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[588] John Zinn Letter to Frank Caffey.
[589] John Zinn Letter to Frank Caffey.

order to cut costs, bit players and extras from the San Antonio area could be recruited on an as-needed basis rather than for a stretch of multiple days, in which case Guild membership and fees would have to be covered by the studio. Of course, such an arrangement would not have been possible if the film were shot in the studio in Los Angeles, where all local actors and extras were required to be registered with the Guild.

The studio's benefitting from shooting outside Hollywood also extended beyond on-screen labor. Housing and transportation were supplied locally in San Antonio.[590] The same was true when the production moved to March Field near Riverside, California, where all local labor not including actors, stand-ins, watchmen, and drivers was hired by Roy Newman.[591] Newman was a carpenter foreman and tasked with sourcing construction workers for the final stretch of location shooting.[592] These on-location arrangements had a tangibly negative impact on Paramount employees, who were left largely bereft of work in Los Angeles. For instance, Tom Plank, who worked in transportation and logistics, reached out to Frank Caffey in August 1940 asking about the availability of work for *I Wanted Wings.* Plank asked Caffey "if you can use me and my station wagon on the unit in San Antonio Texas," and explained that he would be finished working on another production in time to join the team at Randolph Field.[593] Caffey's response makes plain the total absence of work for regular studio employees like Plank, as well as for anyone not affiliated with the army or part of a local unionized set up. Caffey wrote:

> "Dear Tom:
> I have checked over carefully all of our activities as they are now scheduled for San Antonio and I do not see where you will have an opportunity to pick up any work.

[590] "San Antonio Extends Hand to Para.'s 'Wings'," *The Hollywood Reporter*, August 27, 1940, 3.
[591] Information and Instructions Pertaining to the March Field Location, September 18, 1940. File 2344: "I WANTED WINGS – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[592] Work Authorization, October 17, 1940. File 2344: "I WANTED WINGS – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[593] Tom Plank Letter to Frank Caffey, August 2, 1940. File 2344: "I WANTED WINGS – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

> We have practically no set construction to be done on the location, our shooting is entirely on the Army Reservations where the Army will provide everything we need and only on one day will we use extra people.
> I arranged our transportation deal when I was I San Antonio in June and, as you probably know, we must use a completely unionised set-up there.
> I expect our watching, since our equipment will be left on the Army Post, will be handled by their sentries.
> Perhaps next time there will be a spot where you can work in."[594]

Caffey's letter provides a vital perspective on wartime domestic location shooting in its illustration of both the constraints and lack of flexibility in the sourcing of labor, but also the obvious benefits and practicalities from a financial and logistical perspective. This becomes more significant when understood in the context of widespread personnel cuts as a result of wartime restrictions and studio executive agreeing on "the need for strict enforcing of savings ideas."[595] Workers like Plank were effectively left by the waist side, and any leverage studio employees like him were thought to possess in the context of wartime work stoppages and jurisdictional disputes were undoubtedly compromised by the studio's decision to shoot and recruit outside the TMZ. The Army members who supported and contributed to the film were not compensated beyond their usual military wage, meaning that studio employee labor was not necessarily transferred or passed on to someone else but rather subsumed as part of the collaborative effort between—in the case of *I Wanted Wings*—Paramount and the Air Force. In a letter to another employee informing him of the same lack of opportunities, Caffey openly admitted that the circumstances would make "a very disappointing picture for you," before offering the consolation: "I would be very happy to use you were it possible but under the

[594] Letter to Tom Plank, August 8, 1940. File 2344: "I WANTED WINGS – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[595] Edwin Schallert, "Timely 'I Wanted Wings' Set for Early Shooting," *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 1940, 10.

peculiar circumstances surrounding this picture I cannot see where you will have any opportunities at all."[596]

On the surface, the "peculiar circumstances" cited by Caffey might have provided the opportunity to work on a film production for those beyond the scope of what traditionally constituted below-the-line labor (referring principally to contracted studio employees living in Los Angeles). At least, Plank thought this might be the case when he vouched for a construction carpenter he knew in San Antonio called Chas Boqueta, who said, according to Plank, that "he would also like to be with you [Caffey] if possible."[597] As one of many Latin Americans living and working in San Antonio during this period, Boqueta may have had the privilege of a connection with a Hollywood employee, but circumstances for people of Latin American origin in the city were largely dire. Richard Garcia, for instance, describes the "dual oppression" faced by Mexicans who came to the Southwest and San Antonio in search of work: they were exploited as both a reserve labor pool while also facing cultural and racial discrimination.[598] Shifting political economy in the city also contributed toward a segregationist order that saw African Americans and Chicanos excluded from certain school districts, as well as restrictive housing covenants that led to the Chicano barrios becoming hotbeds for tuberculosis, venereal disease, and infant mortality.[599] From a business perspective, conditions in the city made it an appealing labor market due to the lack of progress made by trade unions and the diverse grade of labor due to immigration from Mexico and Germany.[600] What union activity did exist in the city was

[596] Letter to William Farella, August 8, 1940. File 2344: "I WANTED WINGS – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[597] Tom Plank Letter to Frank Caffey.
[598] Richard A. Garcia, "Class, Consciousness, and Ideology: The Mexican Community of San Antonio, Texas: 1930-1940," *Aztlan: A Journal of Chicano Studies* 9, nos. 1-2 (1978): 28.
[599] Rodolfo Rosales, *The Illusion of Inclusion: The Untold Political Story of San Antonio* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 5.
[600] Garcia, "Class, Consciousness, and Ideology," 29.

exclusionary and rife with bigotry. The local carpenters union, for instance, regularly passed motions with brazenly racist language, such as an order "not to work with any non-union nigger mechanics" or calling for business agents to instruct contractors to "let niggers go."[601] Caffey's dismissal of working with Boqueta on the basis that he had already arranged to work with a unionized set-up in San Antonio, then, had broader stakes and implications for racial and ethnic minorities working in San Antonio.[602] Though some were given the chance to perform below-the-line labor on location for a film production, those not granted the opportunity on the basis of racial exclusion occupied a space *below* below-the-line in the margins of the city's labor force.

The irony of Boqueta's erasure from the production came to fruition toward the end of location shooting in December 1940, when Hornblow made the decision, like *Reaching for the Sun* and *North West Mounted Police*, to finish shooting in the studio. Despite running over budget and schedule, Paramount hired Hollywood-based technicians to reconstruct the barracks, mess hall, administration building, and block-square roof garden back at the studio.[603] There were rumors and reports in Hollywood that the squadron of B-17B's from the 19th Bomb Group which the Army were lending the studio for use at March Field had to be turned over to the British for immediate deployment, though journalists found no evidence of this when they visited the set.[604] That said, in addition to reconstructing numerous other sets at the studio in December, Paramount also solicited the building of two planes, modeled after Boeing and Douglas units, for

[601] "Meeting Minutes, Carpenters #14 San Antonio, Texas," October 8, 1940, 131. United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, Local 14 records, Box 6, volume 21. University of Texas at Arlington Special Collections, Arlington, TX. I am grateful to Heather Claney for providing complimentary scans of the meeting minutes at short notice.
[602] For more on the relations and alliances between racial and ethnic minorities in World War II Texas, see Thomas A. Guglielmo, "Fighting for Caucasian Rights: Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and the Transnational Struggle for Civil Rights in World War II Texas," *Journal of American History* 92, no. 4 (2006): 1212–1237.
[603] "Huge Film Sets Show Industry Has Confidence," *The Washington Post*, December 8, 1940, A3.
[604] Paul Harrison, "Harrison in Hollywood," *Del Rio News Herald*, October 7, 1940, 4.

shooting remaining dialogue scenes with the lead actors.[605] In January, Caffey wrote to Lieutenant William P. Nuckols, public relations officer at Randolph Field, explaining that Colonel Weir, Commanding Officer at March Field, was liasing with officials from Kelly Field to see if the studio might be able to purchase one of the planes they had been using in production as "junk."[606] These anecdotes represent the many cost-cutting initiatives and solutions sought by the production team to reconcile the costs of shooting on location.

Much like other walkway productions from this period, *I Wanted Wings* both suffered from logistical and budgetary restrictions and benefited from loopholes. As one review of the film noted, were Paramount to have reproduced all of the backgrounds and planes in the studio, the budget would have entered the territory of *Gone with the Wind* (1939). The reviewer also claimed that the film's authenticity would have suffered as a result, and that Army representatives informed journalists: "Hollywood has the real thing."[607] Yet the enforced hybrid approach to location shooting—apparently missed by this reviewer—had mixed consequences for studio employees as well as local contractors in the San Antonio area. Some were temporarily excluded, until Paramount had exhausted the labor and resources supplied by the Army, while others were erased entirely from participating in the production, such as Boqueta. From the studio's perspective, in the interest of an intensified production efficiency in the context of war, whoever could carry out a piece of work the quickest and for the lowest possible compensation was ideal. This, of course, was part of the appeal of the Army's collaborative efforts for the

[605] "Makes Planes," *The Washington Post*, December 16, 1940, 16.
[606] Frank Caffey Letter to Lieutenant William P. Nuckols, January 23, 1941. File 2336: "I WANTED WINGS – correspondence," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. Nuckols was appointed as technical advisor for the film and even travelled with the production to Hollywood to provide further assistance before returning to Randolph Field and resuming his post. See "Cadet Picture Nears Completion," *Form One*, February 1941, 22. Manford Kinney Wagnon Papers, box 4Ja13. Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.
[607] Ruth Lewis, "The Show World," *Austin American-Statesman*, May 18, 1941, 8.

studio.

4.5: Putting those Hollywood Hegiras to Shame: Military Collaboration and the Production of *I Wanted Wings*

In an article promoting the opening of *I Wanted Wings* at the Paramount Theater in Amarillo, Texas, the author frames the production in the context of recent industrial efforts to shoot on location, which marked "a significant change" from Hollywood's usual practices.[608] In comparison to shooting on location for second unit footage, the author cites a greater degree of authenticity in both production design but also performance—where actors "can draw from reality for the inspiration of their make-believe"—as consequences of this shift.[609] Yet one production in particular is positioned as exceptional, and which "puts even those Hollywood hegiras to shame": Paramount's *I Wanted Wings*.[610] The word hegira—derived from the Arabic *hijra,* originally used to describe the flight of Muhammad from Mecca in 622 a.d.—is defined by the Merriam Webster Dictionary as "a journey especially when undertaken to escape from a dangerous or undesirable situation."[611] It is thus a curious word choice to describe the exploits of Hollywood studios shooting away from Los Angeles, as if wartime restrictions and labor strife were so suffocating as to cause an exodus of sorts.[612] And while little mention was made in press

[608] "'I Wanted Wings' Will Open at the Paramount Theater on Saturday; 'Affectionately Yours' at State," *Amarillo Daily News*, May 23, 1941, 4.
[609] "'I Wanted Wings' Will Open at the Paramount Theater on Saturday."
[610] "'I Wanted Wings' Will Open at the Paramount Theater on Saturday."
[611] "Hegira," *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hegira. Accessed 17 Oct. 2024.
[612] According to a Google Ngram, use of the word hegira peaked in the mid- and late 1930s. In email correspondence, Mohammad T. Alhawary, Professor of Arabic Linguistics in the Department of Middle East Studies at the University of Michigan, suggested to me that the reason for this spike could be the synergies at the time between Hollywood and the Egyptian film industry, particularly in the latter's production of adventure films and musicals which might have prompted more frequent deployments of the term. I am grateful for his insights and assistance with the matter.

coverage for the film of the comparatively complicated conditions back in Hollywood itself, it would be fair to characterize the reporting as full of admiration for the military's role in aiding the production.



'I Wanted Wings' . . . Depicted by Filmland Artists

Flying Cadets have entered the homes and hearts of millions of people throughout the United States during the past year; they have become the background of human interest stories in newspapers from Coast to Coast; they have become so well publicized in general that they are becoming known as "glamour boys" . . . at the same time little is known publicly about their actual lives at Randolph and Kelly fields.

But now, with the inside story of how Flying Cadets are trained being made into a feature length motion picture by Paramount, the name "Flying Cadets" will soon be flashing across the light line of every theatre marquis.

"I Wanted Wings," starring Ray Milland, Wayne Morris, William Holden and Brian Donlevy, and featuring Constance Moore and Veronica Lake, has been more than five months in actual filming and has cost more than a million dollars.

Paramount has been able to make the production through the cooperation of the War Department and the Air Corps—a cooperation which has permitted the use of officers and

(Continued on Page 22)

1. Instructor Brian Donlevy in "I Wanted Wings" checks notes while awaiting next scene. 2. Paramount camera crew films scene 600 Flying Cadets in center of parade ground at Randolph Field. 3. AT-6s from Kelly Field are photographed at 10,000 feet near Corpus Christi, Texas, by camera plane in foreground. 4. William Holden and Donlevy are "stilled" while climbing aboard a BT-9 training plane. 5. Location unit "shoots" scenes of advanced trainer at Kelly Field. 6. Second-unit director, Art Rosson, communicates to formation above by plane microphone preparatory to making a "take." 7. Ray Milland and Holden build to a laugh with Wayne Morris while on location at the "West Point of the Air." 8. Flying Cadets at Randolph Field furnish atmosphere for graduation sequence of "I Wanted Wings." 9. Interested Army personnel watch while location unit with full regalia photographs scene at Randolph. 10. Director Mitchell Leisen, wearing coat, "trucks" down on "dolly" for a "pan" shot of Holden and Harry Davenport.

Figure 4.2: "'I Wanted Wings' …Depicted by Filmland Artists," *Form One*, February 1941, 12-3, 22. Manford Kinney Wagnon Papers, box 4Ja13. Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

At the same time, and as was typical for the trade press and daily newspapers during this period, the contributions of actors, directors, and above-the-line personnel were both highlighted and elevated as substantial feats and undertakings.[613] In that respect, one of the many curiosities of *I Wanted Wings* was the simultaneous fascination with the provisions of the Air Force, the

[613] Even in Randolph Field's own publication, *Form One*, a spread covering the production of the film focused more on the role of Leisen and Rosson in making the film than on the contributions by the cadets as extras. See "'I Wanted Wings' …Depicted by Filmland Artists," *Form One*, February 1941, 12-3, 22. Manford Kinney Wagnon Papers, box 4Ja13. Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

exceptional labor of the performers, and the overall scale of the production as an aviation film. While journalists, critics, and commentators detailed the numbers of planes, extras, and technical assistance supplied by at Randolph and Kelly Fields, the production of *I Wanted Wings* was framed as a timely and urgent collaboration between Hollywood and the War Department. Yet at the same time, the collaborative nature of the location shoot and the circumventing of traditional sources of below-the-line labor enabled by military cooperation both characterized walkaway productions during World War II, but also continuously set precedents for the industry's practices in the postwar period.

Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned the acceleration of the film's production schedule in response to Roosevelt's "50,000 planes" speech, yet as earlier as September, 1940, Paramount were already confronted with a major decision to make which inhibited production progress. Producer Arthur Hornblow Jr. had initially hired J. Theodore Reed, who was fresh off the success of *What a Life* (1939), the first entry in the Henry Aldrich series, as well as *I'm from Missouri* (1939). Production began in earnest on August 26, 1940.[614] Up to that point, proceedings had mostly gone smoothly: permission and support was successfully obtained from the War Department, location scouting was completed on time, and pre-production recruiting had been uncharacteristically straightforward. The only minor hiccup was in securing the services of William Holden, who initially refused to star in the film because his $350 weekly salary was, in his opinion, inadequate, given that he had no control over when or how often he appeared in films.[615] Paramount later reached an agreement with Holden, who reported for work on the film under the assumption that an adjustment of his salary had been made.[616] While Reed began work

[614] Edwin Schallert, "'McGinty Donlevy Gets 'I Wanted Wings' Lead," *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 1940, 11.
[615] Louella O. Parsons, "Close-Ups and Long-Shots Of the Motion Picture Scene," *The Washington Post*, August 10, 1940, 4.
[616] "Screen News Here and in Hollywood," *New York Times*, August 13, 1940, 21.

on the film in San Antonio in late August, Hornblow was in the hospital, and was receiving troublesome reports from the location about the production, which ultimately led to his decision to change director.[617] Although the *Los Angeles Times* cited "difference of opinion on production details" as the reason for Hornblow's plan to replace Reed, Hornblow later revealed that it was Reed's inability to get the most from shooting on location that was the final straw.[618] According to Hornblow, Reed's replacement, Mitchell Leisen, "saved me from disaster. *I Wanted Wings* was falling apart on location at the hands of an inept director."[619] Leisen recalled Paramount telling Reed that they "could get that much production right here on the back lot."[620] This captures the same tensions that undergirded numerous walkaway productions during the war—ascertaining whether shooting on location was necessary enough to justify the expense.

At the time Leisen took over, only two weeks of location shooting remained, but the film would eventually run more than five weeks behind schedule.[621] There were many reasons for the delays, although Leisen's aptitude was not one of them. On the contrary, he was brought in as an obvious replacement for Reed given his experience in the aviation genre; Leisen had previously directed the pre-code *The Eagle and the Hawk* (1933) which was re-released in 1939. The film used footage from *Wings* and *Young Eagles* (1930), and all flying was supervised by Leisen and performed by the Associated Motion Picture Pilots.[622] Leisen was a pilot himself, but this did little to mitigate the size of the task given to him.[623] In an article penned by Leisen promoting the film's release in June 1941, Leisen confessed his initial reservations, but ultimately gestured

[617] "Leisen Replaces Reed as Director of 'Wings' Opus," *Los Angeles Times*, September 9, 1940, 9.
[618] "Leisen Replaces Reed as Director of 'Wings' Opus";
[619] Arthur Hornblow Jr, quoted in David Chierichetti, *Mitchell Leisen: Hollywood Director* (Los Angeles: Photoventures Press, 1995), 144.
[620] Mitchell Leisen, quoted in Chierichetti, *Mitchell Leisen: Hollywood Director*, 144.
[621] "Leisen Replaces Reed as Director of 'Wings' Opus"; "Jimmy Fidler in Hollywood," *Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 1940, 19.
[622] Chierichetti, *Mitchell Leisen: Hollywood Director*, 142.
[623] "Leonard Back to Direct M.G.M. Musical Picture," *Los Angeles Times*, October 13, 1940, 2.

toward the Air Corps' collaboration as providing much-needed relief from the logistical challenges of the production:

> I admit I was somewhat self-conscious of the tremendous task that faced me. The problems were seemingly insurmountable—and seemingly impossible to solve. But as each problem was reached, somehow the barriers began to crumble under the blows of clever technicians, and soon I realized that what had started out as a gigantic headache was turning out to be really lots of fun.[624]

Leisen's singling out of the technical support provided by the Air Corps was characteristic of the production's overall press coverage. Indeed, in many ways the attention paid to the provisions and support from the military functioned as a symbiotic PR campaign for both parties. Randolph Field, for instance, had its own history of being utilized for media campaigns; as aviation historian Bruce Ashcroft explains, "The media embraced Randolph Field from the first, and air force leaders pushed their 'West Point of the Air' forward at every possible occasion."[625] As the principal location for the film, press coverage of the production converged around the trafficking of personnel and materials from Hollywood to San Antonio, and the numerous ways in which the logistics of the production were unlike traditional Hollywood fare.

Whereas the narratives of conquest and exploration dominated accounts of runaway productions in years to come (Frank Nugent describing John Ford as a "pioneer" of Hollywood's "invasion" of Mexico, for example), the production team for *I Wanted Wings* were predominantly framed as *guests* at Randolph and Kelly Fields.[626] The *Detroit Free Press* described how the locations were "playing host to Paramount Pictures, Inc.," before detailing the journey of 130 studio employees, four carloads of equipment, and three camera planes to the

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[624] Mitchell Leisen, "Director Has Task In Manipulating Planes In Paramount's 'I Wanted Wings,'" *The Odessa American,* June 22, 1941, 6.
[625] Bruce A. Ashcroft, "Why We Wanted Wings: American Aviation and Representations of the Air Force in the Years before World War II," PhD Dissertation (University of Texas at Austin, 2003), 207.
[626] Nugent, "Hollywood Invades Mexico," 17.

