

HISTORICAL MEMORY NEGOTIATED: LATINO/A RHETORICAL RECEPTION  
TO KEN BURNS' *THE WAR*

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HISTORICAL MEMORY NEGOTIATED: LATINO/A RHETORICAL RECEPTION  
TO KEN BURNS' *THE WAR*

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## **DEDICATION**

To the World War II-generation of Latinos and Latinas as well as to their children who continue to battle for their inclusion in U.S. historical narratives.

This thesis is also dedicated to Mamá Yita, the memory of Fortino S. Quintana (1926-1995), and to mom.

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*Mi familia.* Thank you for the support and encouragement you all have given me my entire life. *Mamá Yita, Mom, Tía Carol, y Tía Woshie, ustedes me han dado una educación que no se aprende de los libros sino de ejemplo. De ustedes aprendí a luchar para lograr mis sueños. Principalmente, gracias por tanta fe en mi y por tanto amor incondicional.* To friends who have encouraged me and to those who have been there to help me weather the storms throughout this project, thank you so much. Jeff, *corazón,* thank you for holdin' it down and for always finding my smile. *Tu eres mi héroe.* The letters and press releases I analyze in this thesis were obtained through the *Defend the Honor* web site.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCING THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

As the role which historical documentary films play in shaping the public's historical memory increases, so have their viewing audiences taken on larger roles, by, for instance, participating in the final production of the films themselves. This relationship between documentary filmmaker and viewer—with its consequent imprint on the final product, or filmic text, has important cultural implications for society at large. Although scholarly attention on audience reception studies within the field of documentary film theory continues to grow, researchers have yet to examine the rhetorical responses of United States Latinos/as to documentary film in general and historical documentary film in particular. The problem my thesis aims to examine is broadly concerned with how historical memory is rhetorically negotiated by several groups. Specifically, my study examines the following groups: the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), which supports large-scale national documentary film projects; Ken Burns, the documentarian; and the viewing audience, in this case, a diverse range of Latino/a community leaders taking issue with the controversial absence of Latinos/as in Burns' World War II documentary, *The War*.

The following discussion briefly describes the rhetorical situation which resulted from the original exclusion of Latinos in Burns' documentary on WWII. The Latino community first became aware that Latinos/as were in fact not meaningfully included in

the 14.5-hour, six-year-in-the-making, PBS-supported Burns documentary in the film's initial screenings in late 2006. After the initial refusal by Ken Burns and PBS to edit the film, both sides did an about-face in the spring of 2007 and agreed to involve documentary filmmaker Hector Galán, a Chicano documentarian, to produce segments featuring Latino soldiers. The final version of *The War* includes relatively brief segments on two Latino soldiers and one on a Native American, representing the addition of two ethnic groups initially absent from the film and totaling approximately 28 minutes. The added segments, included in episodes one, five, and six, follow the originally-included episode segments and precede the episodes' credits. What is at stake in the rhetorical situation described above is how to characterize the different forces' participation in the process of crafting a national identity through a historical memory, with and through a documentary film on WWII. What follows thus begins the process of analyzing this rhetorical situation surrounding the production and revision of *The War*. This analysis will show how documentaries work to construct a national identity through a constructed historical memory.

In *Introduction to Documentary*, theorist Bill Nichols traces the beginnings of documentary filmmaking as originating through two routes: by examining the image and examining the filmmaker. Nichols cites the late nineteenth-century work of Louis Lumière as marking the beginnings of documentary film, specifically with works such as *Workers Leaving the Lumière Factory*, *Arrival of a Train*, *The Waterer Watered*, *The Gardener*, and *Feeding the Baby* (83). Nichols states that "Lumière's films seemed to record everyday life as it happened" (83). The new opportunity these films afforded ignited a passion in filmmakers around the world to record life in its countless

representations. The intersection of image and filmmaker, Nichols states, “attained a purity of expression in the act of documentary filming” (84). The term “documentary,” explains Patricia Aufderheide in *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction*, was coined by John Grierson, who used it to describe American filmmaker Robert Flaherty and his film *Moana* (1926) (3). It is Flaherty’s particular definition of the term “documentary,” however, which has proven resilient because of its adaptability throughout time: “artistic representation of reality” (Aufderheide 3). Since then, documentaries have arguably increased in popularity and have therefore increased in importance in terms of their influence and implications for changing society. The documentary film medium also boasts the representation of reality—a most coveted commodity. As evidence that the medium draws in big business, Aufderheide points to the relatively recent rise of reality television shows as well as the television documentary beginning in the 1990s, which by 2004, she states, was responsible for generating billions worth of annual revenue worldwide (4). The argument that documentaries are powerfully influential is also supported by their appearance in court cases as evidence (Errol Morris’s 1988 *The Thin Blue Line*).

Also, David Bossie’s alleged use of his 2008 documentary, *Hillary: The Movie*, as political advertising during the presidential campaign was recently argued over before the United States Supreme Court. The debate over this documentary’s influence focused on what Bossie’s film represented—either a political attack advertisement subject to campaign finance laws or a documentary protected by the First Amendment. Historical documentaries have also been influential in the school classroom, as they continue to be used as a teaching tool. In fact, in the introduction to *The War: An Intimate History*,

*1941-1945*, the companion book to Ken Burns' documentary written by Geoffrey C. Ward, Burns states that one of the reasons he would choose to do *The War* is because of the lack of knowledge high school students in the U.S. demonstrate on the subject (xvi). The creation and dissemination of educational materials accompanying *The War* to U.S. schools are further evidence of the role historical documentaries have come to play in the teaching of U.S. history.