Southwest.[627] In an article from the *Austin American-Statesman,* the arrangement was characterized in even more explicitly symbiotic terms: "Hollywood goes all-out for the army, and the army went all-out for Hollywood. […] It turned out to be a sort of mutual admiration society, with Paramount patting the army on the back for its co-operation, and the army patting Paramount on the back for the job it did."[628] The generosity from the Army side was highlighted as a first for the film industry, which helped the press to continuously frame the production as exceptional.[629] Indeed, in his interview, Leisen claims that the film would not have been possible were it not for the unprecedented level of cooperation from the Army: "Never before in the history of the motion picture industry has the War Department so closely co-operated in the making of a film."[630] Several articles detailed this cooperation by listing the sensational amount of equipment and labor provided by the Army; some estimated the total value of government airplanes provided—1,157, including BT-9s and 14s models—at $25,000,000.[631] Personnel included 1050 cadets, 450 officers and instructors, and 2,543 enlisted men to operate the 1,157 planes.[632]

In addition to the equipment and personnel, the hosting capacity of the Army was also legible in the adjustments made to their normal operating procedures and daily routines to accommodate the film crew. For example, Leisen himself admitted that although the presence of civilians in an Army base would normally be strictly against government regulations, "the many violations were tolerantly forgiven by commanding officers, as members of our picture troupe invaded sacred areas, charged into control rooms, out on the field, into class rooms and

[627] "Paramount Starts Air Corps Picture," *Detroit Free Press*, September 17, 1940, 17.
[628] Ruth Lewis, "The Show World."
[629] "'I Wanted Wings' Saturday At Texas; To Play Four-Day Run," *San Angelo Standard-Times*, May 25, 1941, 22.
[630] Leisen, "Director Has Task In Manipulating Planes In Paramount's 'I Wanted Wings.'"
[631] "I Wanted Wings," *The High School Thespian*, April 1941, 16; "'I Wanted Wings' Recruiting Aid," *The Wichita Falls Times*, May 15, 1941, 8.
[632] Leisen, "Director Has Task In Manipulating Planes In Paramount's 'I Wanted Wings.'"

everywhere."[633] According to Stephen Pendo, the only true restriction placed on the filmmakers was a stipulation that every photograph taken on set must be reviewed and approved by the Army censor.[634] Yet the Army went above and beyond merely lifting restrictions and supplying equipment. At one point in the production, the crew found it difficult to capture the actors' dialogue on the ground due to the noise from planes in the air. When Leisen brought this up to Army officials, they agreed to ground 700 planes on one day in order for the dialogue to be recorded.[635] Ironically, when the production moved to March Field in October 1940, the proximity to Hollywood meant that on-set noise from *I Wanted Wings* caused disturbances to other productions, such as *Reaching for the Sun* during its Lake Arrowhead shoot. William Wellman tasked his assistant with contacting March Field to inquire about the noise, only to find out that Paramount were the cause.[636] Harry Sherman's *Hopalong Cassidy* films were so disrupted by the noise that he investigated moving the productions to location shoots in Flagstaff, Arizona.[637] Few anecdotes capture wartime, walkaway production culture more aptly: the booming aircraft industry in Southern California causing such disturbances to nearby productions that they considered moving to location shooting to circumvent both the war itself but also unprecedented wartime productions such as *I Wanted Wings.*

As much as Leisen praised the Army's accommodation and flexibility in supporting the production, many articles in the trade and popular press constructed an image of Leisen himself as an authoritative presence, even on military premises. These articles provide a telling insight into the persistence of the image of the Hollywood director as a powerful presence presiding

[633] Leisen, "Director Has Task In Manipulating Planes In Paramount's 'I Wanted Wings.'"
[634] Pendo, *Aviation in the Cinema*, 246.
[635] Leisen, "Director Has Task In Manipulating Planes In Paramount's 'I Wanted Wings.'"
[636] "Airplanes Irk Movie Makers," *Detroit Free Press*, November 17, 1940, 47.
[637] "Airplanes Irk Movie Makers."

over a willing labor force during this period, especially on location and outside of the studio environment; indeed, coverage of walkaway productions (and later runaway productions, as in the case of Ford and *The Fugitive*), frequently attested to the capacity for directors and crews to exert their influence on a local community of workers. For *I Wanted Wings,* the technical logistics of production afforded journalists and critics with a chance to perpetuate an authoritative image of Leisen. To take an example, one of the film's innovations was its use of a three-way radio communication system that enabled the photographer pilot to communicate with squadron members in the air, the squadron leader, and from Leisen on the ground.[638] Previous aviation film productions, as recently as *Dawn Patrol* (1938)*, Men With Wings, Test Pilot* (1938)*,* and *Flight Command,* used the method introduced by Wellman for *Wings* of rehearsing and choreographing maneuvers using model planes and blackboard drawings on the ground.[639] The new method, with Leisen issuing directions from the ground, was framed in some articles as a first for film history.[640]

Yet as was often the case during the studio era, the studio played an active role in shaping and influencing coverage of the production. In fact, when production of *I Wanted Wings* moved to March Field in California, Paramount paid for journalists to visit the location and witness Leisen exerting his authority as a director over both the crew and the Air Corps. *Detroit Free Press* reporter John Truesdell was invited to March Field in October, 1940, where he paid witness to "suave Director Leisen ordering majors, colonels and a handful of lieutenants around like trained mice."[641] Truesdell goes on to recount how Leisen "wig-wagged a finger" at a major to signal for quiet on set, before explaining to the major that "the government may now use the

[638] "I Wanted Wings," *The High School Thespian*, April 1941, 17.
[639] "I Wanted Wings," *The High School Thespian*, April 1941, 17.
[640] "Governor Makes Movie Debut In Film At Royal," *San Angelo Standard-Times*, May 25, 1941, 22.
[641] John S. Truesdell, "Director Leisen Runs U.S. Airfield," *Detroit Free Press*, October 7, 1940, 17.

field—until we're ready for the next take!'"[642] Whereas some other newspapers placed more emphasis on the collaborative nature of the production and the symbiosis of both parties, in this instance a more unidirectional account of power and influence is given. Truesdell's account is ultimately a dramatic and exaggerated portrait of the unerring influence of Hollywood, even in wartime conditions (or especially in wartime conditions, one might say), over all other locations, bodies, and institutions. Other articles were less overwhelmingly flattering of Leisen and the crew when the reporter was invited to March Field. For instance, Paul Harrison provided an account which conversely highlighted the Army's contribution as his most significant takeaway; in his opinion, "the show was completely stolen by the army."[643] In his article, Harrison situates the film crew as firmly subservient to the Army Air Corps, and frames the collaboration as graceful and generous on the army's part. In contrast to reports that the army followed Leisen's lead and allowed the crew full access to equipment and location, even landing planes to help reduce noise pollution, Harrison instead writes:

> The army approved the script and has been providing locations and lots of manned equipment for a movie about aviation training. But you couldn't expect the Air Corps to curtail its own activities just because an assistant director whose movie rank is about that of a second lieutenant, goes around yelling for silence.[644]

Harrison here ultimately appeals to the severity of the wartime situation, and portrays the exploits of the studio as comparatively frivolous to those of the army. In either instance, whether Leisen was depicted as an authoritative visionary commanding Air Corps representatives, or the entire crew as somewhat out of their depth in such a grave setting, the many peculiarities and firsts of the production remained a topic of principal interest.

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[642] Truesdell, "Director Leisen Runs U.S. Airfield," 17.
[643] Paul Harrison, "Harrison in Hollywood," *Del Rio News Herald*, October 7, 1940, 4.
[644] Harrison, "Harrison in Hollywood," 4.

One of the defining characteristics of this interest was the emphasis on above-the-line personnel, such as Leisen. In *Production Culture,* John Caldwell differentiates the narratives of above-the-line cast and crew from those working below-the-line by suggesting that the former group tend to favor individualistic narratives of personal conquest, genesis myths, and paths-not-taken parables.[645] And this was largely true of *I Wanted Wing's* production culture, even in the context of its collaborative nature. The preoccupation with Leisen's relationship to the army on set, for instance, was bolstered in part by his own experience as a flier.[646] Yet this emphasis was also applied to the lead actors, whose efforts to faithfully portray the cadets they were surrounded by every day on set were valiantly described by the press, in ways that highlight how divisions of labor were both narrated and produced on location. William Holden was described in *Motion Picture* of having "been living the life of a flying cadet" and even suggesting that should Holden be called for selective service, the army "won't get a raw recruit."[647] While it was reported that Milland, Morris, and Holden received a few hours of flight instruction on set, this was predominantly to enhance their credibility in close-up shots back at the studio.[648] As with many productions from the studio era, the actors were given multiple opportunities to narrate and recount their experience as part of a production. Such platforms were normally reserved exclusively for above-the-line personnel; Leisen wrote an entire article on his experience directing the film for *The Odessa American*, while Ray Milland, Brian Donlevy, William Holden, and Constance Moore represented the production in a high-profile radio interview over the Columbia network hosted by Hedda Hopper in August 1940.[649] This trend of foregrounding

[645] John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 38.
[646] "Leonard Back to Direct M.G.M. Musical Picture."
[647] "William Holden," *Motion Picture*, June 1941, 43.
[648] Ashcroft, "Why We Wanted Wings," 235-236; Orris, *When Hollywood Ruled the Skies*, 23.
[649] "Texas on the Air," *The Austin American*, August 29, 1940, 7; Leisen, "Director Has Task In Manipulating Planes In Paramount's 'I Wanted Wings.'"

the labor of the actors in ways that erase and obfuscate the work of those around them (and which makes the actors' work possible) extended to numerous areas of the production. For instance, one article claimed that Ray Milland had broken a record for the number of costume changes for men in one production when he wore his 52nd consecutive outfit for *I Wanted Wings.*[650] Tellingly, no mention was made of the costume designers or any on-set assistance that Milland received.

Having actors working on location alongside the very subjects they were cast to perform as—the real-life cadets, in the case of *I Wanted Wings*—was a strangely reminiscent scenario to that in *Reaching for the Sun.* As I described in Chapter 2, the lead actors in the film were trained on how to operate the machinery inside the auto factory by actual workers, something press coverage lauded the actors for at the expense of the actual Packard plant employees. This was echoed by the stars of *I Wanted Wings* receiving training and instruction from Air Corps representatives to aid the authenticity of their dialogue and expressions in close-up scenes, yet the stakes were different in the latter production due to the subject matter's proximity to the unfolding war. Indeed, in one interview, actor William Morris acknowledged the rumors in Hollywood that actors may be granted exemption from the draft due to the national importance of entertainment and its effect on public morale.[651] Morris's position was that the platform afforded to actors made it more important that they honor the draft should their number be drawn, as a way of setting an example for the public, although he also expressed an expectation that he should be allowed to finish work on the film before beginning service (in his case, that film was *I Wanted Wings*).

If there was a detectable essence of privilege animating Morris's words, the divide

[650] "New Record," *The Tyler Courier-Times*, January 5, 1941, 13.
[651] "Jimmy Fidler in Hollywood," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 1940, 11.

between the glamorous lives of Hollywood stars and those laboring below-the-line became more pronounced once draft numbers began to be called. A *Los Angeles Times* article from late October 1940 listed all film industry personnel whose numbers were called up, a list which included Jimmy Stewart, Sterling Holloway, and Ray Milland. Milland's number was the 2097th drawn, and the article made note of his appearing in a film about cadet training as "an aviation enthusiast," gesturing toward the irony of the situation without explicitly calling it out.[652] Perhaps more telling, however, was the same article's mention of Roy Mulherin, a carpenter, having his number called. Mulherin was on the same lot as Milland, and his number was in fact the first to be called. The article also curiously lists Mulherin's home address as somehow relevant information.[653] Here a stark contrast is legible in the stakes of the draft between above- and below-the-line personnel.

Such a divide was made readily apparent on the set of *I Wanted Wings* in the interactions between the actors playing cadets and the cadets themselves. Although one review of the film jokingly described "the inevitable confusion that arose among the actors in costume and the actual cadets," in actuality the treatment and status of the lead actors was typical of above-the-line personnel.[654] More specifically, the production culture as it pertained the lead actors and those working below-the-line resembled other walkaway productions and what would become runaway productions in the postwar period. For instance, much like the Packard employees in *Reaching for the Sun*, over 450 cadets at Kelly Field were cast as extras to appear in the film, with the unique circumstances of the production providing logistical and financial exceptions for Paramount.[655] Although some reporters described the casting of the cadets as predominantly for

[652] "Film Players' Numbers Called; Several Actors High on List," *Los Angeles Times*, October 30, 1940, D.
[653] "Film Players' Numbers Called; Several Actors High on List."
[654] "'I Wanted Wings' Recruiting Aid."
[655] Orris, *When Hollywood Ruled the Skies*, 23.

"background color,"[656] appealing to the aesthetic realism of the production, Paramount were acutely aware of the representational significance of cadets playing themselves in a wartime production. The studio received a special permit from the Screen Actors Guild for the use of non-Guild extras at Randolph and Kelly Fields, including a waiver for army personnel to both appear in the film, and even to speak lines of dialogue. The only conditions for this were that records should be kept of the dates in which air force personnel spoke story dialogue, and that it be necessary to the plot. As was common in both wartime and walkaway productions, correspondence between studio officials expresses a concern that this should not set a precedent for future productions.[657] Like the treatment of the African-American extras in *Sundown*, the intensified efficiency of wartime production culture in combination with the shooting outside of Los Angeles and beyond the purview of labor organizations, lead to studios pushing the boundaries of labor and resource extraction so long as precedents were not established for the industry going forward.

Indeed, the geographical distance from Hollywood itself and the generous collaboration of the War Department played into the flexibility and relaxed approach to Guild rules that characterized treatment of the cadet extras. Although the Army were generally opposed to on-set photographs and any unauthorized representations of military personnel reaching the public, the control they had of *I Wanted Wings* and the trust they placed in Leisen and Paramount resulted in a culture of symbiosis and mutual benefit. The Air Corps got free publicity for recruitment, while Paramount got free labor. In fact, in one instance the studio got even more than they had bargained for: one cadet at Randolph Field so impressed Leisen that he offered him a screen test

[656] Ida Belle Hicks, "Knute Rockne Role Gets Athletic Prize for O'Brien," *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, September 3, 1940, 5.
[657] Bob Ellsworth letter to John Zinn, August 10, 1940, 1-2. File 2344: "I WANTED WINGS – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

to springboard an acting career in Hollywood. In press coverage of the incident, the cadet remained anonymous so as not to jeopardize his aviation career should he wish to continue it (or if his studio test was unsuccessful).[658] In this instance the representational labor performed by the cadet was rewarded with a potential promotion to working above-the-line, all of which was afforded to him by his privileged appearance in the film and as a cadet in the first place.

That is, the cadets that appear in the film are white, which tells its own representational story about racial discrimination in the Air Corps and the defense effort more broadly. African-Americans, for instance, were excluded entirely from the air force until Congress passed General Arnold's Air Corps expansion act in April 1939, which provided one civilian pilot training school.[659] Soon after, Roosevelt established the Civilian Pilot Training Program, which was hosted by six historically black universities.[660] Yet the graduates from these programs were discriminated against in the air force and instead employed in service capacities, performing menial and common labor well below the level of expertise they had acquired through the CPT program. A commonly held assumption by white officers and pilots was that African Americans did not have sufficient intelligence or hand-eye coordination to succeed as pilots.[661] When the NAACP raised awareness of this discrimination to Judge William H. Hastie, he launched an investigation into the practices at Tuskegee and found that it "maintained separate messes, toilet facilities, and officers' call as well as restrictions on black military police carrying firearms."[662]

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[658] "Cadet May Get Job in Movie," *Amarillo Daily News*, January 3, 1941, 19.
[659] Bruce A. Ashcroft, United States. Air Force. Air Education and Training Command. Office of History and Research. *We Wanted Wings: A History of the Aviation Cadet Program* (Randolph Air Force Base, 2009), 50.
[660] These were the Tuskegee Institute near Montgomery, Alabama, the West Virginia State College for Negroes, Howard University, Hampton University, the Delaware State College for Colored Students, and the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College. See Ashcroft, *We Wanted Wings*, 50.
[661] Alexander M. Bielakowski, *Proud Warriors: African American Combat Units in World War II* (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2021), 223.
[662] Alan M. Osur, *Blacks in the Army Air Forces during World War II: The Problems of Race Relations* (Washington D.C.: Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, [1976] 1986), 70. For more on this, see J. Todd Moye, *Freedom Fliers: The Tuskegee Airmen of World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012);

At the School of Aviation Medicine at Randolph Field, black medical officers were denied access to specialized training and instead achieved their training through a correspondence course, meaning they were never hired.[663] Hastie resigned in protest and only later did the air force admit that excluding black medical trainees from the course at Randolph Field was discriminatory, and conceded that "there appears to be no good reason why Negro Service Pilots should not be effectively employed."[664] Yet at the time *I Wanted Wings* was in production at Randolph Field, black surgeons and trainees were not allowed on site. Black cadets, too, were confined to training at Tuskegee in a segregated program.

Returning to the cadets who appear in the film with this in mind, the representational burden they take on is both racialized and inscribed with the exclusionary practices of the military—particularly in the early stages of the war, before the NAACP had launched protests against those practices. If *I Wanted Wings* was to aid recruitment, it was clear from the demographics of the cadets who appear in the film—both the real-life extras and the lead actors playing them—who was being encouraged to apply.[665] At the same time, whereas the cadets had the chance to work as below-the-line laborers in a Hollywood production as movie extras, opposite the above-the-line stars, African Americans and other racial and ethnic minorities were

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William Alexander Percy, "Jim Crow and Uncle Sam: The Tuskegee Flying Units and the U.S. Army Air Forces in Europe During World War II," *The Journal of Military History* 67, no. 3 (2003): 773-810.

[663] Osur, *Blacks in the Army Air Forces during World War II*, 72. See also Neil A. Wynn, *The African American Experience during World War II* (Plymouth: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 43-62.

[664] Osur, *Blacks in the Army Air Forces during World War II*, 71. For an overview of the fight to desegregate the military, see Phillip McGuire, "Desegregation of the Armed Forces: Black Leadership, Protest and World War II," *The Journal of Negro History* 68, no. 2 (1983): 147–58. See also Daniel Kryder, *Divided Arsenal: Race and the American State During World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

[665] In one article from the Randolph Field official publication, *Form One*, the author attempts to capture the diversity of background and experience that make up the cadet classes, explaining how flyers from poor and wealthy families, and from farms and cities, had "'wrinkles' that had to be ironed out by the upper class in an effort to make an adjustment of personalities." Of course, the cadets were almost all white, and thus what diversity existed did so within an otherwise racially homogenous group. "Cadet Area Overflowing With Largest Class," *Form One*, February 1941, 11. Manford Kinney Wagnon Papers, box 4Ja13. Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

afforded neither opportunity and were instead confined to working *below* below-the-line.

In few other instances was the labor division between above-, below-, and *below* below-the-line more pronounced than in the coverage of the lead actresses. Of particular fascination was the presence of Veronica Lake, who was the subject of deeply gendered attention by the press which framed her as incompatible with the masculine environment, using her perceived lack of labor to contrast with the hard work of the cadets.[666] Cadet classes, for instance, were reportedly "disrupted" by her presence as "the new blonde bomber of screendom."[667] One author commented on how seldomly, "in the strenuous life of the flying cadet, are there interludes and actresses."[668] Other articles positioned her on-set demeanor as distinct from the laborious nature of production logistics and praised her capacity to find feminine respite amidst all the hard work taking place: "While the rest of the cast of 'I Wanted Wings' […] sweltered under a broiling sun at San Antonio, Veronica Lake, pint-sized screen find, figured out a way to cool off. She just got into the propeller blast of a training ship."[669] Indeed, reporting on the film took pains to cast Lake as somehow out of place and intrusive in ways that cannot be said for the male actors in the film.