Because of the growing influence documentaries continue to have in disseminating knowledge, it is important to briefly relate the relationship between historical documentaries and the crafting of historical memory. In "Wreckage upon Wreckage: History, Documentary and the Ruins of Memory," Paula Rabinowitz argues that the historical documentary "often functions as an historical document itself" in addition to reconstructing "historical narrative" (119). She further states that "the connection between the rhetoric of documentary film and historical truth pushes the documentary into overtly political alignments which influence its audience" (119). Consequently, I argue that in the creation of historical memory through an audience's reception, specifically a Latino/a audience's reception, reception itself acts as an important component in the rhetorical situation engendered by such documentaries as Burns' *The War*. My analysis thus seeks to show the dynamics of this rhetorical situation. After laying down in Chapter I the stakes of what's involved in the dynamics of the rhetorical situation surrounding the production and the Latino/a audience's reception of *The War*, I provide a theoretical overview in Chapter II. This overview informs my inquiry into the rhetorical situation involving both *The War* and the Latino/a audience's reception to it. Moreover, my analysis shows how this reception is a response to the lack

of critical attention placed on the U.S. Latino/a war effort in the film. Debates within the field of documentary studies traditionally center themselves around the objectivity of documentary films, namely, on whether the films may lay claim to represent truth and reality accurately and ethically. Alternatively, however, my analysis relies on Hector Amaya's "Racialized Reception of Ken Burns' *Jazz*" to examine the way truth is constructed in documentaries as an effect of a mode of viewer reception. As Amaya argues, "In doing so [constructing truth as an effect of viewers' reception], truth becomes the effect of a set of hermeneutic conventions activated in the moment of viewership: it is contingent, divergent, and community specific" (113). Amaya thus argues for a different type of viewer in response to reception studies grounded on normative descriptions of reception (by Nichols, Plantinga, Ponch, Eitzen), that is, assumptions that viewers, one, "have the same reasons to watch documentary" and, two, that viewers "know how to make sense of documentaries" (116).

Drawing as well on the insights of Janet Staiger in *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*, Amaya works from assumptions which posit that "not all viewers are unfamiliar with the piece of reality documentary is trying to represent, and that not all viewers are willing to accept the authority of documentary" (116). I apply both Amaya's non-normative description of a viewing audience and Steven Mailloux's rhetorical hermeneutics approach to conduct my rhetorical analysis. In *Reception Histories: Rhetoric, Pragmatism, and American Cultural Politics*, for instance, Mailloux states, "As theoretical practices, hermeneutics involves placing a text in a meaningful context, while rhetoric requires the contextualization of a text's effects" (4). My thesis incorporates Mailloux's approach and thus examines the contextualization of the

available means of persuasion used by U.S. Latinos/as in response to Ken Burns' placement of *The War* in a particular historical context of World War II. This context effectively shows how Burns left Latino/as entirely out of the picture, out of his original version of his documentary.

Chapter III then offers an overview of selective critical responses to Ken Burns and his films, specifically his other major war film, *The Civil War* (1990). In *A New History of Documentary Film*, for instance, Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane establish what they call “the Ken Burns phenomenon”—“the biggest success story for PBS in the past twenty years has been the films made by Ken Burns and company” (299). Burns' most successful film, *The Civil War*, they state, “changed the way many in America thought about documentary, and it [also] changed the way television executives thought about historical documentaries” (299). In “Ken Burns's America,” Gary Edgerton confirms Burns' influence on the popularity of historical documentaries: “He [Burns] has successfully seized the attention of the mass audience through the topics he chooses, as well as created a stylistic approach that is well suited to his subjects and ideological outlook” (51). Burns' ideological outlook, Edgerton argues, is connected to his appropriation of a “Homeric” model for his documentaries. As Edgerton states, “Burns is essentially drawing narrative parameters that are epic and heroic in scope. The epic form tends to celebrate a people's shared tradition in sweeping terms, while recounting the lives of national heroes is the classical way of imparting values by erecting edifying examples for present and future generations” (54).

Edgerton further describes Burns' perspective, as represented in his various films, as representing a “liberal pluralist consensus” (58). According to Edgerton, Burns' liberal

pluralist perspective may be described as a space “where social and cultural differences between Americans are kept in a comparatively stable and negotiated consensus within the body politic” (54). For example, “Different speakers might clash on certain issues (such as what degree of freedom is actually symbolized by the Statue of Liberty and for whom),” Edgerton explains, “but disagreements ultimately take place within a broader framework of agreement on underlying principle” (58). In regards to Burns’ consensus approach, Edgerton attributes this strategy to the filmmaker’s corporate sponsorship alliances: “Ken Burns’ liberal pluralist version of America is perfectly suited to the interlocking framework of corporately funded, PBS-sponsored productions, based on continuing government support” (59). Edgerton, however, critiques Burns’ liberal pluralist stance in the following manner: “The blind spot of liberal pluralism, though, is ignoring the reality that the supposed consensus that exists preserves the current power relations in society essentially as they are. Some social groups do indeed benefit from a system that ‘works,’ while other subordinated constituencies are left silent and outside the country’s ‘engine of democracy’” (60).

Before examining the rhetorical situation and the position of the pertinent constituencies, specifically the location of Latinos/as in this rhetorical situation, a constituency initially absent from Burns’ *The War*, I examine, in Chapter IV, both the structure of *The War* and how it informs its intent with reference to the crafting of a sanctioned historical memory. Of particular importance in this analysis is a careful consideration of the episodes within which segments featuring Latino soldiers were added on as a result of the protest by the Latino/a community. A rhetorical analysis is therefore conducted for the beginning of the film, Episode One, “A Necessary War,” as

well as Episode Six, “The Ghost Front,” and the conclusion of the series, Episode Seven, “A World Without War.” Working within the chronology of the film, my thesis examines the rhetorical effects of the documentary conventions employed by Ken Burns, namely, sound, image, character development, and narrative storyline. The point of this type of rhetorical analysis is to build a frame of reference from which the Latino/a audience evaluated the film, both before and after the revisions were made.

In Chapter V, I analyze the reception of *The War* by the Latino/a community by examining the rhetorical appeals used in the texts generated from within the Latino/a community, that is, from key newspaper and magazine accounts and interviews, press releases, letters, and weekly updates, from 2006 to 2007. This type of analysis also examines the arguments used by PBS representatives as well as by Burns and his crew to explain why Burns initially produced the documentary—without Latinos/as. Their responses from letters, press releases, newspaper and magazine accounts, and interviews describe the initial intent and structure of *The War* and document their response to the Latino/a reception. The texts selected for rhetorical analysis constitute a representative sample of all the correspondence between these opposing parties.