As was typical with press coverage of Hollywood productions in the studio-era, journalists and critics placed notable emphasis on Lake's appearance, and in the case of *I Wanted Wings,* suggested that her femininity was distracting and out of place in a military setting. An article in the *Washington Post* claimed that Lake's casting as a blonde villain "violated" the

[666] Of course, the construction of her glamorous image and the aesthetic of effortlessness necessarily involved labor on the part of the costume and makeup department, but also from Lake herself. For more of this in the context of studio-era Hollywood, see Marissa Spada, "Camera Beauty: Makeup and the Art of Image Making in Studio Era Hollywood," PhD Dissertation (University of Michigan, 2022). See also Stephen Gundle, *Glamour: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 172-198.
[667] "'I Wanted Wings' Recruiting Aid."
[668] "Army Picture Being Made At Randolph Field," *Pampa Daily News*, September 5, 1940, 10.
[669] "News Photo-Flashes," *The Mexia Weekly Herald*, January 17, 1941, 11.

industry's traditional practices of reserving those roles for brunettes.[670] Yet other articles more explicitly commented on her incompatibility with military space, especially those from Texas-based newspapers. One striking example from the *Pampa Daily News* began by positioning Lake's feminine glamor as invasive: "Mascara, rouge, lipstick and face powder have invaded Randolph Field […] No—Randolph Field has not turned co-educational. It is still strictly reserved for male citizens of excellent character."[671] Here the author uses the presence of Lake to remind and reassure the reader of the gender-exclusionary policy of the Air Corps, characterizing women's contribution to the space as frivolous, superficial, and dehumanized (in the form of make-up), firmly juxtaposed with the comparatively substantive notion of male character and nobility. Even when the press attempted to cast feminine presence on set as positive—reporting, for instance, that Constance Moore's brother flew to San Antonio to watch the shoot and "was so impressed with the cadets that he joined the air force"—the women themselves are decentered and essentially portrayed as accessories to recruitment.[672] One particular anecdote which captured the paradox of gendered labor and gendered space in the production of *I Wanted Wings*, in turn reflecting the film industry's preoccupation with the narrativization and aestheticization of femininity, told of a Beverly Hills "society girl," Trude Wyler.[673] Wyler reportedly hitch-hiked by air to San Antonio in order to "plead with officers at Randolph Field to form a women's squadron in Uncle Sam's Air Corps."[674] She was not successful. However, when Leisen was informed of the episode and met with Wyler, he offered her a conciliatory bit-part in the film.

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[670] "Blonde 'Heavy' Shatters Film Tradition," *The Washington Post*, December 1, 1940, V2.
[671] "Army Picture Being Made At Randolph Field."
[672] Hedda Hopper, "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood," *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 1940, 12. As another example of conciliatory coverage and acclaim afforded to the women in the film, Moore later became the first Hollywood star to be inducted into The Women Flyers of America at Rockaway Airport in May 1941. See "The Talkie Town Tattler," *Motion Picture*, May 1941, 82.
[673] "Two Shows of 'Tiger House' Planned Friday," *The Tyler Courier-Times*, December 8, 1940, 23.
[674] "Two Shows of 'Tiger House' Planned Friday."

She performed well in tests and was subsequently "on her way" in the industry.[675] Perhaps the suggestion was that one day, she might graduate to the laborless level of Lake, who takes refuge from the sweltering sun by standing in front of a propeller. In any case, the message was clear: active duty was out of the question.

At the same time that Wyler was coming to terms with having to accept a screen appearance in a Paramount production in lieu of serving her country, instead looking up at the privileged positions of Lake and Moore, a subset of women were performing decidedly less-glamourous labor behind the scenes at Randolph and Kelly Fields. Indeed, as part of the accelerated demand for labor in wartime, particularly in militarily significant locations such as southern California and the Southwest in general, numerous Latina women were offered unprecedented opportunities for paid work in support of the war effort. They worked as riveters, crane operators, welders, assemblers, railroad section workers, roundhouse mechanics, forklift operators, meatpackers, farmworkers, seamstresses, nurses, secretaries, shipbuilders, and in the production of aircraft, tanks, trucks, jeeps, ships, uniform, tents, medical supplies, small arms, heavy artillery, ammunition, and bombs.[676] Some moved from fighting for better pay and negotiating power in canneries in southern California to more lucrative roles in defense plants.[677] Others quit their jobs as migrant farmworkers to work as housekeepers, assisting wives whose husband had been drafted. As the war progressed and the defense industry called for more labor,

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[675] "Two Shows of 'Tiger House' Planned Friday."
[676] Richard Santillán, "Rosita the Riveter: Midwest Mexican American Women during World War II, 1941–1945," *Perspectives in Mexican American Studies* 2 (1989): 117. See also Naomi Quiñonez, "Rosita the Riveter: Welding Tradition with Wartime Transformation," in *Mexican Americans & World War II*, edited by Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez (Texas: University of Texas, 2005), 245-268; Elizabeth R. Escobedo, *From Coveralls to Zoot Suits: The Lives of Mexican American Women on the World War II Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003).
[677] Vicki L. Ruiz, *From Out of the Shadows: Mexican Women in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 82. See also Vicki L. Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1987).

women like Henrietta López Rivas from San Antonio worked as interpreters for the Civil Defense, and later repairing airplane instruments.[678] Although this marked a steep increase in earnings (moving from $1.50 a week as a housekeeper to $90 a month for Civil Defense work, in Rivas's case), there were still limitations placed on which roles women had access to in the defense industry. Airplane repair, for instance, became a viable avenue for women that kept them out of flying the planes themselves; Josephine Kelly Ledesma Walker moved to Randolph Field to study aircraft repair after working as a sales clerk in Austin. For some time, she was the only woman in the training program.[679] Yet the demand for labor saw the Civil Service as well as the military increasingly welcome Hispanics into the workforce; one San Antonio local, Aurora González Castro, who worked for the State Department of Public Welfare taking dictation for social workers, recalled Kelly Field providing the chance for "Hispanics or people who were not well off […] to work for the government. They paid $100 a month."[680] Despite these advances, however, women of all races and ethnicities were still excluded from more high-profile, high-visibility roles in the defense industry.

With that being said, the opportunity offered to Trude Wyler to appear in *I Wanted Wings* in lieu of the formation of a women's squadron highlights the racialized stakes of representation on-screen. In a similar formulation to the labor dynamics at play in the production of *Reaching for the Sun*—in which the lead actors perform the labor of auto workers alongside actual auto workers (re-creating a 'traditional' above- and below-the-line division), meanwhile auto workers of color are excluded, operating below below-the-line—the production culture of *I Wanted*

[678] Joanne Rao Sánchez, "The Latinas of World War II: From Familial Shelter to Expanding Horizons," in *Beyond the Latino World War II Hero,* edited by Maggie Rivas-Rodríguez and Emilio Zamora (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 77.
[679] Sánchez, "The Latinas of World War II," 77.
[680] Sánchez, "The Latinas of World War II," 79.

Wings offers another example. While Veronica Lake sustained her glamorous, effortless appearance and stardom by staying out of the sweltering San Antonio sun, Wyler and other women were denied actual representation in the military in favor of, in this context, superficial and consolatory representation in the form of a screen appearance. Yet beneath this narrative, and ultimately subsumed by it, are those women who were denied access to similar forms of representation or narrativization, whether in the film, press, or in the capacity to perform military service. Instead, their labor was readily used and exploited, but confined to background roles either servicing equipment or performing other menial tasks in and around the Air Force bases in San Antonio.

4.6: Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted some of the ways in which wartime productions both navigated new challenges, while also looking backwards at how previous productions had handled similar circumstances. What studios learned on location during the early war years, whether for an aviation film, combat film, or a film entirely unrelated to the conflict, was that moving outside the thirty-mile zone opened up opportunities for the sourcing and soliciting of production labor. Yet in many such instances, the circumventing of the traditionally below-the-line labor field either opened the possibility for a newly exploitable workforce, or continued to overlook them on the basis of racially-motivated exclusion.

Because *I Wanted Wings* was based on a book about the Army Air Corps that predated the war by 2 years, its release as a recruitment drive for the United States's impending entry into the war was largely serendipitous. Less than a year after its release in March 1941were the Pearl Harbor attacks, which signaled a seismic shift in the film industry in terms of its attitude toward

such material. Indeed, the lessons learned during the production of *I Wanted Wings,* and the precedent Paramount set for sourcing labor through military collaboration and location shooting were especially palpable in the aviation films that followed the country's official intervention in the war. At least, that was until a series of restrictions and impositions on film production were established at both the state level in California as well as the federal level. In the following chapter, I survey a handful of walkaway productions post-Pearl Harbor made in collaboration with the military that attempted to pick up the mantle, as it were, from *I Wanted Wings*, with varying degrees of success.

Chapter 5

Race, Labor, and Material Resources in Hollywood After Pearl Harbor

5.1: Introduction

Mr. Teraji, a Japanese man from Wakayama and stepfather to four children, split his time between working at Paramount Studios and KNX radio station as a janitor, making around $15 a week. He was described by his son, Thomas, as a shy man who obeyed his wife's instructions, and loved to do gardening work in the yard. He told Thomas that he wished he wouldn't play sports because he might get hurt. However, Thomas's friends had spotted Mr. Teraji sneaking into football games on more than one occasion to watch his stepson play.[681] When Japan launched its attack on the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, everything changed for Mr. Teraji.

The day after the attack, following President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Day of Infamy" speech, the United States declared war on Japan. In response, while waiting for the government to announce its policy regarding Japanese nationals, Paramount made the decision to ban all Japanese employees from the lot until further notice. The studio employed around 30 Japanese men at the time, all of whom were janitors like Mr. Teraji, excluding two in the art and still

[681] Thomas Shuichi Teraji, "Interview 1 of 2: Tape 1, Side A," by Mary Doi, January 28, 1998. *REgenerations Oral History Project: Rebuilding Japanese American Families, Communities, and Civil Rights in the Resettlement Era, Volume 1: Chicago Region*. (Los Angeles: Japanese American National Museum, 2000), 524. Retrieved from the Digital Public Library of America, http://ark.cdlib.org/ark:/13030/ft7n39p0cn. Accessed April 21, 2025.

departments.[682] By March 1942, Teraji, his wife, and two of their sons had arrived at Manzanar Relocation Center, one of ten concentration camps housing Japanese Americans forcibly removed from the West Coast during the war as a result of Roosevelt signing Executive Order 9066 a month earlier.[683] Manzanar was located in Inyo County, California, in the Owens Valley, and at that time was the only active camp. Historians estimate that 120,000 Japanese Americans were interned throughout the war.[684] Mr. Teraji was one of them, despite the fact that two of his stepsons were active members of the United States Army, specifically the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. Paramount were not alone in their decision to remove Japanese employees from their ranks; Warner Bros. also began in-house evacuation in anticipation of more concrete measures from the capital.[685] At the same time, studios reiterated their commitment to the war effort and offered up their vast resources—both material, and in terms of manpower. The unions made their own declarations of readiness and support. Though Hollywood had long been engaged with the war from afar, now that it had become a more domestic affair, the studios were shaken into action. The Pearl Harbor attacks had both immediate and more lasting effects on film production, especially in terms of labor. This chapter aims to examine these effects.

I began with the anecdote about Mr. Teraji because it encapsulates the industry's existing dependence and use of racialized labor within the studio system, but also marks a key moment in which that dependency only intensified and became exacerbated. Indeed, as the case studies in this chapter demonstrate, the combination of filmmaking restrictions imposed at the federal level

[682] "War's Effect on Hollywood," *The Hollywood Reporter*, December 9, 1941, 3.
[683] Teraji, "Interview 1 of 2," 528.
[684] For some representative works on the subject, see Brian Masaru Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy: The Japanese American Internment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Peter Irons, *Justice at War: The Story of the Japanese-American Internment Cases* (Oakland: University of California Press, 1993); Wendy Ng, *Japanese American Internment During World War II* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002); Benson Tong, "Race, Culture, and Citizenship among Japanese American Children and Adolescents during the Internment Era," *Journal of American Ethnic History* 23, no. 3 (2004): 3–40.
[685] "War's Effect on Hollywood," 3.

effecting set construction, transportation, light, aviation, and labor, pushed the studios to find labor from alternative sources. In particular, the internment of virtually all of the industry's Japanese employees had implications both in front of and behind the camera; the suddenly urgent ideological project of portraying the Japanese as the enemy created a representational problem: how could studios depict Japanese characters without Japanese actors or extras? As with the need for authentic locales and new materials for set construction, this problem prompted studios to take productions on location, meanwhile scouring the nation for east Asian actors and extras who could convincing play Japanese characters. In several instances, this led studios to exploit racialized workforces, whom I describe as below below-the-line. While this kind of work was certainly present in the early war years, and in the productions examined in previous chapters, after Pearl Harbor the industry's labor divisions became only more pronounced and dependent on racialized labor.

In the first section, I survey some of the key impacts the United States's entry into the war had on filmmaking, particularly within Los Angeles itself. Given its location on the West Coast and proximity to the Pacific Islands, the city was subject to substantial security measures and regulations, which severely impacted film production. One genre that faced numerous restrictions despite its renewed importance to the war effort was the combat film, especially the aviation subgenre. I highlight some examples of how studios attempted to navigate these restrictions, and what role labor played in their doing so. In the second section, I turn to Warner Bros.' *Air Force* (1943) as a case study both for its navigation of production challenges by shooting on location in Tampa, Florida, but also for its handling of representing Japanese soldiers onscreen. The third section, by way of comparison, looks at Paramount's *Wake Island* (1942), which found in its location near the Salton Sea in Imperial Valley, California, not just a

workaround for being unable to shoot aerial scenes on the West Coast, but also a ready supply of Filipino farmers who played the Japanese soldiers. Finally, the fourth section examines *Five Graves to Cairo* (1943) which Paramount also shot in Imperial Valley, after their productive experience there only months prior. In order to build sets to represent Cairo itself, while circumventing the cap on spending for new materials, Paramount had the idea of using adobe brick from the location, hiring Mexican laborers—in plentiful supply in Imperial Valley—to assist with their handling of the material. Throughout the chapter, I argue that the restrictions imposed on the industry after Pearl Harbor resulted in an intensification of the industry's existing attitudes toward race, labor, and resources.

5.2: Wartime Filmmaking Restrictions and Military Collaborations After Pearl Harbor

The combination of an increasing shortage of available labor due to the draft and the broader defense effort, with the rationing of supplies such as film stock, war-related bans on transportation for production purposes, and the growing level of oversight the Office of War Information demanded to have on all Hollywood's activities, all had profound impacts on wartime production culture.[686] Restrictions on set construction and a general shortage of lighting and studio space prompted more and more filmmakers to shoot on location, though many studios stubbornly tried to adapt their practices in order to avoid leaving the lot.[687] But doing so had its consequences, and Los Angeles was not an easy city to make films in at the time—it was wrought with anxiety and paranoia in the months following the attack on Pearl Harbor, which

[686] A *Hollywood Reporter* article published shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack declared a labor crisis in the industry, but specified that Hollywood had lost more manpower to the defense effort itself than the draft. Skilled technicians found that they could earn as much as 25-40% higher wages working in the defense industry. "Hollywood Faces Labor Shortage," *The Hollywood* Reporter, December 15, 1941, 3. See also Biesen, *Blackout*, 66-68. For more on the shortage of film stock and its effect on the war economy, see Lovejoy, "Celluloid geopolitics: film stock and the war economy, 1939-47."
[687] Steinhart, *Runaway Hollywood*, 5.

manifested in restrictive and difficult filmmaking circumstances. In this section, I examine the attack's immediate impact, and survey how some of the restrictions affected productions both in Hollywood and beyond.

The day after the attack, the 125th Infantry Regiment were informed by the army that they were moving to California, with some of the GIs joking that they were being sent "to guard Hollywood."[688] Both at the time and in the years since, a belief emerged that the Pearl Harbor attack was an act of madness, and that the Japanese decision to incite war was essentially borne out of total irrationality—though some historians have since critiqued the idea and described it as "perversely comforting" given its use to justify both the internment of Japanese Americans as well as retaliatory attacks such as the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.[689] Still, such a notion no doubt contributed to the culture of fear and paranoia that engulfed the West Coast in the immediate aftermath, including the film industry. Indeed, on the screen, many films actively preyed upon the public's growing fear of the Japanese threat in the wake of Pearl Harbor, particularly B-grade pictures. Such productions, in the words of Schatz, "demonized the Japanese and established the 'stab-in-the-back' thesis which was haphazardly applied to all Japanese—including Japanese Americans, in some cases."[690] And while I touch on this in discussing *Wake Island* (1942) later in this chapter, my principal interest here is in what

[688] Mark D. Van Ellis, *Red Arrow Across the Pacific: The Thirty-Second Infantry Division During World War II* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2024), 81.
[689] Scott D. Sagan, "The Origins of the Pacific War," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 18, no. 4 (1988): 894. Sagan argues that the Japanese decision to attack Pearl Harbor was more rationalized and pre-meditated than both contemporary and later accounts have suggested. Sagan also describes how the "madness theme was echoed throughout American newspapers" the day after the attack. Sagan, "The Origins of the Pacific War," 893. John Mueller also downplays the material damage of the attack and argues that it did not particularly accelerate the United States's involvement in the war or affect the overall pace of the conflict. Instead, Mueller argues that Pearl Harbor's impact was more discursive: "Within the United States," he writes, "it utterly closed off careful thought and propelled the country heedlessly into a long, ghastly war in Asia". John Mueller, "Pearl Harbor: Military Inconvenience, Political Disaster," *International Security* 16, no. 3 (1991): 173.
[690] Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 242.

happened off-screen—that is, how the culture of anxiety in post-Pearl Harbor Los Angeles affected the practices of film production.

Two events in February 1942 only exacerbated the feelings of anxiety and paranoia within the city about the possibility of a Japanese attack, and which had implications for Hollywood.[691] On February 23, hours after the *Los Angeles Times* ran an article claiming that weekend raids had broken up and disrupted Japanese espionage activity in the city, a Japanese submarine crashed into an oil storage center in Ellwood. Despite the attack having minimal impact, "it substantially heightened citizen fears of a Japanese attack and it unfortunately served to increase the credibility of those favoring the removal of Japanese Americans from the West Coast."[692] Only two days later, on the night of February 25, unconfirmed reports of Japanese airplanes flying over Los Angeles reached a nearby military base, from which anti-aircraft artillery promptly began firing rounds into the sky. As it turned out, in what became known as "The Battle of Los Angeles," no Japanese planes flew over the city (or Southern California, for that matter—either in 1942 or at any other time during the war), and any damage that did occur to cars and houses in the city was a result of falling shrapnel from the artillery fire. As historian Abraham Hoffman remarks, what civilians thought was a Japanese aircraft was, in all likelihood, a weather balloon.[693] Nonetheless, it only intensified the feeling within the city that an attack loomed large. After all, by this point, Los Angeles and Southern California had all but

[691] Much of this paranoia was racially motivated, and led to an increased hostility from both the public and the press toward Japanese Americans living in Los Angeles. As Kevin Allen Leonard describes, "Less than two weeks after Pearl Harbor, daily newspapers began to publish articles that depicted all people of Japanese ancestry as a threat to the security of the United States, and some elected officials and journalists began to suggest that drastic action should be taken to reduce or eliminate the threat of sabotage posed by Japanese Americans who were at least potentially loyal to Japan." Kevin Allen Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles: Racial Ideology and World War II* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 57.
[692] Arthur C. Verge, "The Impact of the Second World War on Los Angeles," *Pacific Historical Review* 63, no. 3 (1994): 298.
[693] Abraham Hoffman, "California during World War II," *Journal of the West* 63, no. 2 (2023): 22.

transformed into a central zone for the defense effort: airfields and aircraft plants were built, it was close to important navy bases—all of which would have made it a logical focal point for a Japanese attack.[694]

As a precaution, the Civil Defense enforced blackouts and air-raid drills in anticipation of an attack on the West Coast, and studios were restricted from location shooting in the daytime as a result. As early as December 15, 1941, the studios were forced to move to an 8-5 work schedule, so as to maximize production work before the ban on shooting at night came into effect.[695] In order to continue production progress but to stay within the established rules, studios continually liaised with the city's Defense Council for advice and guidance about how to manage specific challenges. (Non)-events like the "Battle of Los Angeles," combined with the added defense risks of Hollywood's enormous light pollution, meant that light itself became a prized commodity for filmmakers. In fact, it was reported that military authorities sought to protect and possibly acquisition studios' large spotlights, mobile generators, and other lighting equipment.[696]

While the studios were keen to express their commitment to and support for the war effort, such measures had notable impacts on production logistics. For instance, on August 20, 1942, the industry prepared for a dimout stretching 150 miles along the West Coast, referred to in the press as "Hollywood's Night of the Big Blank." Each studio developed a different plan to continue production, particularly for night scenes; Twentieth Century-Fox considered buying property inland to continue shooting on location, while Paramount, Warner Bros., and Universal elected to continue shooting exteriors on their sound stages; RKO used a giant canopy for night shots at its Culver City studio for *Seven Miles from Alcatraz* (1942); and Columbia used filters

[694] Hoffman, "California during World War II," 22.
[695] "H'wood Works 8 to 5 Daily," *The Hollywood Reporter,* December 12, 1941, 1.
[696] "War's Effect On Hollywood," 4.

and heightened makeup on its actors while shooting *The Desperadoes* (1943).[697] Studios often had to make arrangements with Robert Anderson, the Lighting Consultant of the Defense Council of Los Angeles, if they wanted to shoot outdoors. One such instance occurred during the filming of RKO's *Forever and a Day* (1943)—a multinational, collaborative war romance which donated its profits to American and British war relief charities.[698] The production team made an agreement with Anderson to shoot with booster lights at the RKO Ranch between sundown and dusk for three days in September 1942.[699] The only condition was that any glow from the booster lights had to be eliminated in case it alerted enemy spies. As a workaround for these restrictions on light, more productions were shot on the streets of Los Angeles at nighttime, which meant less available work for much of the studio labor force as a result.[700]

It should be noted that not all productions were created equally, however. The ideological importance of Hollywood to the war effort meant that some provisions were made to alleviate logistical challenges, if the film could demonstrably be considered to boost morale and play its part in the conflict. As Ralph Donald notes, combat films in particular were often given exceptional and preferential treatment due to their capacity to be mutually beneficial for the military and the film industry.[701] And though they still had the restrictions to manage, the military's lending a helping hand often made a big difference. Productions that benefited from some form of military collaboration included *Action in the North Atlantic* (Warner Bros., 1943),

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[697] "Every Studio to Try Out Own Pet Idea in Shooting Pix Under Dimmers," *Variety*, August 19, 1942, 6.
[698] In addition, it was reported that actors, writers, and directors worked voluntarily in support of the film's philanthropic efforts. See Vance King, "Multiple Star Films Are New Hollywood Cycle," *Motion Picture Herald*, January 16, 1943, 12.
[699] Richard Hungate memo to Walter Daniels, September 16, 1942. Forever and a Day Production File, RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records, UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 119P.
[700] The restrictions on daytime location shooting also helped to develop the aesthetic of film noir, as Biesen has shown. Biesen, *Blackout,* 60-63.
[701] Ralph Donald, *Hollywood Enlists! Propaganda Films of World War II* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 58.

Crash Dive (20th Century Fox, 1943), *Destination Tokyo* (Warner Bros., 1943), *Destroyer* (Columbia, 1943), *Flying Tigers* (Republic, 1942), *The Fighting Seabees* (Republic, 1944), *Winged Victory* (20th Century Fox, 1944), *God Is My Co-Pilot* (Warner Bros., 1945), *Guadalcanal Diary* (20th Century Fox, 1943) *Marine Raiders* (RKO, 1944), *Back to Bataan* (RKO, 1945), and several others. The nature of the collaboration varied from the provision of sets, planes, equipment, personnel, or technical advice and consultation. In the case of aviation films, the supply of filming locations such as air fields offered a particularly desirable degree of symbiosis for studio and military, as well as the ability to recruit locally. Pine-Thomas Productions, a unit of Paramount, shot *Aerial Gunner* (1943) on location at the Harlingen Air Force Base in Texas, where Air Force trainees featured as extras, as in *I Wanted Wings*.[702] *Bombardier* (RKO, 1943) was shot on location at Kirtland Army Air Field in New Mexico with the collaboration and oversight of the Air Forces.[703] *God Is My Co-Pilot* featured substantial second-unit footage of the Japanese Mitsubishi A6M Zero fighter planes in Arizona.[704]

As a unique genre with a decades-old precedent for military collaboration, the availability of air fields and military bases across the country opened up many possibilities—that is, until the pilots were needed in battle rather than in front of or behind a camera. On the West Coast, the risk of Japanese spies spotting combat planes being flown for a film production led to disapprovals and restrictions being issued for many films. Some productions such as Republic's *Flying Tigers* opted to use miniatures and archival combat footage to get around the restrictions on aerial photography in Los Angeles.[705] Others, like RKO's *Flight for Freedom* (1943), suffered

[702] Orris, *When Hollywood Ruled the Skies*, 72.
[703] Orris, *When Hollywood Ruled the Skies*, 74-75,
[704] GOD IS MY CO-PILOT, List of miniatures, 4. File 640: "GOD IS MY CO-PILOT – production." Hal Wallis papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[705] Orris, *When Hollywood Ruled the Skies*, 59-61.

a series of setbacks due to the pivoting of the Central Defense Command on what the production was allowed to do. The film was an unofficial representation of Amelia Earhart's aviation exploits in the 1930s, and in order to remain authentic, RKO tried to obtain a Lockheed Electra plane for use in the film. After ascertaining that the only ones in the country were used by the Army Air Forces, in August 1942 RKO requested to borrow one for four weeks to use at Metropolitan Airport in Los Angeles, offering to pay all expenses for whatever crew was necessary, as well as contributing $5000 to the Air Society Trust Fund. Major General J. F. Miller of the Air Service Command eventually confirmed one could be made available.[706] RKO were then granted permission by the Civil Aeronautics Administration that they could shoot scenes at Metropolitan Airport on the basis that no flying was done.[707]

However, production ran into a hurdle when Louis Shapiro, the location manager, received a message from C. S. McBrien, Chief of the General Inspection Branch, that RKO's request to fly the Lockheed Electra over water had been denied.[708] The Central Defense Command suggested instead that RKO moved production to the Lake Michigan area, where there was "a clear water expanse of approximately 160 miles north and south and 75 miles east and west."[709] It was suggested to use Chicago Municipal Airport as a base, and to use civilian pilots to fly the army airplane loaned to the studio. In Chicago, shipment of the plane itself and countless other pieces of equipment were delayed, and production was heavily stunted by the

[706] Hans Christian Adamson, "Lending Lockheed 36 to RKO for Making of Amelia Earhart Picture," August 15, 1942. Flight for Freedom Production File, RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records, UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 131P.
[707] Jas. E. Read letter to Louis Shapiro, August 21, 1942. Flight for Freedom Production File, RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records, UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 131P.
[708] C. S. McBrien letter to Louis Shapiro, October 20, 1942. Flight for Freedom Production File, RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records, UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 131P.
[709] Forrest F. Watson letter to David Hempstead, October 30, 1942. Flight for Freedom Production File, RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records, UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 131P.

pouring rain.[710] In addition to the weather, one of the obstacles facing such 'walkaway productions' after Pearl Harbor was that the attention of the military became increasingly occupied by the actual war rather than with film production. Indeed, on top of RKO's other woes in making *Flight for Freedom*, at one point the studio was informed that Air Force pilots could no longer be provided to fly the C-36 airplane that had recently been delivered because the pilots were occupied by the conflict itself.[711]

One producer, Walter Wanger, designed a plan to circumvent some of the logistical issues other such aviation productions were encountering during this volatile period. Wanger owned the rights to a film about the Eagle Squadrons, the volunteer pilots from the United States that assisted the United Kingdom in the early war years. What became *Eagle Squadron* (Universal, 1942), was conceived by Wanger to be "the daddy of all air pictures" and to capitalize on the aviation craze in the country that, he felt, previous productions had not done justice to.[712] The trick up Wanger's sleeve was to shoot the film on location in England, with assistance from the British Royal Air Force, but using stock footage from documentary shorts such as *London Can Take It!* (Warner Bros., 1940) and *Target for Tonight* (Crown Film Unit, 1941).[713] Wanger felt that using American actors while sourcing all other labor from England would strike the right balance between star power and efficient labor sourcing.[714] Moreover,

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[710] Walter Daniels memo to Fred Fleck, November 10, 1942. Flight for Freedom Production File, RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records, UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 131P.
[711] Arnold, Government Wire, August 31, 1942. Flight for Freedom Production File, RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records, UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 131P.
[712] Walter Wanger letter to Frank Orsatti, undated. Wanger Papers, 1908-1968. Box 77, Folder 19: Eagle Squadron: Production Correspondence from Great Britain, July 1941-November 1941. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[713] Arthur Lubin memo to Walter Wanger, January 16, 1942. Wanger Papers, 1908-1968. Box 77, Folder 16: Eagle Squadron: Employment Correspondence, December 1940-October 1942. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[714] As he told Frank Orsatti, "Another great advantage in this picture is that while all the flyers are American, all the crews of workers, assistants and commanding officers are British." Walter Wanger letter to Frank Orsatti, undated. Wanger Papers, 1908-1968. Box 77, Folder 19: Eagle Squadron: Production Correspondence from Great Britain, July 1941-November 1941. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.

Wanger had the idea of shooting without a script and building scenarios around the documentary and stock footage from other films, a decision motivated in part by the "swift changes due to war" that were giving other productions such a headache.[715] Yet this decision made United Artists, who Wanger was contracted to at the time, uneasy about how the film's finances were being used, which led to Wanger attempting to go independent and finance the film on his own. In the end, he signed a contract with Universal Pictures, but production was plagued by directorial changes, constant rain and fog, and on-set hostility between the squadron members and Wanger's personnel.[716] Wanger may have envisaged the film as having "terrific value in cementing Anglo-American interests," but the efforts to circumvent the logistical challenges other productions were encountering only led to more complex problems.[717] What would become runaway productions no doubt learned from such encounters, yet it is important to mention, of course, just how dictated and influenced films like *Eagle Squadron* were by the specificities of wartime production culture after Pearl Harbor. An article in *The Hollywood Reporter* describing the impact of Pearl Harbor on productions in-progress actually singled out *Eagle Squadron* as one of a fortunate few whose chosen location meant that it would not just be unaffected by the attack, but, given its subject matter, "greatly enhanced in value."[718] In the cases of aviation films that were being shot within the United States, moving to an active airfield inside the country and seeking the approval and assistance of the Air Forces was not always the luxury that productions

[715] Vice-Marshall Peck telegraph to Walter Wanger, May 23, 1941. 77, Folder 18: Eagle Squadron: Production Correspondence from Great Britain, October 1940-June 1941. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[716] Matthew Bernstein, *Walter Wanger, Hollywood Independent* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 169-171. On Wanger's contract issues with United Artists and the decision to sign with Universal, see pages 178-185.
[717] Walter Wanger letter to Lord Beaverbrook, June 14, 1941. Wanger Papers, 1908-1968. Box 77, Folder 18: Eagle Squadron: Production Correspondence from Great Britain, October 1940-June 1941. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[718] "War's Effect On Hollywood," 3.

like *I Wanted Wings* made it appear, and was often more of a necessity imposed by the new shooting restrictions in Los Angeles.

5.3: "Made in Tampa": *Air Force* and the Problem of Japanese Representation

Ironically, this was especially true of productions that aimed to represent or commemorate the Pearl Harbor attack, which—in their depiction of Japanese soldiers—encountered multiple logistical problems. These problems became exacerbated depending on where the films were being shot: within Hollywood, the Central Casting Agency were inundated with calls from studios requesting any available east Asian actors and extras to play Japanese characters, only to be repeatedly denied. If a film was being shot on location, it was more subject to the availability of east Asians in the local population to fulfill its representational quota. One example, Warner Bros.'s *Air Force*, navigated this problem in its enforced location shoot in Tampa, Florida. The film dramatizes the journey of a bomber plane, the *Mary-Ann*, which intercepts the Pearl Harbor attack on its way to Hickam field in Hawaii.

As an aviation film, it had to circumvent the ban on aerial photography on the West Coast, and did so by moving production to Drew Field in Tampa.[719] Though it eventually won praise for its "semidocumentary style," production was challenging, and impacted by weather conditions in Florida, including record-breaking heat.[720] Over 100 studio employees spent five weeks in Tampa to shoot the film, which involved extensive set construction and depended

[719] Biesen, "The Classical Hollywood Studio System, 1928-1945," 66. Despite this, the film's pressbook suggests the location was chosen for the purposes of authenticity. The pressbook claims that Florida was chosen "because of its close resemblance to islands and atolls of the South Pacific." See Warner Bros., "Air Force Pressbook," 1943, 24. Media History Digital Library.

[720] Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 244. Schatz describes the production in positive terms for director Howard Hawks, who was able "to work without direct supervision—and without interference from Wallis and the front office." Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 254. An article in the film's pressbook noted that the heat in Tampa broke a 20-year record, making conditions the "most difficult" of Hawks's career. See Warner Bros., "Air Force Pressbook," 1943, 24.

heavily on collaboration with the Drew Field officials.[721] More than 500 soldiers participated in some way, and Warner Bros. made a concerted effort to demonstrate their gratitude and respect for the armed forces.[722] For instance, the studio gave a dinner at the Tampa Terrace hotel for the Army and civilian officials who collaborated in the making of the film.[723] A special preview of the film was also arranged to be hosted at Drew Field, including a prize draw in which one man from the air base was be "feted and acclaimed as Drew's hero in connection with the movie," as reported in Drew Field's official publication, *Drew Field Echoes*.[724]

Air Force also had a notable impact on the Tampa area and received ample press coverage documenting it. Local newspapers focused enthusiastically on above-the-line stars and their presence in the Tampa area, especially Gig Young.[725] As with many wartime productions, extra attention was paid to the actors and their engagement with the local communities: one anecdote reported Gig Young bemoaning not being able to shave for his role, and getting mistaken for a homeless man on a Tampa street corner.[726] A review of the film in the local press remarked that "Tampans are familiar with the names of the men identified with the film, having seen them in hotels, cafes and shops during the last two weeks while they made action shots at Drew Field."[727] As with much of the coverage of *I Wanted Wings* and *Sundown*, then, the film's

[721] "Two Warner Troupes Due For Long Location Treks," *The Hollywood Reporter*, June 9, 1942, 3.
[722] "Made In Tampa," *The Tampa Tribune*, September 1, 1942, 4.
[723] "No Women—Garfield's Glad," *The Tampa Times*, July 28, 1942, 1. For more on the contributions of Tampa and soldier pilots to the war effort, see Thomas Reilly, "Florida's Flying Minute Men: The Civil Air Patrol, 1941-1943," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 76, no. 4 (1998): 417-438.
[724] Drew Army Airfield, "Picture Filmed At Drew Field By Warner Bros," *Drew Field Echoes* 2, No (2. March 19, 1943), 1.
[725] See Ruth Alden, "'The Gay Sisters' and 'Mrs. Miniver' Billed," *The Tampa Tribune*, August 23, 1942, 8; "Newcomers Who Look Like Uncle Sam's Fliers Are Getting Break," *The Tampa Tribune,* August 14, 1942, 22. See also interviews with George Tobias, Ed Brophy, and Harry and Ollie Carey in the same publication: James A. Clendinen, "An Interview with a Brooklyn Boy in the Movies," *The Tampa Tribune*, August 9, 1942, 5; Nona Cameron, "Ed Brophy Runs With Crooks In Films, But He Won't Steal Scene," *The Tampa Tribune*, August 12, 1942, 10; Nona Cameron, "Meet A Hollywood Couple Happily Married," *The Tampa Tribune*, August 16, 1942, 41.
[726] "In Our Town," *The Tampa Tribune*, August 15, 1942, 5.
[727] "Here's War At Its Worst…Movie-Making At Its Best," *The Tampa Tribune*, August 30, 1942, 25.

subject material and its unique production circumstances were often pushed aside in favor of the enthusiastic adoration of movie stars coming to town. Indeed, an article bidding farewell to the returning Warner Bros. troupe on their train back to California reported that "Many Tampans went to the train yesterday to say goodbye to the movie boys."[728]

Coverage that made more mention of those working below-the-line emphasized the grueling conditions of filmmaking in the Florida heat, generating countless "war story" narratives in the process.[729] One article on assistant director Jack Sullivan cited his efforts to keep the crew cool and hydrated as earning him the title of the "unsung hero" of the production. Sullivan, it was reported, sustained water supply levels at 250 gallons, provided 900 pounds of ice, and kept 1750 drinking cups on hand, as well as "transforming a half mile of Florida swampland into liveable space during the working hours."[730] But fresh, cold water could only mitigate so much: another article told of how the company "battled mosquitos and smoke in the swamps outside of Tampa. Nature provided the bugs, and the Warners the smoke; they fought the battles of Bataan and Wake Island all over again."[731] Other coverage emphasized the brutal nature of the production from a labor perspective, often in a highly masculinized way, referring to the physically intense manual labor involved in relation to the heat. A company doctor, it was reported, was kept busy treating sunburn every day of the production.[732]

In a spread detailing a day on set of the film, the author took pains to highlight the contributions of below-the-line crew members, from the carpenters and prop men reconstructing the Hawaiian landscape, to electricians and sound men transporting their equipment in the

[728] "Warner Movie Troupe Heads Home; Spent $450,000 In Tampa," *The Tampa Tribune,* August 31, 1942, 5.
[729] John Thornton Caldwell, *Production Culture: Industrial Reflexivity and Critical Practice in Film and Television* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 46.
[730] "Assistant Director Is Unsung Hero," *The Tampa Tribune*, October 11, 1942, 31.
[731] Frederick C. Othman, "Carey Escaped Riding In Plane While in Tampa," *The Tampa Tribune*, September 19, 1942, 12.
[732] "Warner Movie Troupe Heads Home," 5.

sweltering heat. “There’s little glamor on the set,” the article remarks. “There’s a lot of hard, hot work and painstaking detail, and a hundred things can go wrong to spoil an hour’s work, at the rate of a couple of thousand dollars an hour.”[733] The same article reaffirms the gendered nature of the work: “‘Air Force’ is an all-male picture, even to the script clerk.”[734] Even director Howard Hawks declared elsewhere that “there won’t be any women to drag in a lot of phony romance.”[735] Yet there were some that used similar rhetorical strategies of erasure common in wartime production coverage, describing how Drew Field transformed into numerous diegetic locations “through the help of Hollywood magicians.”[736] At the same time as playing up the absence of women in the film and calling attention to the laborious below-the-line contributions, the film’s pressbook featured a piece on the “new glamour girl in Hollywood,” referring to *Mary-Ann*, the Boeing B-17 flown in the film. The article frames the plane as a female star—who “passed every screen test with flying colors”—before calling attention to what the camera “*doesn’t* show”: an “invisible supporting cast” of “the designers and engineers, the technicians and researchers, the laboratory men and the craftsmen and workmen” who made the production possible.[737]

Within the local area, over $300,000 was reportedly spent on Tampa firms, and “employment was given to hundreds of civilians.”[738] Yet many also believed the publicity the film afforded to Tampa would reap even more business rewards in the future. This impact was particularly felt by workers in the shipyard industry: the president of Tampa Shipbuilding Company attached an “Air Force pledge” to the paychecks of 13,000 employees in order to

[733] “A Day On the ‘Air-Force’ Set At Drew Field,” *The Tampa Tribune*, August 16, 1942, 24.
[734] “A Day On the ‘Air-Force’ Set At Drew Field,” 24.
[735] “Army Bomber Will Be Star of ‘Air Force,’” *The Tampa Tribune,* July 29, 1942, 2.
[736] “Warner Movie Troupe Heads Home,” 5.
[737] “Warner Bros., “Air Force Pressbook,” 1943, 12.
[738] “Tampa’s Own ‘Air Force,’” *The Tampa Tribune,* March 9, 1943, 4.

discourage absenteeism, pointing to the heroics of the air force as a dutiful example that, in his opinion, all industries should follow.[739] On the filmmaking level, though, *Air Force* was used as an example production by local leaders as the potential the area had for location shooting. Relations between Warner Bros. and Tampa's Chamber of Commerce had been positive since before the crew properly arrived, when location manager Joseph Barry visited Tampa in May 1942 to confer with the Chamber and Army officials.[740] After shooting had wrapped up, a motion picture committee of the Chamber of Commerce headed by Trenton C. Collins received authorization from the board of governors to seek further film production opportunities for Florida after the success of *Air Force*, citing the restrictions on set construction and shooting in Los Angeles as reasons for studios scouting elsewhere across the country.[741] As a sign of amicable relations, members of the Tampa Chamber of Commerce were invited to a luncheon with the entire Warner Bros. cast and crew as a show of appreciation for their cooperation with the production.[742] In return, the Tampa Junior Chamber of Commerce invited the crew to attend a dance for the benefit of the Civil Air Patrol.[743] Anecdotes like these gesture toward the precedent-setting effect of wartime walkway productions on the mobility and localization of Hollywood that characterized the postwar years. At the same time, the press coverage at the local level demonstrates how the above- and below-the-line labor distinction is rhetorically produced, yet the contributions of those working *below* below-the-line were glossed over almost entirely, and racialized in the process.