In order to provide a framework from which to examine the rhetorical arguments and evidence initially used by Latino/as in their reception to *The War* without Latinos, I then provide a brief overview of the shared historical memory World War II evokes for this community. This historical memory is represented in documentary film, oral history projects, and specifically from the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project, as well as from relevant scholarship. To evaluate the implications arising from the consequent inclusion of Latinos in *The War*, this thesis also considers the relationship

which exists between Latinos/as serving in the military and how that service can work to craft their identity as U.S. citizens. In sum, this thesis utilizes a rhetorical critical approach to analyze the communication between the Latino/a community and PBS, as represented in letters, press releases, and newspaper accounts. This thesis in addition analyzes the beginning, middle, and conclusion of *The War* itself.

For the basis of my rhetorical critical approach, I use Mailloux's interpretative technique of rhetorical hermeneutics as well as elements of reception theory informed by film studies. Also, two concepts important to my rhetorical analysis originate from two contemporary Chicano scholars: anthropologist Renato Rosaldo and his notion of the positioned subject and Chicana cultural critic Alicia Gaspar de Alba and her understanding of *concientización*. Rosaldo argues in *Culture and Truth* that people are "positioned subjects who have a distinctive mix of insight and blindness" (19). In *Chicano Art Inside/Outside the Master's House: Cultural Politics and the CARA Exhibition*, Gaspar de Alba describes *concientización*, or consciousness-raising, as "a moment of personal and political epiphany" (241). Rosaldo's appeal to ethnographers to account for and have self-reflexivity has affected my own line of sight within the field of English Studies. For how ethnographers position themselves within a culture indeed shapes their particular angle of vision as much as the effect life experiences have on what can possibly be understood and imagined by an ethnographer and cultural critic. I was introduced to the concepts of a positioned subject and of *concientización* after having enrolled in Dr. Jaime Armin Mejía's English 5317 course, Chicano and Chicana Rhetorics, at Texas State University-San Marcos. The concepts I learned in Dr. Mejía's

course have been invaluable to me in that they have made me a better scholar by deepening my understanding of the relationship I have to my heritage and culture.

Viewing myself as a positioned subject in part means acknowledging myself as a Chicana from El Paso, Texas, on the U.S.-Mexico border, and as the oldest sibling of three and a daughter of an inspiring single mother. Despite the glaring absence of Latino/a literary voices throughout my public school education, as a child I nevertheless found stories relating to my culture fascinating. For instance, I found the Latino/a voices raised in response to the controversial absence of Latinos/as in the 2007 Burns' documentary, *The War*, to be just as fascinating as those I'd heard growing up along the border because of how much I found myself culturally identifying with both.

So it is additionally important for me to state and acknowledge, following Rosaldo's concept of the positioned subject, how I am positioned to this research project. The rhetorical critical approach conducted for this research project, for instance, is informed in part by the fact that I identify with a Latino/a community. I specifically identify with a Mexican American and a Chicano/a community by virtue of my sharing and holding the same ethnic and cultural heritage and values as other Mexican Americans and Chicanas/os. Also important for me to foreground is my experience of becoming politically aware, of my *concientización*. This happened in the fall of 2000, as an undergraduate at the University of Texas at Austin, when I enrolled in Dr. Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez's J335 course, Community Journalism. This course introduced me to many oral history concepts, but more importantly, it effectively marked the beginning of my awareness of the meager representation, especially in mainstream accounts, of the experiences of U.S. Latinos/as before, during, and after World War II. In this class, I

heard first-hand accounts of the racial discrimination Mexican Americans lived through in the United States before and after risking their lives on the far-away battlefields of WWII—only to return to face continued racial discrimination. Another component of this formative course was the publication of *Narratives*, the student produced newspaper featuring the stories written by students about the Latinos/as interviewed that semester. In addition to gaining important research and journalistic skills, the course on Community Journalism represented the intersection of several long-held interests of mine, namely, hearing stories, writing stories, and grappling with the absent status of Latinos/as, particularly of Mexican Americans, as either invisible or as an Other in the United States. Porfirio Escamilla Martinez, the first person I interviewed for the U.S. Latino and Latina WWII Oral History Project, for instance, spoke of being made to enter establishments in Austin, Texas, through the backdoor before World War II simply because he was Mexican American. When he returned from the European theater of World War II, Martinez stated that although no longer made to enter through backdoors, he continued facing racial discrimination once inside restaurants. Martinez also described the challenges of receiving adequate healthcare from veterans' hospitals.

One particular interchange between Mr. Martinez and his grown son, Luis, which occurred during my interview with them both, is important to note. While reviewing a stack of medical records, Luis selected one of the documents and read a line representing an inquiry of the patient's description out loud: "General findings: A short stocky Mexican" (Martinez Interview). The elder Martinez only chuckled about it and shrugged his shoulders. The different responses to the diction used in the medical document by the three generations in that living room that day, with me being the youngest, may be said to

represent the various perceptions of situatedness in reference to the social location of Mexican Americans within the United States. Mr. Martinez described surviving the Great Depression, the racial discrimination faced at home, military campaigns in both the North African and European theatres of World War II—which left him almost completely deaf—and then the continued racial discrimination at home. He characterized these experiences as simply a part of life. On the other hand, Luis Martinez, his son, had taken on the responsibility of overseeing his father’s healthcare and had a different reaction, namely anger, to the way his father had been and continued to be treated in, for example, veterans’ hospitals.

For me, the experience of hearing Porfirio Martinez talk about his life and then my writing about it for publication planted the seeds of both awareness and curiosity about the historical representations of Mexican Americans in the United States. Rosaldo’s argument that ethnographers are “positioned subjects who have a distinctive mix of insight and blindness” was made meaningful to me as a scholar when conducting this interview with Porfirio Martinez and his son. In my case, cultural insight replaced cultural blindness when I heard stories like the one by Porfirio Martinez, gathered at the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project. Listening to their stories, in fact, marked the beginning of my *concientización*.