For instance, Warner Bros. decided to hire around 200 Filipinos from the Tampa area as

[739] "Florida Shipbuilder Is Using 'Air Force' To Cut Absenteeism," *The Hollywood Reporter*, March 8, 1943, 4.
[740] "John Garfield to Carry Top Role in 'Air Force,' Movie To Be Made Here," *The Tampa Times,* July 24, 1942, 16.
[741] "Chamber Plans Drive to Bring Movies Here," *The Tampa Tribune*, October 24, 1942, 7.
[742] "Chamber Directors Have Lunch With Warner Bros. Stars," *The Tampa Tribune*, August 22, 1942, 5.
[743] "Warner Brothers Cast To Attend Dance for CAP," *The Tampa Tribune*, August 28, 1942, 6.

extras. Indeed, it was reported in *The Tampa Tribune* that "200 Tampans 'extraed' as Filipino soldiers."[744] One incident a decade prior which impacted the Filipino community in Florida brought the issue of violence toward Filipinos to national attention. In Canal Point, Florida, in July, 1932, a mob of 200 white farmers had threatened to burn down the homes of 45 Filipino farmers and their families unless they left the area.[745] Despite this discrimination, many Filipinos found lifelong careers in the U.S. Navy, from as early as just after World War I.[746] By World War II, Filipinos could be found working domestically on ships or for shore duty at naval bases.[747] Indeed, an article surveying Filipino migration trends to the United States confirms: "Association with the armed forces is the basis for most distinctive aspect of the Filipino population pattern, and ties with the navy are most significant."[748] Given that Florida became an important hub for the U.S. Navy during World War II, with two bases—Naval Air Station in Jacksonville and Naval Air Station Green Cove Springs—being commissioned in 1940, it is possible the Filipino extras were recruited from there. However, that this is the only mention in local or national newspapers of the Filipinos' contribution to the film points more broadly to their rhetorical erasure as below below-the-line laborers.[749]

To play the Japanese soldiers in the film—a representational challenge the industry was grappling with at the time—Warner Bros. looked instead to the Chinese population in Tampa

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[744] "Made In Tampa," *The Tampa Tribune*, September 1, 1942, 4.
[745] For more on this, see Stephanie Hinnershitz, "An Incident at Canal Point: Filipinos and Florida's Role in American Imperialism," *Florida Historical Quarterly* 96, no. 4 (2017): 413-434.
[746] Barbara M. Posadas goes as far as to claim that Filipinos in the navy "enjoyed more security" than "most compatriots who lived in the United States." Barbara M. Posadas, *The Filipino Americans* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 23.
[747] Raymond A. Mohl, "Asian Immigration to Florida," *The Florida Historical Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (1996): 276.
[748] James P. Allen, "Recent Immigration from the Philippines and Filipino Communities in the United States," *Geographical Review* 67, no. 2 (1977): 203.
[749] One interpretation, though hard to empirically determine, is that the Filipino soldiers in *Air Force* are played by Caucasian Americans, given that most crowd and battle scenes in the film's Manila sequences feature few Filipino extras—at least, that one can see. Most of the soldiers are wearing helmets and not facing the camera. Only the Japanese soldiers have time facing the camera. Still, this would account for the extras' appellation as "Tampans" in the *Tampa Tribune* article.

and the surrounding area. It was reported in *The Miami Herald* that the studio had hired 200 Chinese actors and extras to play Japanese roles.[750] If all 200 were found locally in Florida, this would have included nearly all registered Chinese residents in the state—the U.S. census reported 214 Chinese living in Florida in 1940.[751] Most Chinese immigrants in Florida either owned or worked in laundry companies—the laundry business represented the largest source of income for Chinese immigrants in the whole country. Tampa, specifically, had 15 Chinese laundries by the early twentieth century. Aside from the laundry business, there were also truck farms selling Chinese fruits and vegetables to groceries and restaurants in the northeastern states.[752] With that in mind, it would still seem unlikely that all 200 were recruited from the local area. Yet regardless of where they were recruited from, the general practice of depending on Chinese (as well as Korean and Filipino) actors and extras to play Japanese characters became increasingly common from 1942 until the end of the war.

In addition to the extras, the same casting approach was employed for above-the-line roles as well. At one point, the studio approached Chinese cinematographer James Wong Howe about a speaking role in the film. An article in the *Tampa Tribune* reported that Warner Bros. were struggling to "find a suitable Asiatic to portray a Japanese general, necessary to the picture's story."[753] Howe, who oversaw ten cameras on location in Tampa, publicly refused to play the character, despite having acted in the past.

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[750] Howard Heyn, "Chinese Hasn't Chance To Miss Movie Career," *The Miami Herald,* November 22, 1942, 14.
[751] Mohl, "Asian Immigration to Florida," 269. In the late 19th and early 20th century, some of the Chinese migration to Florida was clandestine, often using Cuba as a base and paying locals to smuggle them across to Key West and other ports along the southern coast. For more on this, see Elliott Young, *Alien Nation: Chinese Migration in the Americas from the Coolie Era Through World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 153-193. For a broader overview of the history of Chinese migration to Florida, see Wenxian Zhang, "Chinese in Florida: History, Struggles, and Contributions to the Sunshine State," in *Far East, Down South: Asians in the American South,* edited by Raymond A. Mohl, John E. Van Sant, and Chizuru Saeki (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2016), 108-131.
[752] Mohl, "Asian Immigration to Florida," 266.
[753] "Chinese Cameraman Refuses To Play Jap General Role," *The Tampa Tribune*, August 7, 1942, 20.



Figure 5.1: *Air Force* (Warner Bros., 1943). According to *The Miami Herald*, Japanese soldiers in *Air Force* were played by Chinese actors. See Howard Heyn, "Chinese Hasn't Chance To Miss Movie Career," *The Miami Herald,* November 22, 1942, 14.

Howe cited concerns about what his wife and Chinese friends would think of him, as well as the strong military presence in Tampa (who "might not like my looks," in his words) as reasons for his refusal.[754] Howe was later forced to end his work and leave the set under the instructions of the American Society for Cinematographers as a consequence of their ongoing dispute with IATSE back in Hollywood.[755] Yet the studio's efforts to recruit him in front of the camera, and his vocal refusal, touch on a number of important issues in the industry after Pearl Harbor. On

[754] "Chinese Cameraman Refuses To Play Jap General Role," 20.
[755] "Chinese Camerman Is Called Off 'Air Force' Set By Union Dispute," *The Tampa Tribune*, August 21, 1942, 2.

the one hand, east Asian actors had never been the subject of more demand from studios, but on the other, for many of them, the task of playing Japanese characters was considered a step too far, and something they outright refused to do on multiple occasions. For instance, it was reported that the Chinese and Korean actors who played Japanese roles in *Destination Tokyo* plainly refused to have their names appear in the credits.[756] Suddenly, the logistics and politics of cross-racial casting became a commonplace consideration for any production that engaged with the Pacific conflict.

Most of the scholarship on the cross-racial casting of east Asian characters in Hollywood tends to focus on Caucasian actors being cast in east Asian roles in yellowface.[757] Studies that examine non-white actors playing east Asians are even fewer.[758] Yet, as Karla Rae Fuller explains:

> Although the racial impersonation of Asians by Caucasian actors remained the predominant performance practice during World War II, after the attack on Pearl Harbor the construction of a Japanese enemy in Hollywood films was perceived by government authorities as critical to the war effort.[759]

Following the signing of Executive Order 9066 in February 1942, Hollywood suddenly had no actors of Japanese descent to help represent the subjects it so enthusiastically wanted to portray. As a result, non-Japanese east Asians in Hollywood were turned to in an effort to 'authentically'

[756] "No Screen Credit," *Detroit Free Press*, December 26, 1943, 15.
[757] For an authoritative work on the subject, see Esther Kim Lee, *Madeup Asians: Yellowface During the Exclusion Era* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022), as well as Melissa Phruksachart, "The Many Lives of Mr. Yunioshi: Yellowface and the Queer Buzz of *Breakfast at Tiffany's*," *Camera Obscura* 32, no. 3 (2017): 93–119; and Karla Rae Fuller, *Hollywood Goes Oriental: Caucasian Performance in American Film* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2010), especially 123-171.
[758] For instance, see Josephine Lee's work on Juanita Hall playing a Chinese aunt in *Flower Drum Song* (1961): Josephine Lee, *Oriental, Black & White: The Formation of Racial Habits in American Theater* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 263-269. I thank Esther Kim Lee for pointing me in the direction of this work.
[759] Fuller, *Hollywood Goes Oriental,* 124.

depict Japanese soldiers, which put the more high-profile actors in serious demand.[760] For instance, during the war Korean actor Philip Ahn became renowned for playing Japanese 'heavies,' in the process earning the titles "the man we love to hate" or "leering yellow monster," as Hye Seung Chung explains.[761] Ahn appeared in numerous propaganda films such as *Behind the Rising Sun* (RKO, 1943), *The Purple Heart* (20th Century Fox, 1944), *Back to Bataan*, and *Blood on the Sun* (William Cagney Productions, 1945). These kinds of films actively portrayed the Japanese as "not only uncivilized but essentially inhuman—a view that pervaded the American media and colored the mindset of the public as well."[762] And the urgency of this representational project put the studios into crisis mode, leading to attempted trades and bargaining over who had the most Chinese extras on hand.

An article from the Associated Press that appeared in numerous local newspapers across the country provided a commentary of the situation, opening with a striking address to the reader: "If your cheekbones are high and prominent, if your eyes will slant with the aid of a little adhesive tape, Hollywood's harried casting directors may be looking for you."[763] Author Howard Heyn goes on to explain that, due to the amount of Japanese actors now in internment camps, the burden has fallen on Chinese (but also Koreans, Malayans, and Filipinos) to take the representational burden. So desperate was the situation that the Screen Actors Guild agreed to

[760] Yet even Chinese, Korean, and Filipino actors were in shorter supply to the draft and their contributions to the war effort domestically. According to one article, the number of Chinese actors in Hollywood pre- and post-Pearl Harbor halved from 1,000 to 500. See Heyn, "Chinese Hasn't Chance To Miss Movie Career," 14.
[761] Hye Seung Chung, *Hollywood Asian: Philip Ahn and the Politics of Cross-Ethnic Performance* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 11.
[762] Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 24
[763] Heyn, "Chinese Hasn't Chance To Miss Movie Career," 14. The article was published in *The Herald-News* (Passaic, New Jersey), *Evening Star* (Washington, DC), *The South Bend Tribune* (South Bend, Indiana), *The Evening Review* (East Liverpool, Ohio), *The World-News* (Roanoke, Virginia), *News-Pilot* (San Pedro, California), *The Bee* (Danville, Virginia), *Press-Telegram* (Long Beach, California), *Wilkes-Barre Times Leader* (Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania), *The Sunday Oregonian* (Portland, Oregon), *The Durham Sun* (Durham, North Carolina), *The Greenwood Commonwealth* (Greenwood, Mississippi), *Press and Sun-Bulletin* (Binghamton, New York), *The Birmingham News* (Birmingham, Alabama), and several others.

waive membership demands, meaning that "Anybody who fills the bill can be hired, on a waiver basis."[764] As examples of some of the backdoor bargaining going on between studios, Heyn reports that Henry McRea, a producer of serials who, by the time of the war, was managing features, appealed to the Central Casting Agency for 10 Chinese actors to play Japanese submarine crewmen in *Don Winslow of the Coast Guard* (Universal, 1943).[765] When the Agency explained that there simply were none available, McRea turned to Philip Ahn—who was under contract for the film—as leverage. McRea knew Paramount were lining up Ahn for a role in *China*, and so he called the film's director John Farrow to suggest a trade: McRea would rewrite the script for *Don Winslow* so that Ahn would be available sooner, and in exchange, Farrow, who had 400 Chinese extras under contract at the time, would provide 10 of them the same day for McRea. A deal was struck, and the Chinese extras shipped to the Universal studio like prized commodities.

Other studios ventured beyond the Central Casting Agency in order to benefit from the SAG's membership waiver (meaning that studios could hire any Chinese person as an extra without having to cover the fees to become a member of the Guild, normally a requirement). MGM allegedly sent scouts across the West Coast from the Mexican to Canadian border in search of "Chinese character types" for *Dragon Seed* (1944).[766] The studio at that time had 400 Chinese extras under contract for *Salute to the Marines* (1943) but feared they may lose them to the insatiable demand across the industry. Similarly, 20th Century-Fox resorted to venturing outside Los Angeles in its pursuit of 400 Chinese men, women, and children for *China Girl* (1942). Columbia, on the other hand, opted to use a combination of Caucasian actors in makeup

[764] Heyn, "Chinese Hasn't Chance To Miss Movie Career," 14.
[765] McRea was promoted from serials to features in 1937. See "U. Employe System Uncovers 9 'Finds,'" *The Hollywood Reporter,* July 22, 1937, 7.
[766] Heyn, "Chinese Hasn't Chance To Miss Movie Career," 14.

for long-shot sequences of *Submarine Raider* (1942), while using Korean actors Ahn and Nino Pepitone, and Chinese George Lee and James Leong, for closeups.[767] But it was ultimately Paramount that developed a solution that combined the logistical convenience of shooting on location with sourcing local labor and finding actors to play the Japanese soldiers, which benefited from the SAG waiver but also circumvented the traditional methods for recruiting extras entirely. Indeed, the production of *Wake Island* provides an informative case study for the way it set a precedent for how Paramount navigated such restrictions as the transportation limit, sourcing local labor, solving the Japanese representational problem, and—as I explore in the last section of this chapter—working around the spending cap on new materials for set construction.

5.4: Picking the Lettuce Pickers: *Wake Island* and Filipino Extras from the Imperial Valley

From the outset, the production of *Wake Island* was characterized by a sense of pressing urgency, given the renewed importance the government placed on representing the Japanese as enemies after the Pearl Harbor attack. Described as the first depiction of the United States at war since the attack, the film received full support (and supervision) from the United States Marine Corps and the United States Navy to make it a faithful representation of the Battle of Wake Island.[768] The timeliness of the collaboration was key to its success: neither the military nor Hollywood knew how feasible such projects would be the longer the war went on, and the more labor the military would require on the frontlines.[769] An official press release from Paramount

[767] Heyn, "Chinese Hasn't Chance To Miss Movie Career," 14.
[768] "Production Notes on Picture 'Wake Island,'" *Marine Corps Gazette* 26, no. 3 (1942): 34. For an account of the battle, which ended when the island fell to the Japanese on December 23, 1941, see Gregory J. W. Urwin, *Facing Fearful Odds: The Siege of Wake Island* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002). Urwin draws from interviews from both American and Japanese survivors and veterans to provide a more detailed and balanced recollection.
[769] As one *New York Times* article explained, "Because of the war, the services can no longer cooperate as extensively with film producers as they have in the past, and military sources here have let it be known that henceforth the services will view scripts submitted to them as undesirable unless they have 'positive morale' value.'

described this feeling of urgency, in relation to the importance of the production providing an accurate account of the battle: "Too many people know exactly what happened on Wake Island. Everyone is more or less of a battle expert these days. But Paramount doesn't know when such a story will be filmed again."[770] In other words, because Paramount seemingly had one chance to make the film, they had to make it properly. In spite of the restrictions imposed on the film industry, and the problem of representing the Japanese, the studio made every effort "to reproduce that historic battle in mid-Pacific as truthfully as possible."[771]

For Paramount to succeed, there were many factors to consider. Hollywood had been given the responsibility from Washington to take the leading role in shaping and influencing public opinion about the Japanese and the country's involvement in the war more broadly. At the same time, the expectation and condition of the support the production received from the military meant that a cold, quasi-journalistic approach to the source material was required, with as little of the sensationalism Hollywood was known for as possible. In addition, the geopolitical position the United States was in—now fighting alongside groups and countries with whom it shared complex histories—necessitated that the script underwent intense scrutiny from the Motion Picture Association of America. For instance, at least two reviewers flagged the film's mention of the Battle of the Alamo as "dangerous from the point of view of friendly Latin American relations."[772] In a similar vein, it was advised that Paramount used a word other than

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Some leniency is expected, however, because the services are anxious to keep the good-will of the film industry." See Thomas Brady, "Forecast for 1942," *New York Times*, January 4, 1942, X5.

[770] "War and Pictures," *The Austin American*, August 28, 1942, 13.

[771] Bruce Peacock, "Stage and Screen," *The Leader-Post,* June 6, 1942, 7.

[772] Production Code Administration Letter to Luigi Luraschi, March 26, 1942. File: "Wake Island [Par., 1942]." Motion Picture Association of America. Production Code Administration records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. See also Luigi Luraschi Letter to Joseph Sistrom, March 25, 1942. File 7: "Wake Island – production." Paramount Pictures production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

"monkeys" because "our friends in Hawaii would resent this."[773] Of particular importance, too, was the elimination of the word "yellow" from speeches given in the film in order to avoid offending non-Japanese allies from east Asian countries.[774] These recommendations reflect the unique geopolitical context of the production, with the industry recognizing the importance of maintaining good relations with the Allied Powers where, normally, such offensive terms and remarks would have received far less (if any) scrutiny.

Of course, another reason for this careful approach to representing allies was to substantiate and make clear who was the enemy in the film. The MPAA's film analysis chart contained a section on "Races and Nationals," which broke down how characters from different groups were depicted and, accordingly, they found *Wake Island's* portrait of Japanese characters to be suitably "unsympathetic."[775] Like other productions mentioned earlier in this chapter, Paramount turned to non-Japanese east Asians to play the Japanese; in the case of *Wake Island*, these were mostly Filipinos. What makes *Wake Island* a more significant case study, I argue, is both where and how Paramount acquired these Filipino extras, as well as how they were treated on set and in the press. More specifically, the relationship the extras had to the location of Imperial Valley itself demonstrates the film industry's opportunistic approach to sourcing labor and materials after Pearl Harbor.

It all started with the location. Where could Paramount faithfully reconstruct the landscape of Wake Island inside the United States, but away from the West Coast? Like other combat films with a strong aviation component, after Pearl Harbor, creative approaches to

[773] Luigi Luraschi Letter to Joseph Sistrom, March 25, 1942. File 7: "Wake Island – production." Paramount Pictures production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[774] Luigi Luraschi Letter to Joseph Sistrom, April 3, 1942. File 7: "Wake Island – production." Paramount Pictures production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[775] Wake Island analysis chart, July 7, 1942. File: "Wake Island [Par., 1942]." Motion Picture Association of America. Production Code Administration records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

scouting for location sites became a necessity when the government outright banned aerial photography on the West Coast.[776] Ed Ralph, the production manager tasked with finding the location, surveyed numerous sites along the Pacific coast and inland, eventually landing on the Salton Sea area in Imperial Valley, where the local press took immediate notice of his presence.[777] Although the *Marine Corps Gazette* claimed that authenticity was the driving force behind the decision to shoot on the Salton Sea site—"because of the topographical similarity with the rigid terrain of Wake Island"—in reality, there were many other factors that played a role in the decision.[778] For one, Paramount had already discovered the filmmaking suitability of Imperial Valley, having shot exterior desert scenes for the comedy *The Road to Morocco* (1942) in the eastern region weeks before production for *Wake Island* began.[779] The bigger problem was finding a large body of water, which led Ralph to Sandy Beach at Salton Sea.