Thus situated, I bring the conclusion of my rhetorical analysis to an end by centering itself on the Latino/a response to Ken Burns’ documentary, *The War*, which initially excluded the contributions of U.S. Latinos/as to the war effort. The responses by PBS and Ken Burns to the Latino/a audience reception on the matter should reflect the lessons learned by the parties involved. Future historical documentarians will need to

keep these lessons in mind, lessons the Latino/a viewing audience will also need to keep in mind in the future when regarding their omission and consequent absence from popular historical narratives and memory which are used to construct a national identity.

## CHAPTER II

### **THEORETICAL OVERVIEW: RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF *THE WAR* AND LATINO/A AUDIENCE MODES OF RECEPTION**

This chapter describes the theoretical foundations of the analytical framework which inform my rhetorical analysis of Ken Burns' *The War*. I also examine the rhetorical appeals a Latino/a audience used, as demonstrated through its particular modes of reception to Burns' documentary on World War II. For my analysis of the Latino/a audience's modes of reception, I use Hector Amaya's application of a non-normative audience reception theory, coupled with his concept of using racially-enabled hermeneutic techniques to evaluate documentary film truth claims. Providing the foundational analytical framework of my overall analysis of both *The War* and the Latino/a audience mode of reception will be Steven Mailloux's interpretative technique of rhetorical hermeneutics.

To frame my rhetorical analysis of Ken Burns' *The War*, I use Mailloux's rhetorical hermeneutics to interpret aspects of the film to show how myopic his documentary approach truly was—in its original form as well as in its subsequent revision. Regarding Burns' WWII historical documentary as a filmic text, I also examine the rhetorical aspects of Burns' use of documentary film conventions. My rhetorical analysis includes an examination of the structure of *The War* as well as of how it informs its intent with reference to the crafting of a sanctioned historical memory. I give careful

consideration to the episodes within which segments featuring Latino soldiers were added as a result of the protest stemming from the Latino/a community.

My rhetorical analysis therefore begins with the beginning of the film, Episode One, “A Necessary War,” as well as Episode Six, “The Ghost Front,” and the conclusion of the series, Episode Seven, “A World Without War.” The first part of my analysis of *The War* considers the ways Burns’ documentary conforms to documentary film genre conventions. Thus, my study examines the rhetorical effects of the documentary conventions Ken Burns employs in *The War*. Analyzing the rhetorical effects of such documentary film conventions, such as sound, image, character development, and narrative storyline, aids in deepening an understanding of Burns’ particular perspective, and consequently, of his intentions.

As I discuss further in this chapter, “framing” Burns’ perspective within the conventions of this documentary genre aids in the examination of the filmmaker’s particular perspective. Furthermore, “framing,” as an analytical tool, is effective in this regard because it exposes the boundaries of this genre. In addition to framing, Burns’ unique and now controversial use of the documentary genre to present historical narratives reinforces his perspective because of the previous positive receptions his documentaries have commanded in the past. Criticism directed at the reception of his narratives of his previous films did not cause as high a level of controversy as the criticism raised in response to *The War*. This is largely due to the ethos Burns’ success has granted him as a filmmaker, especially after the overwhelmingly positive public response to his documentary, *The Civil War*.

Also, because of the unquestioned respect Burns has commanded due to his previous successes with his documentary productions, whatever the oversights—while questioned at times—his films produced little negative consequences. Because of such unquestioned respect, *The War* thus necessitates a form of deconstruction which analyzes his construction of the social realms in his WWII documentary. In fact, it is the initial absence, or omission, of a significant Latino/a presence in *The War*—what effectively marks the provocation for the particular Latino/a viewer response and protest—which my project seeks to investigate. The point of this rhetorical analysis is to build a frame of reference from which the Latino/a audience evaluated and responded to the film, both before and after the revisions were made. While useful as an approach to the rhetorical analysis of the filmic text that is *The War*, using a deconstructive approach of how Burns constructs the United States, its identity and historical memory, necessitates its being supplemented with an approach which also analyzes the role and influence of audience reception today.

So my analysis of the rhetorical reception to Burns' *The War* by the Latino/a community leaders and representatives, on which my project is based, is grounded, in part, on Hector Amaya's theoretical approach, as articulated in "Racialized Documentary Reception of Ken Burns' *Jazz*." Working at the intersection of documentary theory and reception studies, Amaya makes the case for a non-normative audience reception theory through the rhetorical analysis of film reviews, as published in major newspapers, of Burns' documentary *Jazz*. Based on Janet Staiger's work on modes of audience reception, Amaya further argues that race as an identity marker serves as a part of a hermeneutic technique with which to interpret and evaluate the truth claims of a documentary. Truth

claims made in a documentary, as Aufderheide argues, are what make documentary films “important reality-shaping communication” precisely because they “are always grounded in real life, and make a claim to tell us something worth knowing about it” (5). Amaya first argues against using a normative audience approach, or normative tendency, which he describes as “a propensity to naturalize narrow definitions of audiences and spectatorship and often fails to take into account the semiotic and epistemological productivity of contexts and the audience’s identity axes like race, class, locality, nationality, gender, and sexual orientation” (116). Amaya then describes the role of racial ethics which comes into play in the reception of Burns’ *Jazz*. This section of my chapter therefore lays out Amaya’s interpretive frame which, in turn, serves as the basis of my rhetorical analysis of the Latino/a modes of reception to Burns’ *The War*.

The relationship between documentary films and truth has been the subject of debate among documentary theorists for quite some time due to the medium’s claims to objectivity. In “The Totalizing Quest of Meaning,” Trinh Minh-ha, for instance, represents a poststructuralist stance in the debate and states, “Truth and meaning: the two are likely to be equated with one another. Yet, what is put forth as truth is often nothing more than *a* meaning” (92). The preoccupation with truth within documentary studies, as Amaya states, “remains important [...] because it is in [a] documentary’s claimed relationship to truth and the real that [the] documentary establishes its genre specificity” (113). Thus, operating from an assumption that truth is socially constructed, that is, “contingent, divergent, and community specific,” Amaya aims to “make truth a problem of reception, an issue of ‘decoding,’ and [to] understand it in relationship to a mode of

reception ([Stewart] Hall 1980). In doing so, truth becomes the effect of a set of hermeneutic conventions activated in the moment of viewership” [sic] (113).

Before describing Amaya’s set of hermeneutic techniques involved in viewer reception, namely, the ways in which race creates a set of expectations for particular viewers, I think it is important to describe the normative reception approach taken up by documentary theorists. In *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Bill Nichols states, “The distinguishing mark of [a] documentary may be less intrinsic to the text than a function of the assumptions and expectations brought to the process of viewing the text” (24). In addition, Nichols attributes the difference between documentary and narrative fiction to the difference in viewer expectations upon reception and, specifically, to the relationship documentary film has with presenting history (25). Moreover, as Nichols states, “Cues within the text and assumptions based on past experience prompt us to infer that the images we see (and many of the sounds we hear) had their origin in the historical world” (25). Based on the relationship between documentary film and historical representation, Amaya in turn asserts that “The relationship between spectator and nonfictional text is then determined by the evaluation the spectator performs on the truth claims of the text” (115).

On the other hand, in “When Is a Documentary?: Documentary as a Mode of Reception,” Dirk Eitzen argues that audiences engage with documentary films in ways which extend beyond evaluating the soundness of rational historical arguments. In this sense, Eitzen departs from Nichols in relation to the assumption about which type of argument the viewer may be said to be evaluating when viewing a documentary. To illustrate, Eitzen describes a scene from the first episode of Ken Burns’ documentary

series, *The Civil War* (1991). The scene, Eitzen states, “quotes at length from a sentimental love letter from a soldier named Sullivan Ballou to his wife, Sarah, written just before the soldier’s death at the Battle of Bull Run” (87). Eitzen takes note that it is this scene, “more than any other moment in the eleven-hour series,” which “generated a flood of responses” (87). Although, as Eitzen acknowledges, there are truth claims to be evaluated in the scene, albeit “ordinary and trivial,” i.e., ““there was an actual person named Sullivan Ballou who died at the First Battle of Bull Run’ and ‘this is an authentic letter,’” the impact on viewers rests on “how moving and poignant it is, how it stirs up their sentiments, [...] how it makes them weep” (87).

According to Eitzen, “In this scene, which many viewers held to be exemplary of what made the whole series interesting and special as a documentary, this rhetorical operation seems to be far more crucial and certainly quite different from what [Bill] Nichols calls argument” (87). While emphasizing the melodrama Burns employs in the scene in order to trigger sentiments in viewers, Eitzen makes it clear that it is important that “viewers seem to *assume* that the scene is telling the truth, even though they do not pay attention to its particular truth claims” (88). Amaya thus notes that Eitzen’s description of the documentary viewer’s mode of reception “incorporates both rational and nonrational evaluative processes of truth claims,” which “underl[ie] both the ideological import of the documentary narrative and [...] its truth effects” (115). Although more comprehensive, Eitzen’s description of audience modes of reception nevertheless describes a normative approach to audiences, which Janet Staiger contests in *Perverse Spectators: The Practices of Film Reception*. Staiger asserts that “major problems exist in several assumptions underpinning the ‘normative reception’ account of

spectatorship” (3). According to Staiger, a couple of these assumptions “are that spectators are primarily interested in cognitive acts—especially the act of solving a problem—and that spectators are ‘knowledgeable and cooperative’” (3). Amaya, in addition, outlines the following tenets which undergird normative reception: “First, [...] the viewer has interiorized some basic principles of the documentary form. He or she is able to recognize textual conventions (such as direct address, use of experts, and argumentative claims) and their relationship to documentary. Second, [...] the event or reality depicted by the documentary is relatively unfamiliar to the viewer” (116).

These tenets, Amaya contends, “imply the existence of at least three other basic variations that must be considered when investigating documentary viewers” (116). For the purposes of my project, I examine the first variation. According to Amaya, “‘Duo-competent mode of reception’” may describe viewers who “may have interiorized the documentary form [,]” and “yet they may have also interiorized the profilmic event” (116-7). In *Explorations in Film Theory*, David Bordwell explains that a “profilmic event [...] exists in empirical reality and is filmed by the camera” (“Camera Movement” 230). In other words, according to Bordwell, “On this account, camera movement simply means that the apparatus which films this event moves while filming this event” (230). Amaya explains that for viewers who have “interiorized the profilmic event,” “the content of the documentary addresses a part of the history of the audience that is familiar to the audience and that the audiences [sic] uses as currency for identity formation” (117). It is in relation to audiences not “willing to accept the authority of documentary” that Amaya is interested in, by moving beyond the audiences Nichols and Eitzen imagine,

namely, “[for] audiences that (apparently) have the same reasons to watch documentary, and on viewers who know how to make sense of documentaries” (116).

Amaya’s non-normative documentary viewer thus introduces a new understanding of truth claims in relation to documentary reception. As Amaya states, “it means that truth effects may very well be quite different in different communities, and that this maybe [sic] the result of different communities using unexpected modes of reception” (116). In addition to describing and examining the Latino/a community in relation to its critical responses to Burns’ *The War*, I also examine the way members of this community use “unexpected modes of reception.” However, to investigate non-normative audience modes of reception, it follows that a discussion is necessary of the role that identity comes to play in the matter of viewer reception. “Because modes of reception may be determined by identity, given that identity is overdetermined (i.e., race, nationality, sexual orientation, gender, class, age, education, etc.), and performative,” Amaya states, “it becomes quite difficult to understand the relationship between identity and documentary modes of reception without reference to specific cases and audiences” (117). Amaya is thus moving to encapsulate a much more specific rhetorical framework for understanding the reception of specific audiences.