Once the construction crew had arrived, work began in early April 1942 on recreating the Wake Island outpost on the shore of the inland sea.[780] Reportedly, the whole job took only 10 days, and included the construction of a 4,000-foot long and 200-foot wide airfield in collaboration with Vinson and Pringle—two firms who were associated with installing the original Wake Island field.[781] The most expensive and complex aspect of the set was the wide runway, which, following wrap-up, was donated to the US Navy for use as an emergency landing

[776] As one reporter explained, "It was necessary to find a location outside of the fortified California coastal area, yet one that could be made to look like the real Wake Island. The Salton Sea was chosen." See "Filming 'Wake Island' A Military Problem," *Brooklyn Eagle*, November 8, 1942, B9.
[777] See "Movie Agent Here To Arrange Filming," *Imperial Valley Press*, March 29, 1942, 1.
[778] "Production Notes on Picture 'Wake Island,'" 34.
[779] "Salton Sea is Far Pacific for Movie Purposes," *Imperial Valley Press,* March 22, 1942, 1. In fact, construction crews on site for *The Road to Morocco* were ordered back to Hollywood instead of to Sandy Beach due to a brief postponement in *Wake Island's* production. See "Picture Filming At Sea Postponed," *Imperial Valley Press,* March 31, 1942, 2.
[780] "Movie Agent Here To Arrange Filming."
[781] "Production Notes on Picture 'Wake Island,'" 34.

field.[782] Other set work included water and oil tanks, the nearby town, a parade of coconut palms, and various other scrub and fauna, which were overseen by a coral expert who lived for years in the South Seas.[783] When construction was complete, the finished article won the praises of marines who served on Wake Island before the war, and verified the authenticity of Paramount's recreation.[784] Once filming began, and the work of the construction firms had ended, Paramount turned to labor from the local area to support production progress. For operation and maintenance of the set, as well as miscellaneous additional expenses and work $1,000 was set aside in the budget for "local labor on location."[785]

All things considered, the production encountered relatively minor problems and setbacks, only a handful of which were a consequence of the location. One concern Ralph had was the location's proximity to the nearest draft board, which was in Westmoreland, about 24 miles from the Salton Sea set. The schedule meant that a number of staff and crew were required to be on set during 3 R-Days (Redeployment days—the movement of soldiers and equipment from one post to another) at the end of April, and so Ralph suggested to the Local Draft Board to have them send someone to the location to register them.[786] As it turns out, a handful of crew members including actors Robert Preston, Phil Terry, Rod Cameron, Jack Chaplin, Keith Richards, MacDonald Carey, and Jim Brown never left the location and were drafted from the Salton Sea site directly.[787] Overall, more problems were posed by the shooting of the aerial battle scenes in Utah over the Great Salt Lake. Even though it was inland, flying planes with the

[782] Production Notes on Picture 'Wake Island,'" 34; "War and Pictures."
[783] "War and Pictures."
[784] Peacock, "Stage and Screen."
[785] Paramount Pictures Production Budget, Set Operation and Maintenance and Miscellaneous, sheet 13. File 2: "Wake Island – budgets." Paramount Pictures production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[786] Ed Ralph Letter to Charles Boren, April 13, 1942. File 7: "Wake Island – production." Paramount Pictures production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[787] Paul Harrison, "Hollywood's Fancies," *Imperial Valley Press,* May 10, 1942, 3.

Japanese Rising Sun insignia was considered a security risk, and required special clearance from the army, who had initially supplied the aircrafts from their salvage pile.[788] Local newspapers and radio stations in Utah broadcasted warnings and assurances that the 'enemy' planes flying over the lake were in fact American, and part of a film production.[789] Among the comparatively fewer problems at the Salton Sea site were windstorms that blew sand over the set and damaged some equipment, such as the sound recorder and camera. At one point, the machine guns were clogged by the sand and an important battle scene had to be reshot.[790] The camp was also plagued by sidewinder rattlesnakes, though no attacks were reported. In fact, some crew members brought back skins to Hollywood "as trophies of the location."[791]

Paradoxically, the biggest headache for the studio at the Salton Sea location was also one of the area's biggest conveniences: the Filipino farmers who played the Japanese soldiers. The solution to the representational problem affecting the film industry of finding actors who could convincingly 'pass' as Japanese was presented by the Imperial Valley locale itself, which boasted one of the largest Filipino populations in the country. As Paramount discovered, once the production ventured away from the region, the supply of Filipinos immediately dwindled; when the studio attempted to shoot a landing scene along the Silver Strand, Ed Ralph noted that getting sufficient footage with extras available in the area would be difficult because, as he put it, "Can not get any Filipinos at that location."[792] The same approach applied to speaking roles: for one of the few more substantial Japanese roles in the film, Filipino actor Pete Katchenaro played a

[788] "Filming 'Wake Island' A Military Problem"; General Arnold telegram to Luigi Luraschi, April 13, 1942. File 7: "Wake Island – production." Paramount Pictures production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[789] "Production Notes on Picture 'Wake Island.'"
[790] "War and Pictures." The crew became accustomed to tying equipment down with guy ropes, including all the trees and shrubs that were designed to recreate the fauna on Wake Island.
[791] "Production Notes on Picture 'Wake Island.'"
[792] Ed Ralph memo to the file, "Wake Island (Silver Strand)," May 11, 1942. File 7: "Wake Island – production." Paramount Pictures production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

character titled "Jap officer." Katchenaro went on to play often-uncredited roles as Japanese characters during the war, in films such as *Rookies in Burma* (RKO, 1943) and *Dragon Seed*.[793] For the extras, the studio were able to recruit between 150-200 Filipinos from nearby farms in Imperial Valley.[794] Some resources reported that they were lettuce pickers, others that they came from tomato and carrot farms, and one claimed that truck gardeners were also included.[795] What is clear is that Paramount were able to tap into the plentiful supply of Filipino labor from the agricultural industry to assist with the representational problem of depicting the Japanese.

For much of the first half of the twentieth century, there had been a steady influx of Filipinos migrating to look for work in Imperial Valley, and the region's agriculture industry grew more and more dependent on their cheap labor. Motivated by the economic conditions of the Philippines, and the higher wages on offer in the United States, Filipinos moved to California in droves with the intention of returning home once they earned enough money, though many ended up remaining in the country for decades.[796] Though they often migrated back and forth across farms in both California and the Pacific Northwest, the centrality of Imperial Valley as an agricultural hub meant that steady employment was more likely. So much so, in fact, that California "came to rely in large measure upon these men who were caught in a trap, partly of

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[793] Daily Production Report, May 19, 1942. File 7: "Wake Island – production." Paramount Pictures production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. For *Rookies in Burma*, Katchenaro played a bit part role as a "Knife Thrower," which was unnamed and uncredited in the film's production files. He was on set for 3 days and budgeted for $100. See call sheets from September 2, September 4, and September 7, 1943; Budget Detail, "Extra Talent," 3. Rookies in Burma Production File, RKO Radio Pictures Studio Records, UCLA Library Special Collections, Box 138P.

[794] I provide an estimate of 150-200 because some sources reported 150, others 200. The following sources report 150: "Production Notes on Picture 'Wake Island'"; "Filipinos Play Dead Japs Only," *The Sunday Oregonian,* May 24, 1942, 38; Ted Gill, "Brave Tale Of Wake Island Is Filmed," *Buffalo Evening News,* May 2, 1942, 3; while the following report 200: "Filming 'Wake Island' A Military Problem"; Orriss, *When Hollywood Ruled the Skies*, 54.

[795] See Gill, "Brave Tale Of Wake Island Is Filmed"; Margaret Bean, "Miracle of Make-Believe Gives Us 'Wake Island,'" *The Spokesman-Review*, November 1, 1942, 1; "Filming 'Wake Island' A Military Problem"; "Production Notes on Picture 'Wake Island.'" Hedda Hopper was the only journalist claiming that some were truck gardeners. See Hedda Hopper, "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood," *The Shreveport Times*, May 8, 1942, 8.

[796] H. Brett Melendy, "Filipinos in the United States," *Pacific Historical Review* 43, no. 4 (1974): 526.

their own making. The state's major farming regions—the Imperial Valley, the San Joaquin Valley, the Delta Region, and the Salinas Valley—relied upon cheap migratory labor to produce a variety of crops."[797] Filipinos were employed predominantly as "stoop labor" or "unskilled farm hands," and were transported, supervised, and often housed by contractors (with relevant costs usually deducted from the workers' wages).[798] As a result, in many respects the Filipinos were as dependent on the region's farming business as were the farming business on their labor. In addition, racialized notions held by farm owners toward both the Filipinos and Mexicans in the area, such as that their bodies were "made for farm labor" and their minds "did not object to 'bad conditions,'" developed over time to enable agricultural industry professionals to justify poor treatment and living conditions.[799] Both Filipinos and Mexicans were also barred from working in the fruit and vegetable packing sheds, where predominantly white women and men worked. Instead, they were restricted to field labor.

For Paramount, the perception that Filipino laborers in Imperial Valley were not just plentiful and available, but also dependent enough on the area for work, meant that the chance to appear in a Hollywood production was attractive enough of an opportunity that they wouldn't need to be paid more than they already earned. Indeed, as one article reported: "For wages, the Filipinos were paid $10.50 a day, but it was largely the rare opportunity of appearing in a motion picture that attracted them. They said they could make the film fee any day picking lettuce."[800] At a time when actors who could play Japanese characters were in shorter supply than ever, the location that was convenient for recreating Wake Island happened to be located in a region

[797] Melendy, "Filipinos in the United States," 527.
[798] Melendy, "Filipinos in the United States," 529.
[799] Lori A. Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming: Mexican Americans, Mexican Immigrants, and the California Farmworker Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 22.
[800] Gill, "Brave Tale Of Wake Island Is Filmed."

renowned for its supply of Filipino labor. Paramount, in that sense, had exploited virtually the entirety of resources the local area offered.

With that being said, the extraneity of the Filipinos to the studio system—to the above and below the line division of labor, that is—presented logistical problems to the studio. Despite one article claiming that the Filipinos looked "close enough to the real thing to give onlookers a sinking feeling as they splashed ashore from their landing boats to establish a bridgehead," in reality, Paramount and director John Farrow felt that a significant amount of work was needed to make their performances more convincing.[801] This applied to the cosmetic as well as dramatic level; it was thought that the extras required makeup to make them appear more Japanese. So important was this detail in the film's quest for authenticity that Bob Ewing, the film's makeup man, was tasked with "one of the big jobs on the picture"—making up the entire Filipino contingent each morning in time for every scene that they were required.[802] To make things easier, Ewing deployed an "assembly line technique" and enlisted the help of others to apply the first basic paint layer, before he came in for the final pencil strokes in order to get through all 200 extras in under two hours.[803]

On the dramatic front, from their first day of shooting the Filipino extras disrupted the progress of production, to Farrow's frustration. Their first involvement was a scene in which the Japanese soldiers approach a machine gun nest as part of an invasion, which required that the extras pile out of barges upon reaching the store, storm the machine gun nest, and then fall and die as if shot when the machine gun fire began. Yet according to reports, the Filipinos did not fall into the surrounding water like they were supposed to, and instead waited until they reached dry

[801] "Filming 'Wake Island' A Military Problem."
[802] Bean, "Miracle of Make-Believe Gives Us 'Wake Island.'"
[803] "Filming 'Wake Island' A Military Problem."

land and falling in a heap together, rather than scattered across the conflict zone.[804] They also fell to their deaths almost in unison, when the instructions had been for half of them to continue charging. One description from the press, full of racialized condescension, offers an account of the first take:

> They came ashore all right. But the mowing down left much to be desired. First, the Filipinos piled off the barges with the agility of one-year-olds crawling out of a crib. Second, they failed to get shot and fall into the water, preferring the security of dry land for their movie deaths. And finally, when they did get ashore and started falling, they looked as though they had tripped over a hoe handle—or they carefully laid down their rifles and reclined, grinning. They thought it was fun. But it was no fun for Director Farrow, who yelled himself hoarse. And he's still trying to teach the converted farm hands to act like soldiers of the Mikado.[805]

The author here paints an infantilizing portrait of the Filipinos as blissfully unaware of the seriousness of wartime filmmaking, much to the chagrin of Farrow. That the author makes explicit note of the Filipinos' profession as part of his description helps to convey the notion that they were out of their depth on a film set, and a necessary solution to a broader problem, but no one's idea of a first choice. Hedda Hopper's coverage of the take struck a similar chord; she described the extras as "grinning like Cheshires" and "having the time of their lives," while Farrow was forced to take them aside and beg them to "please go ahead and die like rats!"[806]

However, as it turned out, there were other factors at play and motivating the Filipinos' performance. The shot took three takes to complete, and it soon dawned on Farrow that the Filipinos' inability to get the shot he wanted was not out of ineptitude, but more so out of their own patriotic zeal and defiance. They were so eager to play the Japanese as dead that all other instructions were ignored. "They wanted the slaughter," one reporter wrote, "to be hair-raisingly

[804] Gill, "Brave Tale Of Wake Island Is Filmed."
[805] Peacock, "Stage and Screen."
[806] Hedda Hopper, "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood," *The Shreveport Times*, May 8, 1942, 8.

wholesale. Farrow had a time coaxing them to see that drama, though just as noisy sometimes, isn't exactly war."[807] Indeed, other outlets published similar stories of the early takes being spoiled because the Filipinos were desperate to play Japanese corpses, rather than Japanese soldiers.[808] For example, an article titled "Filipinos Play Dead Japs Only" which provides more detail than others about how this problem was handled on set, claims that when Farrow pulled the extras aside to ascertain what the problem was, the extras openly told him that they refused to play the Japanese soldiers unless they were dead. Farrow then had the idea of reaching a compromise whereby, instead of only half the group dying, the other half that continued the siege would also die, but outside the camera's angle. That way, each extra fulfilled their wish of playing a dead Japanese soldier, while Farrow got the shot he wanted.[809]

Of course, the context from which the Filipinos were approaching the material and their relationship to it, was in all probability lost on most of the production crew, who were likely unfamiliar with the history of relations between the Japanese and Filipinos. When Japanese immigration was momentarily paused by federal law in 1924, Japanese American farm owners started to depend on Filipino labor, as well as their patronage for other businesses, such as movie theaters. Indeed, in her book on the latter subject, Denise Khor notes: "Japanese and Filipinos grew increasingly interconnected in the intervening years as immigration laws and demographic changes transformed both communities. These interrelations were shaped by uneven and unequal relationships to capital as well as the colonial relationship between Japan and the Philippines."[810] In his work on Japanese American farming communities in California such as Walnut Grove,

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[807] "War and Pictures."
[808] Robert E. Murphy, "'Wake Island' Rugged Story of Marines' Futile Stand on Pacific Outpost," *The Minneapolis Star,* September 20, 1942, 11.
[809] "Filipinos Play Dead Japs Only." *The Sunday Oregonian,* May 24, 1942, 38.
[810] Denise Khor, *Transpacific Convergences: Race, Migration, and Japanese American Film Culture Before World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022), 117.

historian Eiichiro Azuma argues that Japanese Americans viewed Filipinos as essentially subhuman, particularly fearing the idea of Filipino men having relations with Japanese American women.[811] Reports of such incidents in the Japanese American press played a substantial role in shaping resentment toward Filipinos.[812] Indeed, columns in *Rafu Shimpo*—the Japanese American newspaper based in Little Tokyo, Los Angeles—contributed to the depiction of Filipinos as "backward, misguided, unenlightened, or dangerous."[813] Some of these attacked Filipino farm labor directly, claiming that workers had refused to take orders from their Japanese American bosses once Japanese troopers invaded the Philippines.[814] Once Executive Order 9066 had come into effect, and 120,000 Japanese Americans were imprisoned, the decades-long feud between Japanese Americans and Filipinos came to a head, with the Japanese invasion of the Philippines and China causing Filipino and Chinese immigrants to "rally behind the American war effort and to decry Japan's occupation of their own countries."[815] In other words, participating in the ideological project of representing the Japanese as the enemy was an opportunity the Filipinos in *Wake Island* would likely have relished.

The history of tension between the Filipino and Japanese American community in California helps to frame and characterize the behavior on set of the Filipino extras in a new light; rather than the childlike portraits some news outlets painted of them, in actuality, the Filipinos' disruption of the production was in many respects a political statement in and of itself. This would have been especially true for the farmers who might have worked for Japanese American-owned farms, and been subjected to the kind of treatment and prejudice various

[811] Eiichiro Azuma, "Racial Struggle, Immigrant Nationalism, and Ethnic Identity: Japanese and Filipinos in the California Delta," *Pacific Historical Review* 67, no. 2 (1998): 163–199.
[812] David Yoo, *Growing Up Nisei: Race, Generation, and Culture Among Japanese Americans of California, 1924-49* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 83-85.
[813] Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles,* 59.
[814] Leonard, *The Battle for Los Angeles,* 60.
[815] Khor, *Transpacific Convergences*, 137.

historians have described. In the context of the war itself, Filipino sentiments toward the Japanese only intensified, such was the enthusiasm the extras had for playing dead soldiers at the first opportunity they were given. For Paramount, evidently unaware of these dynamics, the behavior of the Filipino extras was a minor inconvenience, in what for the studio was an otherwise shrewd move in logistics terms: solving the representational problem of portraying the Japanese, while recruiting directly from the shooting location. In that respect, what happened on set provided the studio with a lesson in recruiting below below-the-line labor: not to discount the political agency such laborers possessed, especially in the context of a global conflict. One of Paramount's next productions—*Five Graves to Cairo*—returned to Imperial Valley, and by all accounts appeared to have taken these lessons into consideration in its soliciting of labor from the local area.

5.5: Brick by Adobe Brick: *Five Graves to Cairo,* Mexican Labor, and the Spending Cap

A significant measure that affected productions both within and outside of Los Angeles was a $5,000 spending cap on new materials, which also applied to the furnishing and construction of sets. This was problematic for productions that were incomplete or in-progress, such as Twentieth Century-Fox's *The Night that Shook the World,* which called for a giant city set built on rockers for earthquake scenes, for which the studio found no solution and shelved the film entirely.[816] In general, though, studios took this measure in their stride; if anything, it aligned with their broader cost-cutting mission. As a *Variety* article explained, "Cost ceilings are regarded by some studios as beneficial in many respects since economies would be forced upon

[816] "Film Biz Takes $5,000 Set Limitation In Stride," *The Hollywood Reporter*, September 30, 1942, 5.

producers and directors who have been spending too lavishly with unsatisfactory results."[817] Indeed, studios quickly grew into the habit of recycling old sets, or constructing sets in a way that allowed them to be easily adapted into others without incurring further costs. Twentieth Century Fox's art director, Richard Day, became a pioneer of such designs, and set the precedent for other studios to follow. Day designed a series of standard sets with fixed walls, overhead catwalks, and light banks (collections of smaller light fixtures forming a soft, diffused bank of light, often hanging overhead), but with almost everything else (including windows, doors, furniture) removable and customizable.[818] The measures even incited a bout of wartime cooperation: studios began sharing and renting studio space with each other, with Paramount, for example, shooting parts of *Dixie* (1943) at studio space at the Samuel Goldwyn Studios, the Vitagraph studio, Columbia, and Twentieth Century-Fox.[819]

Yet as much as these creative and innovative measures enabled the industry to adapt to the $5,000 ceiling, they did not resolve the issue of jurisdictional disputes that continued to affect set construction in particular. One *New York Times* article described the production culture of "hot sets"—any film set requiring labor that was involved in a jurisdictional dispute or work stoppage—in the context of the restriction on using new materials for construction: "Sets are dismantled as carefully as time-bombs: a carpenter who splits a board virtually is made to stand in a corner. One studio has a wheeled magnet which sweeps up all the bent nails dropped from a 'struck' set; two men spend their days hammering them straight."[820] An obvious workaround for both the $5,000 ceiling and the labor headache was to shoot on location. And while location

[817] "Unsuspected $5,000 Ceiling On Construction Cues Producers How Priorities Can Hit Them Harder," *Variety,* May 13, 1942, 5
[818] Frank S. Nugent, "Hollywood Counts the Pennies," *New York Times*, August 30, 1942, 15.
[819] "Major Lots Get Together To Beat $5000 Set Ceiling," *The Hollywood Reporter,* October 27, 1942, 4.
[820] Nugent, "Hollywood Counts the Pennies," 14.

shooting did slow down towards the end of the war, in the immediate aftermath of the 1942 restrictions, some notable productions sought to circumvent the spending cap by taking filming beyond Hollywood.[821]

One such example was Columbia's *Sahara* (1943), which was shot in the Imperial Valley, with a base camp set up in Brawley, California. For *Sahara*, known during production as *Somewhere in Sahara,* Columbia figured that shooting on location in the Southwest desert allowed costs for new materials to be reallocated in order to maintain authenticity; for instance, director Zoltan Korda reportedly instructed his technicians to take sand from the Mojave desert and spray it with white paint, before using wind machines "to blow the sand into typical Saharan swirls and ripples."[822] This way, the studio did not have to pay for imported sand like they would have back at the studio—instead, by taking the production *to* the sand, the cost could be reallocated to purchasing the paint. Yet the novelty of shooting on location in desert conditions still carried with it some of the growing pains typical of walkaway productions: Korda was somehow unhappy with the amount of sand available at the shooting site in Brawley, and instructed assistant director Abbay Berlin to locate some stray sand dunes nearby and haul their contents to the set. After only one day of shooting with the new sand, a wind storm blew all 2,000 tons of it back to where Berlin had hauled it from.[823] Despite these troubles, the film did benefit from military collaboration. As was later revealed by Kenneth Koyan, a young Second Lieutenant with the Fourth Armored Unit that was detailed to assist with the production, trainees

[821] As Mark Shiel notes, "by the end of 1942, conditions became even more austere as the studios' prewar stockpiles of materials ran out and nationwide gasoline rationing put a brake on the use of locations." Mark Shiel, "Classical Hollywood, 1928-1946," in *Art Direction and Production Design*, edited by Lucy Fischer (New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2015), 71.
[822] "Hollywood's Sand Even Gets Makeup," *The State Journal*, March 6, 1943, 3.
[823] Hedda Hopper, "What Did Director Korda Want On Desert?—More Sand," *The Evansville Courier*, June 20, 1943, 11.

at the California Desert Training Center were ordered to appear as extras in the film.[824] Only, they were tasked with performing as German, rather than American, soldiers.