So in order to describe the dynamics involved with non-normative audience modes of reception and the ideology thus advanced through the documentary film being viewed, Amaya offers the following description: “it is [...] fruitful to think of the response to ideological interpellations of documentary as instantiations of subjectivity of the audiences *and* as performances of the audiences’ identity” (118). Amaya further explains that

By instantiation of subjectivity, I am referring to the manifestations, in the present, of the viewer's subject formation. By performance of the audience's identity I am referring to the fact that a de-essentialized identity, a culturally constructed identity, is maintained through the ongoing exercise of actions (by the individual) that perform the viewer identity's cultural specificity (as they are marked by a community). (118)

For the purposes of analyzing a Latino/a audience's reception to a historical documentary film, Burns' *The War*, it is important to think about the relationship Latinos/as may be said to have in relation to the filmic text. As Amaya states, "the instantiation of subjectivity is the result of the activation by the text of processes of recognition and identification (self-recognition)" (118).

To refer back to Amaya's application of Staiger's criteria for non-normative modes of reception—that the viewer is not necessarily "cooperative" in relation to the authority of the documentary film—he argues that racial identities create a set of expectations couched in lived experiences, specifically as experienced in the United States. As Amaya states, "these [racialized] identities include hermeneutic techniques that help interpret our histories, bodies, ideas, and social positions as those constitutive of a race" (119). And, reiterating Chicano anthropologist Rosaldo's notion of the positioned subject, I note that Amaya in addition states that "these hermeneutic techniques also render the world intelligible and allow us to see it as a racialized landscape, subject to evaluation, acceptance, or rejection" (119).

For Amaya, then, a racial identity in the United States is linked to both ethics and justice. As he states, "Having a racial identity means acknowledging the plurality of

racism, the existence of the other, and, in the United States, awareness that our identity is also related to ethics and justice” (120). Therefore, according to Amaya, “A racial identity provides an ethos of difference, an ethics, and an epistemology through which the social real is known” (120). Using the views of an African American reviewer of Burns’ *Jazz* as an example of a racialized viewer reception, Amaya aims to demonstrate how racial identity and racial epistemology are used in the “evaluation of truth claims in documentary” (120). He explains that for this particular evaluation to occur, a non-normative viewer with a familiarity of the events described, through the documentary film being viewed, “use[s] [...] cognitive mechanisms to evaluate the system of truth claims by comparing their knowledge with the documentary claims” (120).

In other words, racialized viewers are positioned in such a way that enables them to compare their “ideology and knowledge system” with that which is represented by the documentary film (120). In addition, this position furthermore enables the racialized viewer to either “reject (or partly accept and partly reject) the truth claims of the documentary as well as its ideological underpinnings” (120). As an example, Amaya cites the review of Preston Love, “An African American jazz musician writing in the *Omaha World-Herald*” on January 21, 2001 (123). Love’s commentary, below, speaks to the evaluation of the most important themes of *Jazz*, that is, “themes [...] that linked this cultural form [jazz] to the transformation of the racial conditions of African Americans during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries” (120). Amaya also notes that Love remarks on the ways in which Burns’ documentary is structured so as to “mak[e] the documentary palatable to white audiences” (123). As Love states,

Of course, jazz was regarded as exclusively black music in that era, as was blues, but not every black person was involved with or interested in jazz. Most whites of that era looked upon black music as something rather exotic or even humorous. So the frequent use of footage of whites in the series rang a bit insincere to me. I was old enough in the 1920s and '30s to observe the nature of white people's participation in jazz, so I viewed much of that footage as something Burns used simply to attract a larger white audience. (123)

According to Amaya, Love is an example of a viewer enacting a racialized reception of *Jazz* which Love enables by his not so “unusual position as a witness to jazz's history and as a black man” (123). This positionality, Amaya states, in turn has “allowed him [Love] to challenge the historical contributions of the documentary (by contesting most of them) as well as to question the ideology of the film by noting that Burns' target audience was white, jazz-novice individuals” (123). I extend Amaya's argument—that “racial ethics are intrinsic to [...] evaluation of truth claims” (123) in documentary film, to the Latino/a community “ethnicized” reception to Burns' *The War*.

The context within which viewers evaluated Burns' *Jazz* is an important frame. As Amaya states, “the complex context of reception for the film in New Orleans is a strong suggestion that the ‘truths’ embedded in its historical narrative can only be understood when placed within the specific and contingent ways in which people saw it, interpreted it, enjoyed it, or dreaded it” (112). In other words, as Amaya states, “in the case of *Jazz*, the [rhetorical] context of reception influenced the way the historical propositions of the text were understood, seen and felt” (112).

In *Reception Histories: Rhetoric, Pragmatism, and American Cultural Politics*, Steven Mailloux also foregrounds context as key in interpretation. He states, “As theoretical practices, hermeneutics involves placing a text in a meaningful context, while rhetoric requires the contextualization of a text’s effects” (4). Mailloux’s interpretative technique, rhetorical hermeneutics, couples hermeneutics, or, “interpretation focused on texts,” with rhetoric, or, the “figuration and persuasion directed at audiences” (4). By incorporating Mailloux’s approach as part of my rhetorical analysis, I examine the contextualization of the available means of persuasion used by U.S. Latinos/as in response to Burns’ *The War*. In addition, in Chapter V I analyze selected texts comprising a representative sample of the Latino/a audience’s reception within in the particular World War II historical context as designed by Burns—a context which effectively left Latinos/as entirely out of the picture, out of his original version of his documentary.

### CHAPTER III

#### SETTING PRECEDENT: HISTORICAL MEMORY, KEN BURNS, AND WAR

The series of relationships involved in the rhetorical situation created by the Latino/a reception to Burns' *The War* is connected by the activity of negotiating a historical memory. In "Wreckage upon Wreckage: History, Documentary and the Ruins of Memory," Paula Rabinowitz explains the rhetorical situation, from the vantage point of the viewer, thus: "In documentary the viewer is asked to participate in a series of contracts—between film and its object, between filmmaker and audience, between reality and representation" (136).

I begin this chapter with a general discussion of the ways viewers are positioned to interact with the contract between reality and representation, especially in terms of the crafting of a historical memory. In examining the relationship between filmmaker and audience, I discuss the relationship between historical documentaries and the crafting of historical memory through selected critical responses from historians to Burns and his documentary, *The Civil War* (1990). The discussion on the historians' response to Burns' *The Civil War* necessarily includes an examination of the relationship between Burns and a general viewing audience due in part to the use of the historical documentary for educational purposes. An examination of both the relationship between reality and representation and between Burns and particular viewers provides a context from which

to consider the negotiation of historical memory through the subject of World War II and Burns' vision of it as represented in *The War*.

Of particular importance to foreground here is the fact that the unprecedented success of the PBS-sponsored historical documentary, *The Civil War*, created expectations in both viewers and in PBS which may be said to have informed the expectations for Burns' World War II historical documentary, *The War*. The expectations created by Burns' *The Civil War*, combined with the specific relationship between war and its impact on a sense of United States nationhood, I shall argue, works to construct facets of the rhetorical situation surrounding the Latino/a reception to Burns' *The War*.

In "Ken Burns' Rebirth of a Nation: Television, Narrative, and Popular History," Gary Edgerton states that *The Civil War* premiered "over five consecutive evenings (September 23-27, 1990), amassing a level of attention unsurpassed in public television history" (119). This level of success may be said to have effectively served to pave the way for the production of such subsequent large-scale projects such as *The War*, among many others produced by Burns. In *A New History of Documentary Film*, Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane describe one effect of Burns' remarkable success as "the Ken Burns phenomenon"—"the biggest success story for PBS in the past twenty years has been the films made by Ken Burns and company" (299). Burns' most successful film, *The Civil War*, they state, "changed the way many in America thought about documentary, and it [also] changed the way television executives thought about historical documentaries" (299).

Before continuing the discussion regarding Burns' influence as specifically examined through the critical response to *The Civil War*, I believe it is now important to

include some of Burns' background. In "Ken Burns's America," Gary Edgerton states that Burns, born on July 29, 1953 in Brooklyn, New York, grew up in Ann Arbor, Michigan, where Burns's father, a World War II veteran, "taught anthropology at the University of Michigan" (51). Burns received his college education from Hampshire College, Massachusetts—a school Edgerton describes as "an experimental liberal arts college"—from which Burns graduated in 1975. At Hampshire College, Burns studied film studies and design (51). And while at Hampshire College, Burns was influenced by the work of social documentary photographer, Jerome Liebling—under whom Burns studied—along with historian David McCullough and filmmaker John Ford (51).

John Ford's beliefs and attitudes toward the United States, as illustrated through his filmmaking, influenced Burns in important ways. Edgerton states, "Ford animated these specific pictures [*Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), *Fort Apache* (1948)] with a deep commitment to the frontier spirit of rugged individualism, nation building, and traditional Christian virtues" (52). In addition, Edgerton states that the "conventional elements" characterizing Ford's films also continue to be found in Burns' films. He states, "Throughout all his films, Ford proved himself to be a visual poet of the first order; he was also a sentimentalist and a populist, stressing a sense of nostalgia and a firm commitment to the ways of the past" (52). In an interview published in *The Art of the Documentary: Ten Conversations with Leading Directors, Cinematographers, Editors, and Producers*, Burns explains to Megan Cunningham that he was initially interested in making Hollywood films (16). As he states, "I wanted to be the next Howard Hawkes or Alfred Hitchcock or, most of all, John Ford, who is my idol" (16). From these comments,

it is clear how heavily invested Burns would be toward developing his aesthetic sensibility along the same lines as those film producers whom he greatly admired.

However, one of the debates arising from the controversial absence of Latinos/as in *The War* revolved around the evocation of Burns' artistic license to produce a documentary from his particular aesthetic vision, in response to demands he revise the film. In other words, the debate hinged on whether it was right to force Burns to revise *The War* based on the fact that it was his particular aesthetic point of view of World War II represented in the film. This particular debate recalls the traditional debate within documentary theory over the ability of documentary film to ethically and accurately represent reality. In fact, Cunningham begins *The Art of the Documentary* with a section devoted to the question: "Are documentaries art?" (2). The fact that Burns produces historical documentary films in particular is also important to the analysis of my project. I will first introduce Burns' stance on this intersection as it plays out in his own work.

In *The Art of the Documentary*, Burns, in his interview with Cunningham, discusses his beginnings in both documentary film and his interest in history. Burns states that his interest changed from Hollywood film to documentary film as a result of his studies at Hampshire College. For as he states, "They [film and photography teachers] disabused me of this interest in the Hollywood film, and reminded me of what power there is in the things that are and were. True things" (16). It is interesting to take note of Burns' attraction as a filmmaker to being involved in shaping the power of "true things," especially in light of Amaya's interest in approaching the "true things" which are represented in the documentary film as something not limited to the film itself, but as an effect of the audience's mode of reception.

Burns' description of his relationship to the subject of history, specifically American history, is also important to note. Burns confesses to Cunningham that he "had not taken any courses in American history since 11<sup>th</sup> grade, when they hold a gun to your head and tell you that you have to take it" (17). Burns, however, then goes on to describe a moment during his work on a historical documentary film project while at Hampshire College wherein he found his passion in telling historical narratives through documentary film. In response to Cunningham's question about why he chose to work within the realm of history with his documentary work, Burns replies, "I've chosen history, but I'm not interested in history per se. It's what I work in. It's where I practice my craft. The word *history* is mostly made up of the word *story*. I'm interested in telling stories" (17).

In highlighting Burns' research process, which is focused in part on emphasizing stories from the "bottom up," Cunningham quotes Burns on his understanding of the influence of his brand of history on the public. For as Burns states,

The subjects of these films have been an opportunity to practice and improve my craft of filmmaking. That in their totality they represent a fairly diverse and complicated view of American history is secondary, but not insignificant. I know that. And I know that people get a lot of their history from me. So there's a responsibility for me, always, to do the very best I can each time out. (14)

Edgerton further points out the effect, as translated through his historical documentaries, that Burns' perspective of historical subjects has on audiences: "He has successfully seized the attention of the mass audience through the topics he chooses, as well as created a stylistic approach that is well suited to his subjects and ideological outlook" (51).