Incidentally, *Sahara* was not the only Hollywood production depicting North Africa and the Battle of Gazala shooting on location in the Southwest at the time. Paramount's *Five Graves to Cairo*, which depicted the aftermath of the Battle of Gazala in June 1942, where Axis powers had recaptured the port of Tobruk in Egypt, was one of three Paramount productions shot in the Salton Sea in 1942. A *Los Angeles Times* article speculated that the studio's moving away from its normally favored location shooting sites in Arizona and Northern California were due to the transportation restrictions.[825] Yet the film was also shot in Yuma, Arizona for a battle scene in collaboration with the Army Air Force. While the US Army Ground Forces agreed to supply equipment and personnel. they asked Paramount to "be reasonable" with how many days were required, in order to prioritize readiness for the actual conflict.[826] Still, the army did provide a tank for the shoot, including two guards tasked with watching the tank overnight.[827] In addition, the British Embassy assigned British Army Staff representatives to provide technical and story consultations.[828] But perhaps more so than the military support, it was Paramount's savvy approach to sourcing materials and labor for set construction at the location that enabled the production to ultimately be a success. The studio developed methods for circumventing the

[824] Kenneth Koyan, "War in the Sahara, Bogart-Style," *Eve's Magazine*, 2001. http://evesmag.com/bogart.htm Accessed February 4, 2025.
[825] The other two productions were *China* (1943) and *So Proudly We Hail!* (1943). See "News Notes From Studio Town," *Los Angeles Times,* September 25, 1942, 10.
[826] Russell Holman Memo to Luigi Luraschi, December 8, 1942. File 1477: "FIVE GRAVES TO CAIRO – production." Paramount Pictures production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[827] O.C. Stratton letter to Lieut. William Needham, October 29, 1942, 1. File 1477: "FIVE GRAVES TO CAIRO – production." Paramount Pictures production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.
[828] See Charles Brackett letter to Captain Bartle Bull, November 3, 1942; and Charles Brackett letter to Major David Lloyd, January 20, 1942. File 29: "FIVE GRAVES TO CAIRO – correspondence." Charles Brackett papers, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

spending cap on new materials which involved both sourcing and transporting naturally available materials from the location, rather than purchasing them for studio use. For instance, sand was collected from the Indio area just north of the Salton Sea and transported via truck back to the studio for the handful of scenes shot at the studio.[829]

For what set construction was required on location, such as the buildings to represent Tobruk and Cairo, Paramount took advantage of the ample supply of adobe brick on site in the Salton Sea territory. As Hedda Hopper put it: "They won't need any new materials, 'cause they can build the whole city of brick made from there."[830] This way, Paramount could reap the benefits of customized set construction, combined with the authenticity of shooting on location, all the while saving money on new materials and circumventing the labor disputes back in Hollywood. In many ways, the decision to use on-site materials rather than purchasing new ones represented a positive trajectory for Paramount in their efforts to adapt to the spending cap; Ed Ebele, the studio manager, had already been using mud to replace plaster for set construction in the production of *China* (1943).[831] While Ebele's idea only saved Paramount a small amount of money, all things considered, as a principle it helped to pave the way for increasingly frugal approaches, such as in *Five Graves to Cairo.*

In fact, in addition to sourcing the adobe from Imperial Valley, the studio had the idea of outright purchasing an adobe brick company from the area, which afforded them a prosperous loophole: technically, such a purchase was not classified as buying new materials, and thus was not subject to the $5,000 cap.[832] Yet Paramount's engagement with local resources did not stop with just purchasing the company. To assist with the transportation, furnishing, and treatment of

[829] Erskine Johnson, "Hollywood," *Imperial Valley Press*, February 21, 1943, 3.
[830] Hedda Hopper, "Hedda Hopper's Hollywood," *Los Angeles Times,* November 5, 1942, 10.
[831] "Common Unrationed Mud Now Aids in Set Building," *The Hollywood Reporter,* November 4, 1942, 7.
[832] "Common Unrationed Mud Now Aids in Set Building," 7.

the adobe, the studio turned to the plethora of Mexican laborers available in the Imperial Valley region.



Figure 5.2: Adobe brick set construction in *Five Graves to Cairo* (Paramount, 1943)

The film's production records contain a bank deposit from assistant pro duction manager Sydney Street of $3,000 for "Miscellaneous Mexican Laborer Payroll At Location Making Adobe Brick."[833] In the broader historical context of Mexican labor in the Imperial Valley area, such a decision from Paramount reveals a key example of studios turning increasingly to racialized labor during the war, something that was itself inseparable from the resource shortage.

[833] Sydney S. Street bank deposit, October 22, 1942. File 1477: "FIVE GRAVES TO CAIRO – production." Paramount Pictures production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Given its proximity to the Mexican border, Imperial Valley and its numerous farming regions had long been dependent on cheaply available labor from marginalized communities, including Mexicans, Filipinos, Chinese, and Japanese laborers.[834] According to Benny J. Andrés, the larger history of desert farming in Imperial Valley is intertwined with the development of racialized, hierarchical agriculture in the United States. A combination of state and federal laws, the growth of labor-intensive crops, absentee landownership, and the ascendancy of powerful shipping houses sustained unequal power relations over the first four decades of the twentieth century.[835] During this period, Andrés writes, "American landowners in the Imperial-Mexicali Valley created a racialized irrigated desert farming borderland."[836] Companies such as the Colorado River Land Company lobbied and pressured government officials to facilitate the recruitment of Mexican labor because of the lower wages they would accept, as well as their perceived docility.[837]

These racialized characteristics and perceptions only intensified during World War II with the introduction of the Bracero Program in 1942. The program was a wartime agreement between the United States and Mexico which brought farmworkers to, primarily, the harvests of

[834] Though not always harmonious, relations between these groups became increasingly defined by solidarity in resistance to their collective exploitation. The 1930 Imperial Valley lettuce strike is considered by historians to be an important event in the region's history for the way that it facilitated the "formation of a broad-based, multiethnic, interracial coalition of farm workers." See Elizabeth E. Sine, "Grassroots Multiculturalism: Imperial Valley Farm Labor and the Making of Popular Front California from Below," *Pacific Historical Review* 85, no. 2 (2016): 229.
[835] Benny J. Andrés, *Power and Control in the Imperial Valley: Nature, Agribusiness, and Workers on the California Borderland, 1900-1940* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 68.
[836] Andrés, *Power and Control in the Imperial Valley,* 69.
[837] As Luis F. B. Plascencia argues, "sociopolitical and economic arguments about alleged labor shortages, preferred workers, and racialized characteristics of workers become foundational tropes that are relied upon by agricultural and nonagricultural interests to pressure government officials to aid in the recruitment of indentured labor." Luis F. B. Plascencia, "'Get Us Our Privilege of Bringing in Mexican Labor': Recruitment and Desire for Mexican Labor in Arizona, 1917-2016," in *Mexican Workers and the Making of Arizona,* edited by Luis F. B. Plascencia and Gloria H. Cuádraz (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2018), 166.

California.[838] Most of them were contracted with California Field Crops, Inc., and many growers in the region continued to hold racialized assumptions about Mexicans as an "ideal labor source," such as their reluctance or inability to unionize, and being used to a lower, less-than-American standard of living.[839] Yet this proved not to be the case, and many of the Mexicans under the bracero program arrived disappointed at their rate and mode of pay, which Vargas describes as "a family wage system long abandoned in other labor sectors."[840]

In addition, the braceros protested their living and working conditions, which led to a series of work stoppages and some workers breaking their contract entirely to go work on other farms that paid more.[841] In the Imperial Valley region especially, local newspapers frequently ran articles describing alcohol abuse, intra-ethnic violence, and other criminal behaviors as part of a targeted, racialized campaign to portray them as outsiders and ultimately unwelcome.[842] In spite of this, the overall preference for growers and agricultural businesses for bracero labor rather than that of white Americans, persisted throughout the war and in the years that followed. Indeed, many veterans returned to southern California after the war and complained about the lack of available jobs, since growers, shippers, and contractors consistently preferred to hire Mexicans through the Bracero Program.[843] Workers brought over through the Bracero Program also encountered hostility from Mexican Americans, who suffered a decrease in wages and job

[838] Though largely concentrated to California, many braceros did make their way to the Pacific Northwest region. See Erasmo Gamboa, *Mexican Labor & World War II: Braceros in the Pacific Northwest, 1942-1947* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000)
[839] Don Mitchell, "Battle/fields: braceros, agribusiness, and the violent reproduction of the California agricultural landscape during World War II," *Journal of Historical Geography* 36, no. 2 (2010): 144.
[840] Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights*, 7.
[841] Mitchell, "Battle/fields," 143-156.
[842] Alina R. Méndez, "More than Victims or Villains: Representations of Mexican Migrant Men in the Imperial Valley/Mexicali Borderlands, 1942-1954," *California History* 98, no. 3, (2021): 28–53.
[843] Flores, *Grounds for Dreaming*, 94.

availability as a result.[844] And it is in this tension between Mexicans and Mexican Americans who had resided and worked in Imperial Valley *before* the Bracero Program that, I argue, provides significant context for Paramount's decision to hire Mexicans to assist with the adobe.

In his book *Sowing the Sacred: Mexican Pentecostal Farmworkers in California,* Daniel Barba recounts the community-building efforts of Mexican Pentecostals in California, many of whom settled in Imperial Valley given the opportunities for work in the area. For many decades, including during the Great Depression, Mexicans built temples in areas such as Brawley, Cutler, San Jose, Sanger, and San Bernardino. As an inexpensive and readily available material in the area, the temples were constructed using adobe—the same material Paramount used to erect Egyptian buildings for *Five Graves to Cairo.* During World War II, Mexicans continued to build temples—if anything, the demand was greater given the influx of braceros, leading to larger congregations—despite resource shortages. As Barba explains, "While the rationing of materials generally affected construction efforts, Mexican Pentecostals seemed to largely circumvent this limitation, writing it off as a nonissue since they used dirt to make their temples out of adobe bricks."[845] In that respect, given their knowledge of and experience with using the material, in combination with racialized attitudes toward Mexican labor more broadly, from Paramount's perspective it made perfect sense to hire Mexicans for assistance with the adobe brick.

In fact, the associations between adobe and Mexicans ran even deeper into California's past, so much so that it undoubtedly played a role in Paramount's decision to hire Mexicans.[846]

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[844] As Vargas explains, Mexican Americans saw the braceros as scabs, and claimed that they sought to remain in the state and permanently take jobs away from local Spanish-speaking workers. In addition, Mexican Americans feared that discrimination against them would only increase as a result of the larger Mexican presence in California. Vargas, *Labor Rights Are Civil Rights,* 242-243.

[845] Daniel Barba, *Sowing the Sacred: Mexican Pentecostal Farmworkers in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022), 132.

[846] In an email exchange, Barba confirmed to me that Southern California's history as a hub of adobe brick production, with Mexicans the primary labor source, meant that an association between the two had long been

In his work on the industrialization and urbanization of Los Angeles in the late 19th and early 20th century, William Deverell highlights both the material and symbolic importance of adobe to Mexicans. Deverell argues that the material was invariably associated not just with Mexicans, but—in the context of industrial progress—the past. Deverell writes that adobe, "that ubiquitous building material of water, clay, and straw or weeds, stood for the past, a dark-skinned past at that, even a different epoch."[847] For the Anglos, whose chosen material was brick, adobe was associated with "backwardness," and symbolized the pre-industrial history of Catholicism, missions, and an "unusable past."[848] Deverell goes on to draw a parallel between the city's racial turnover with the ushering in of brick as the preeminent raw material:

> Brick took up where adobe left off or, more accurately, where adobe was left off, exactly at the moment of racial turnover, exactly at the moment California became American. Brick replaced adobe just as it had to, in the equations of the era, so that Los Angeles could become the much-boosted, much-boasted Anglo city of the western American future.[849]

As a consequence, for Mexicans, adobe became a symbol of what once was, but now no longer, home. "Those former Californios," summarizes Barba, "found that theirs was an existence increasingly consigned to the past."[850] Yet as the continued construction efforts persisted throughout the early 20th century, this association between adobe and home became increasingly important and political for Mexicans living in California, especially Imperial Valley. If a building project in the area intended to use adobe, there was only one place to look for labor.

Of course, in the case of *Five Graves to Cairo,* we have little way of knowing more about

established. Daniel Barba, e-mail message to author, May 15, 2025. I also wish to thank Barba for pointing me toward William Deverell's work.

[847] William Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe: The Rise of Los Angeles and the Remaking of its Mexican Past* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2004), 133.

[848] Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 134,

[849] Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 135.

[850] Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*, 134.

the Mexican laborers who helped build and transport the material beyond the bank deposit in the film's production records. Were they employees of the adobe brick company Paramount purchased during the production? The description of "Miscellaneous Mexican Laborer" suggests otherwise, and opens up the possibility that they may have been braceros. On the other hand, the reputation Mexicans already in Imperial Valley possessed for working with adobe brick surely played a significant role in Paramount's decision. Certainly, after the studio had made *Wake Island* less than a year prior, and in the same location, it represented a continuation of their approach toward sourcing labor and materials in a restrictive and uncertain climate. In addition to landscapes and locale that could double as the Pacific Islands as well as North Africa, Imperial Valley provided Paramount with a supply of readily available, inexpensive, and comparatively undemanding labor force that knew the land and the materials better than they did. Racialized assumptions, associations, and notions about specific groups that the studio possessed framed and informed their decision to recruit from the marginalized Filipino and Mexican communities who lived and worked in the area. Their interest in and exploitation of racialized labor became the perfect solution to wartime restrictions and the ongoing labor strife in the studio.

5.6: Conclusion

The encounters described in this chapter encapsulate the trend of studios turning to labor *below* below-the-line following the United States's official entry into the war. Wartime conditions and restrictions on filmmaking—such the spending cap on new materials for set construction, the ban on shooting aerial sequences on the West Coast, transportation restrictions, and so on—prompted studios to circumvent the studio system in Hollywood and its conventional supply of below-the-line labor (who were engaged in seemingly unending jurisdictional

disputes). Instead, many of the studios opted to move to locations in the United States where they could source cheaper labor from marginalized groups. Given the concurrence of the labor disputes and the restrictions on new materials from 1942 onwards, in many of these instances the studios were incentivized to develop a parallel approach toward labor and material resources. More specifically, in both cases it made increasing sense for the studios to venture beyond the TMZ and source *both* labor and materials from local areas on location. In doing so, studios frequently found that local labor and raw materials could be supplied at cheaper rates, and often in more fluid working arrangements, blissfully extraneous to union rules. As a result, the broader relationship and conflation of labor, material, and human body represented the racializing logic characteristic of below below-the-line labor, which only intensified after Pearl Harbor amidst the increased material and labor shortages. The precedents set by early war walkaway productions were adopted, learned from, and adapted to deal with the new war restrictions. And, beyond the war itself, I argue that the economic and logistical appeal of sourcing both labor and materials on location that came to characterize postwar runaway productions germinated in wartime productions such as the ones examined in this dissertation.

Conclusion

In this dissertation, I have presented case studies of film productions during the Second World War in order to illustrate how Hollywood responded to, engaged with, and actively participated in the conflict. Yet unlike other scholarship on Hollywood during the war, rather than focus on the propagandistic content of the films themselves, or present an account of the industry's relationship with the Office of War Information, for instance, I have focused specifically on how production practices were effected.[851] The ways in which studios managed the logistics of filmmaking under such unique circumstances, I have argued, can tell us much about their priorities, and attitudes towards labor in particular. Indeed, while many have written excellent accounts of the disputes and conflicts between unions and studios during the war years, how these actually affected production practices has not always figured into such accounts.[852] Yet Hollywood continued to be prolific throughout the war, against the odds of labor shortages, supply issues, restrictions, and geopolitical uncertainty. This dissertation has offered some explanations as to how this was possible on the ground level of day-to-day production.

In order to achieve this, the scope of my approach has been necessarily narrow; that is, I have focused in detail on a handful of productions and what they might tell us about broader trends in the industry, rather than survey those broader trends from the outset. This is another

[851] For instance, see Doherty, *Projections of War*; Dick, *The Star-Spangled Screen*; Koppes and. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*; Shindler, *Hollywood Goes to War*; Birdwell, *Celluloid Soldiers*; Donald, *Hollywood Enlists!*; Bennett, *One World, Big Screen*; Simon, *Hollywood at War.*

[852] Horne's *Class Struggle in Hollywood, 1930-1950* remains the definitive account of the conflicts between studios and unions during World War II. For others, see Abrams "The First Hollywood Blacklist"; Ross, *Stars and Strikes*; Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*; Nielsen Mailes, *Hollywood's Other Black-list*; Howard Suber, "Politics and Popular Culture: Hollywood at Bay, 1933–1953," *American Jewish History* 68, no. 4 (1979): 517–33.

area in which my work builds on but also departs from previous literature: the field of production studies has been predominantly concerned with contemporary forms of media production, which facilitates methodological approaches such as interviews and participant observation so as to describe and analyze things like working conditions and labor divisions.[853] One of the challenges this dissertation has undertaken is how to go about approaching similar levels of understanding of working conditions and labor divisions in media production culture from an historical perspective. To do this, I developed and implemented a triangulated method of putting the production records in studio collections, including ostensibly minor details such as salary changes, casting decisions, guild claims, and other marginalia from daily production reports, call sheets, and so on, into dialogue with local newspapers and trade periodicals. As a result, my case studies offer production histories at a level of detail that enables us to draw conclusions and make claims about patterns in the industry at large.

Looking ahead, it is my hope that this project opens up more possibilities for historically situated production studies, particularly those attentive to the conditions and contributions from workers too-often excluded from such accounts entirely. Indeed, the framework of reading for below below-the-line labor can and should be used to expand what we consider to be the sphere of film production entirely, in order to avoid exclusions and elisions in the future. Hollywood, for instance, has since its inception operated under a racist and racialized mode of exploitation and erasure, which presents its own logistical challenges to scholars interested in the contributions of people of color to film production. I hope that the case studies in this

[853] See, for instance, Mayer, *Almost Hollywood, Nearly New Orleans*; Donoghue, *Localising Hollywood*; Mike Gasher, *Hollywood North: The Feature Film Industry in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002); Ben Goldsmith, Susan Ward, and Tom O'Regan, *Local Hollywood: Global Film Production and the Gold Coast* (Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 2010); Toby Miller, Nitin Covil, John McMurria, Richard Maxwell, and Ting Wang, *Global Hollywood 2* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

dissertation offer some possible approaches for dealing with these challenges. Certainly, although I have focused on Hollywood during World War II, there is no reason that below below the line labor cannot be studied in any historical period, country, or industrial context. For instance, recent scholarship on runaway productions has made race and labor important points of inquiry.[854] As Hollywood adapted to the birth of the consumer electronics industry in the 1960s, the outsourcing by United States-based corporations of technological device construction and manufacture to other parts of the world created a renewed dependency on a cheaply available, predominantly non-unionized, exploitable workforce. As the postwar film industry continued to adapt to the prevalence of television sets in homes across the country, the burgeoning electronics industry presented both the possibility of technological advancement (especially related to film sound and recording) as well as threats to the structure of studio filmmaking (such as home video recording technologies). Yet this transition was undercut by the recruitment strategies and outsourcing from consumer electronics manufacturers, whose reliance on minerals and resources from places such as Central Africa necessitated the development of a network and infrastructure of racialized labor.

One of the reasons I developed my approach is that, upon first looking at production records—particularly correspondence between studio officials—it became clear to me just how much individual productions were dependent on and in dialogue with their precedents. Whether it was a logistical problem regarding transportation to a filming location, or how much to pay locally recruited extras who were asked to perform labor beyond the scope of their initial

[854] See Reinhart, *Runaway Hollywood*; Fortmueller, "Encounters at the Margins of Hollywood"; Johnson-Yale, *A History of Hollywood's Outsourcing Debate*; Hiroshi Kitamura, "Runaway Orientalism: MGM's *Teahouse* and U.S.-Japanese Relations in the 1950s," *Diplomatic History* 44, Issue 2 (2020): 265–288; Wikanda Promkhuntong, "'Runaway' Foreign Film Productions from a Global South Perspective: Film Workers' Memories and Site-Specific Traces from Thailand," *Transnational Screens* 13, no. 3 (2022): 218-233.

agreement, studios frequently turned to previous productions for guidance on how to proceed. By the same token, studios were often weary of making a decision that might set a precedent for their peers. It is one respect in which the relationship between members of organizations such as the Producers Guild of America at times superseded those within individual production companies. Given that this mode of operating is not always explicitly evident in existing accounts of the studio era, it forms an important strand of my broader intervention.[855]

When *Sundown* production manager Dan Keefe explained his rationale for denying the Screen Actors Guild's claim that the African American extras performing running falls on dangerous, hard terrain in New Mexico should receive a raise in their daily rates, he cited the Producers Guild's concern that such prices "might establish a precedent."[856] When the Screen Actors Guild granted permission for army personnel to appear in *I Wanted Wings*, and even speak dialogue, they specified that it should not set a precedent for future productions.[857] This kind of concern permeated numerous productions during the war and offers an important framework for understanding wartime production culture more broadly. In the aviation genre, filmmakers drew expansively from previous iterations long before the war, which set precedents for collaborating with the air force and shooting on location at air fields and military bases. This established a foundation from which studios could quickly enter agreements with the military

[855] Among the few to make this a core component of their study is George Custen in his work on Daryl Zanuck. For Custen, Zanuck's way of working was characterized and shaped by his ability to monitor all the goings on in the industry around him. He developed a reputation as a "cinematic handyman" for his problem-solving initiative and hands-on skill with all aspects of filmmaking. Custen details how Zanuck's contributions to technological innovations such as the coming of sound were facilitated by his understanding of what other studios were doing, and building on the precedents they set. George F. Custen, *Twentieth Century's Fox: Daryl F. Zanuck and the Culture of Hollywood* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 17.
[856] Dan Keefe Letter to George Johnson, June 5, 1941. "Sundown" Production File, Walter Wanger Productions: United Artists Corporation Records, Series 3G, 1941, Box 1, Folder 1: Correspondence RE: Acoma, New Mexico, May-Jun 1941. Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research. Madison, WI.
[857] Bob Ellsworth letter to John Zinn, August 10, 1940, 1-2. File 2344: "I WANTED WINGS – production," Paramount Pictures Production records, Margaret Herrick Library, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

under the guise of facilitating recruitment drives in preparation for the United States's impending entry into the war. Even *Reaching for the Sun*, which, in its unconvincing portrait of auto industry labor, broke ground in its shooting on location at the Packard Plant and using plant employees as extras. Numerous productions, particularly combat films, similarly employed actual workers, trainees, or recruits to 'play themselves' as extras.[858] For cases like *North West Mounted Police,* an established precedent for recruiting Native Americans from reservations to appear 'as themselves' existed, yet became complicated by the production's enforced hybrid approach to location shooting, when they had to retreat to the Paramount studio and hire Native American actors from the talent bureau.

In what remains of this conclusion, I turn to some of the major changes that affected the industry in the postwar years as a way of tying together the strands presented throughout the previous chapters, in the process articulating the relationship between what Hollywood learned during the war, and the seismic shifts the industry underwent shortly afterwards. Once the war concluded, Hollywood continued to enjoy its record financial success for another year, before enduring a steep decline. In the years that followed, tensions which had brewed throughout the war came to the fore and imparted substantial changes to the entertainment industry; by the 1950s, it was in many respects unrecognizable. Indeed, the postwar period is one of the most discussed and written about in all of Hollywood history, and it is easy to see why: the film industry underwent a total transformation within a handful of years as a result of two significant historical events, which for many scholars marked the end of the studio period altogether. I am referring principally, of course, to the blacklist and trial of the Hollywood Ten in 1947 and the

[858] For example, *Aerial Gunner* (1943) features air force trainees as extras on location at the Harlingen air base; *Guadalcanal Diary* (1943) features marines both in on-screen maneuvers, bit parts, and extras on location at Camp Pendleton, California; and *Back to Bataan* (1945) features a battle scene with recently released prisoners of war, to name a few.

Paramount decree of 1948, though the steep drop in box office attendance came also as a consequence of various social, cultural, and economic changes in American society.[859] As Douglas Gomery points out, the Paramount antitrust case actually had its seeds planted before the war: Franklin D. Roosevelt filed an initial anti-trust suit against the major studios in 1938, charging them with conspiring to fix distribution contract terms of runs, clearances and admission prices. Although all parties signed a consent decree in 1940 which established a set of rules for bargaining and effectively asked the studios to self-governing, it had little real impact. The case was reactivated in August 1944, when the government called for the severance between the studios and their proprietary channels of theatrical distribution. Once the war had ended, the antitrust campaign could regain momentum, leading to the Supreme Court's handing down the Paramount decree in May 1948, in effect "signaling the end of the twenty-year period of the studio era."[860]

Among the reasons cited for the court's unanimous decision were that the major studios had enjoyed monopoly power. Whether this power was gained lawfully or unlawfully was ultimately immaterial, given the impact it had on trade within the industry.[861] In the first part of Chapter 3, I argued that the isolationist campaign against Hollywood's warmongering rightfully accused the major studios of engaging in monopolistic business practice, and that this practice extended through the labor ranks and in to the world of distribution. And one of the many

[859] For instance, the first four chapters of Casper's *Postwar Hollywood: 1946-1962* are dedicated to the social and cultural changes affecting the nation which facilitated the slump in theatrical attendance, chief of which was the emergence of the suburban middle class and the movement of millions across the country out of major cities and in to suburban housing developments. See Casper, *Postwar Hollywood: 1946-1962*, 1-37. For more on this, see John Belton's *Widescreen Cinema* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 69-84. See also Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 289-297.
[860] Gomery, *The Hollywood Studio System,* 22. Biesen also argues that the postwar activities of the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), the Paramount decree, and the development of television as a threat to Hollywood's entertainment monopoly, "were initiated during the late 1930s as wartime events escalated." Sheri Chinen Biesen, *Blackout: World War II and the Origins of Film Noir*, 66-68.
[861] Schatz, *Boom and Bust*, 326.

changes enacted by the Paramount decree was a reshaping of the industry's labor division, marking a move away from "mass production" and toward what Bordwell, Staiger, and Thompson call the "package unit system." As they explain:

> Although still an instance of divided labor with a structural hierarchy, the package-unit system differed from former systems in its industry-wide pooling of labor and materials, the disappearance of the self-contained studio, and the transitory combination of labor-force and means of production. As we have noted, these were all effects of the industrial shift away from mass production and toward film-by-film financing and planning.[862]

As a consequence of this shift, and the efforts to reduce short-term costs in order to combat the box-office slump, the overall number of workers in Hollywood declined. The studios consolidated their workforces and issued an array of salary cuts and layoffs.[863] The move toward fewer, bigger productions also saw the studios increasingly shoot on location both inside the country—as they had done during the war—but also beyond, in what became known as runaway productions. For Hollywood's below-the-line contingent, who had suffered through union disputes, strikes, the draft, and endured the beginnings of the circumvention of their labor by studios who moved production outside Los Angeles, the Paramount decree and postwar consolidation put a permanent end to the stability of their employment. Indeed, speaking about runaway productions, Steinhart summarizes: "To the detriment of Los Angeles-based workers, these changes would alter the stability of local employment for decades and contribute to the decentering of Hollywood as a production hub."[864] Throughout this dissertation, and particularly in Chapter 4, I have argued that the industry already began this process in the form of what I have called walkaway productions, which introduced the studios to some of the economic and

[862] Bordwell et al., *The Classical Hollywood Cinema*, 332.
[863] Casper elaborates: "Services, from mogul's barber to actor's elocutionist, were discontinued. To minimize the fixed payroll and reduce overhead expenses even further, talent and craft were pink-slipped." Casper, *Postwar Hollywood: 1946-1962*, 46.
[864] Steinhart, *Runaway Hollywood*, 53.

logistical benefits of shooting on location and recruiting labor locally. The studios became quickly exposed to a desirable, often racialized labor category—below below-the-line—characterized by an increased level of exploitability, flexibility, and fluidity, crystallized in runaway productions shot overseas, but which emerged and began to form in wartime walkaway productions. The Paramount decree no doubt helped to accelerate this process.

The other major historical event in the postwar years—the blacklist—played just as important a role in the reshaping of the industry. Given the politicized nature of the trials and the discourses of anti-communism and antisemitism that permeated them, it is tempting for scholars to consider the impact of HUAC's attack on the film industry and the 'Hollywood Ten' in chiefly ideological terms.[865] Yet as others have shown, it perhaps makes the most sense to think about the blacklist as signaling an economic change in much the same capacity as the Paramount decree. For instance, while acknowledging the political and ideological dimension, Ceplair and Englund are sure to frame the blacklist in economic terms for the industry: "the decision not to hire certain artists—that is, to capitulate to political reaction at the highest level of government—was highly political. Reduced to its essence, however, the decision to blacklist was economic—fear of adverse box office required their dismissal."[866]

Undoubtedly the most forceful articulation of the blacklist's impact on the industry from an economic and—by extension—labor perspective, is Jon Lewis's article, "'We Do Not Ask You to Condone This': How the Blacklist Saved Hollywood." Lewis's argument is framed by

[865] For some key works on the subject, see Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood*; Thomas Doherty, *Show Trial: Hollywood, HUAC, and the Birth of the Blacklist* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018); Reynold Humphries, *Hollywood's Blacklists: A Political and Cultural History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008); Larry Ceplair, *The Hollywood Motion Picture Blacklist: Seventy-Five Years Later* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2022); Gerald Horne, *The Final Victim of the Blacklist: John Howard Lawson, Dean of the Hollywood Ten* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2006); Arthur Eckstein, "The Hollywood Ten in History and Memory," *Film History* 16, no. 4 (2004): 424-436;
[866] Ceplair and Englund, *The Inquisition in Hollywood,* 330.

the tense and deteriorated relationships between studios and the industry workforce throughout the war and leading up to the trial in 1947. For Lewis, the blacklist offered the major studios an opportunity to begin the process of consolidation, which, coupled with the same impetus from the Paramount decree, led to a lasting loss of power for the unions and guilds.[867] Indeed, Lewis posits the Paramount decree as signaling an imminent, alarming change that would see the industry become a haven for independent, creative thinkers, which would in turn mean less control for the studios:

> In concert with the forthcoming Paramount decision, this new Hollywood promised (or threatened) to be a place where talent, suddenly organized, seemingly radicalized, and soon to be further empowered by the free market engendered by divestiture, held significant power. It was therefore in the best interest of studio managers to find a way to control the industry workforce before it controlled them.[868]

The blacklist offered the industry a means of achieving this as they sought to establish a new mode of conducting business, in the process taking the opportunity to solve some long-term problems, like labor. During the conflict between IATSE and the CSU and its culmination in the 1945 strike outside the Warner Bros studio, IATSE leader at the time—Roy Brewer—helped studios find scab labor, as well as supported the use of tear gas and water hoses on picketers. Then, two years on, Brewer assisted the Motion Picture Association of America's establishment of the blacklist.[869] In that sense, so determined and desperate were the studios to cling on to and consolidate their power, that they sought collaboration and help from every source available to them. As Lewis points out, despite the number of Jewish moguls in the studio system,

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[867] As Lewis describes, "The Hollywood guilds and unions that gained so much power and influence in the thirties and forties lost their momentum during the blacklist and never recovered." Jon Lewis, "'We Do Not Ask You to Condone This': How the Blacklist Saved Hollywood," *Cinema Journal* 39, no. 2 (2000): 5.
[868] Lewis, "'We Do Not Ask You to Condone This,'" 8-9. For more on postwar Hollywood's industrial changes facilitating a rise in independent productions, see Denise Mann, *Hollywood Independents: The Postwar Talent Takeover* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).
[869] Lewis, "'We Do Not Ask You to Condone This,'" 23.

"management was so desperate to hang on that it was willing to deal, even though it seemed to invite federal censorship of its product and even though dealing forced the moguls into complicity with an anti-Semitic congressional committee."[870] In that respect, one could argue that the threat posed by organized labor, which had reared its head in the years leading up to and during the war, was one of the main driving forces between the industry's efforts to reshape itself in the postwar period. And the motivation behind those decisions was ultimately economic rather than ideological. For the studios, it was always about the bottom line.

I began this dissertation with an article from *Labor Action* that made similar claims about the major studios' fundamental preoccupation with wealth, profit, and controlling the means of production above all else. The author portrayed the studios as being led by conniving and calculated businessmen who used the excuse of the loss of foreign markets in the war to cut costs, lower wages, and line their pockets. I imagine the author would be thoroughly unsurprised by the events of the postwar years, when studios used the Paramount decree, the blacklist, and the decline in revenue as justification for the widespread consolidation and downsizing that affected the industry as it entered a new era. In this dissertation, I have often described Hollywood production culture as characterized by the setting of precedents, and of individual productions learning and taking lessons from their predecessors. One of the most important lessons the industry learned during the Second World War was that efficient film production is dependent on a mobile, flexible, exploitable, cheap, and ultimately supplicant workforce. By the time the war had ended, it became clear that such a workforce was not to be found within the studio system in Los Angeles. Those below-the-line workers were too safeguarded by the contracts their unions had bargained for with the studios, and all too ready and willing to incite a

[870] Lewis, "'We Do Not Ask You to Condone This,'" 20.

work stoppage, derailing production entirely. Instead, studios increasingly found the kinds of workforces they were looking for *below* below-the-line.

Filmography

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (Disney, 1954)
Action in the North Atlantic (Warner Bros, 1943)
Aerial Gunner (Pine-Thomas, 1943)
Air Force (Warner Bros, 1943)
Algiers (Wanger, 1938)
All Quiet on the Western Front (Universal, 1930)
Arsenals of Might (Universal, 1942)
Back to Bataan (RKO, 1945)
Battleground (MGM, 1949)
Beau Geste (Paramount, 1939)
Behind the Rising Sun (RKO, 1943)
Belle Star (20th Century-Fox, 1941)
Bhowani Junction (MGM, 1956)
Black Fury (Warner Bros, 1935)
Blood on the Sun (William Cagney Productions, 1945)
Bombardier (RKO, 1943)
Caught in the Draft (Paramount, 1941)
China (Paramount, 1943)
China Girl (20th Century Fox, 1942)
Christopher Strong (RKO, 1933)
Citizen Kane (RKO, 1941)
Comin' Round the Mountain (Paramount, 1940)
Confessions of a Nazi Spy (Warner Bros, 1939)
Coronado (Paramount, 1935)
Crash Dive (20th Century Fox, 1943)

Dawn Patrol (Warner Bros, 1938)

Dead End (Goldwyn, 1937)

Destination Tokyo (Warner Bros, 1943)

Destroyer (Columbia, 1943)

Disputed Passage (Paramount, 1939)

Dixie (Paramount, 1943)

Dragon Seed (MGM, 1944)

Don Winslow of the Coast Guard (Universal, 1943)

Eagle Squadron (Wanger, 1942)

Five Graves to Cairo (Paramount, 1943)

Flight Command (MGM, 1940)

Flight for Freedom (RKO, 1943)

Flower Drum Song (Universal, 1961)

Flying Bland (Pine-Thomas, 1941)

Flying Hostess (Universal, 1936)

Flying Tigers (Republic, 1942)

Forced Landing (Pine-Thomas, 1941)

Foreign Correspondent (Wanger, 1941)

Forever and a Day (RKO, 1943)

Genevieve (Sirius, 1953)

God Is My Co-Pilot (Warner Bros, 1945)

Gone with the Wind (Selznick International Pictures, 1939)

Guadalcanal Diary (20th Century Fox, 1943)

Hell's Angels (The Caddo Company, 1930)

Holiday for Lovers (20th Century-Fox, 1959)

Home Town Story (Wolverine, 1951)

Hudson's Bay (20th Century-Fox, 1941)

I'm from Missouri (Paramount, 1939)

I Wanted Wings (Paramount, 1941)

Jesse James (20th Century-Fox, 1939)

London Can Take It! (Warner Bros, 1940)

Marine Raiders (RKO, 1944)

Men and Ships (Bureau for Public Information, 1941)

Men With Wings (Paramount, 1938)

Miracles for Sale (MGM, 1939)

Modern Times (United Artists, 1936)

North West Mounted Police (Paramount, 1940)

Patria (Pathé, 1916)

Power Drive (Pine-Thomas, 1941)

Power for Defense (National Defense Commission, 1941)

Racket Busters (Warner Bros, 1938)

Rangers of Fortune (Paramount, 1940)

Reaching for the Sun (Paramount, 1941)

Reap the Wild Wind (Paramount, 1942)

Riffraff (MGM, 1936)

Rookies in Burma (RKO, 1943)

Sahara (Columbia, 1943)

Salute to the Marines (MGM, 1943)

Santa Fe Trail (Warner Bros, 1940)

Seven Miles from Alcatraz (RKO, 1942)

Singin' in the Rain (MGM, 1952)

Ski Patrol (Universal, 1940)

So Proudly We Hail! (Paramount, 1943)

Submarine Raider (Columbia, 1942)

Sullivan's Travels (Paramount, 1941)

Sundown (Wanger, 1941)

Swing Time (RKO, 1936)

Tail Spin (20th Century-Fox, 1939)

Target for Tonight (Crown Film Unit, 1941)

Tarzan's New York Adventure (MGM, 1942)

Test Pilot (MGM, 1938)

The Bribe (MGM, 1949)

The Buccaneer (Paramount, 1938)

The Desert Song (Warner Bros, 1953)

The Desperadoes (Columbia, 1943)

The Eagle and the Hawk (Paramount, 1933)

The Fighting Seabees (Republic, 1944)

The Fugitive (RKO, 1947)

The Lion Has Wings (London Films, 1939)

The Little Foxes (Goldwyn, 1941)

The Making of 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea (Buena Vista Home Entertainment, Inc., 2003)

The Night that Shook the World (20th Century-Fox, Unfinished)

The Purple Heart (20th Century Fox, 1944)

There's Magic in Music (Paramount, 1941)

The Road to Happiness (Ford Motor Company, 1924)

The Road to Morocco (Paramount, 1942)

The Shanghai Gesture (20th Century-Fox, 1941)

The Sheik (Paramount, 1921)

The Shepherd of the Hills (Paramount, 1941)

They Died with Their Boots On (Warner Bros, 1941)

They Knew What They Wanted (RKO, 1940)

Tom, Dick, and Harry (RKO, 1941)

Virginia (Paramount, 1941)

Wake Island (Paramount, 1942)

West Point of the Air (MGM, 1935)

What a Life (Paramount, 1939)

Winged Victory (20th Century Fox, 1944)

Wings (Paramount, 1927)

Wings in the Dark (Paramount, 1935)

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