Edgerton, quoting Burns as he discusses his relationship to history, provides insight into Burns' ideological outlook:

I think I'm primarily a filmmaker. That's my job. I'm an amateur historian at best, but more than anything if you wanted to find a hybridization of those two professions, then I find myself to be an emotional archaeologist. That is to say, there is something in the process of filmmaking that I do in the excavation of these events in the past that provokes a kind of emotion and a sympathy that remind[s] us, for example, of why we agree against all odds as a people to cohere. You know as you look at the world unraveling, its interesting that we Americans who are not united by religion, or patriarchy, or even common language, [...] we have agreed because we hold a few pieces of paper and a few sacred words together, we have agreed to cohere, and for more than 200 years it's worked and that special alchemy is something I'm interested in. (54)

Within this ideological context, it is useful to once again return to the question of who exactly the "we" are when Burns states he is interested in the glue that holds people in the United States together, when he ponders "why we agree against all odds as a people to cohere" (54). According to Edgerton, "A celebration of the nation, and a highlighting of its ideals and achievements, are fundamental aspects of both consensus thinking and Burns's body of work" (54). In "Ken Burns and the Romance of Reunion," for example, historian Eric Foner responds to *The Civil War* thus: "Burns's message is clear: the chief legacy of the war [the U.S. Civil War] was the survival and consolidation of the nation state, and that of the postwar era the re-establishment of a sense of national unity" (105).

In addition, Foner states, “As the historian David Blight has remarked, this combination of nostalgia and national celebration is a ‘most appealing’ legacy, which manages to ignore all those issues that raise troubling questions about American society today” (105). One issue Foner points to and which disrupts the goal of consensus thinking is the fact that in the context of the U.S. Civil War, “Reunion took place not in a vacuum but in a specific historical context, marked by the rise of a xenophobic patriotism ‘imagining’ the reunited nation via the language of racial exclusiveness” (114). “By ignoring this context (which included the disenfranchisement and segregation of blacks in the South, the exclusion by federal statute of Chinese immigrants, and the emergence of the United States as an overseas imperial power in the Spanish-American War),” Foner states, “Burns surrenders the possibility of probing the costs of reunion as well as its benefits” (114).

Moreover, the research on a racialized reception to Ken Burns’ documentary, *Jazz*, as undertaken by Amaya, is one effort which serves to address the blind spot Edgerton identifies in Burns’ liberal pluralist consensus perspective. Amaya’s analysis, in fact, also serves to problematize historian David Harlan’s understanding of Burns’ consensus perspective in his article, “Ken Burns and the Coming Crisis of Academic History.” Harlan states that “Burns’ documentaries are meditations on race in America but they are also dramas of integration, attempts to ‘find a way in which we can include the diverse tributaries of our experience into something that might nourish the whole’” (177). Harlan uses a normative approach to audience reception when he assumes that most viewers will be persuaded by Burns’ notion of America and its history. Harlan states that Burns is interested in depicting the shared cultural values he sees all

Americans possessing, namely, “a mutual understanding of who we are, what we value, how we mean to live” (179). Through his depiction of jazz and baseball, Burns, Harlan argues, has viewers “pretty much convinced that [he] is right: if we Americans really do possess a common culture, then the experience, the rhetoric and the sentiments associated with baseball and jazz probably lie somewhere near its centre” (179). For Amaya, Harlan’s assumption “fails to take into account the semiotic and epistemological productivity of contexts and the audience’s identity axes like race, class, locality, nationality, gender, and sexual orientation” (116).

Moreover, Edgerton states that “The Public Broadcasting System actually achieved its highest rating ever when 39 million Americans tuned into at least one episode of *The Civil War*, averaging more than 14 million viewers each evening” (120). Edgerton states that according to Steve Coe’s article, “CBS, PBS Factors in Surprising Prime Time Start,” the “viewership ‘skew[ed] older, male and upscale’” (120). This data provide further evidence of the normative audience reception which Amaya takes into account, but then broadens to include a viewership encompassing not only a wider demographic range, but also a viewership with particular knowledge of the film’s subject.

Echoing Harlan’s observation that Burns’ work is in part serving to popularize history, Edgerton states, “More than anyone before him, Ken Burns has transformed the historical documentary into a popular and compelling form through the apt though unexpected forum of prime-time television” (120). Providing further evidence that many Americans do indeed get their history through Burn’s films, Edgerton cites Monica Collins’s article “A Victory for ‘Civil War’” published in *The Boston Herald*, wherein

she states, ““You have to keep in mind that the investment in the program is an investment in yourself, in your knowledge of your country and its history”” (120).

However, speaking to the issue of the Ken Burns phenomenon, Harlan cites the opinions of academics who lament the rise of popular history and the corresponding fall of academic history: “For Wilentz as for Lowenthal, popular history is a seductive and captivating distraction that opens the heart but castrates the mind” (183). Consequently, Harlan warns historians who are tempted to ignore Burns’ work due to the fact that his work attracts millions of viewers. As he states,

his [Burns’] particular recasting of American history has come to play a central and vital role in shaping the public’s sense of who we have been and who we are now becoming. If we academic historians want our discipline to survive and flourish in the new media-saturated world in which we find ourselves, we will have to come to terms with Ken Burns and the kind of history he is producing. (170)

In “A Trademark Approach to the Past: Ken Burns, the Historical Profession, and Assessing Popular Presentations of the Past,” Vivien Rose and Julie Corely also note the influence of Burns’ films on how history is understood. They state, “Through his films, Burns has begun to shape public understanding, not only of specific historical events, but of what history is, as well” (51).

Edgerton takes a closer look at the public response to Burns’ way of doing history through his filmmaking in “Ken Burns’ Rebirth of a Nation: Television, Narrative, and Popular History.” In discussing the public response to *The Civil War*, he provides a brief overview of various reactions from historians to Burns’ “popularizing” of history.

Although one debate between some historians and Burns rests on whether to take an analytical approach or a narrative approach when treating historical events that reach a broad audience through film, another debate is about *which* narratives get air time and how. In the preface to *Ken Burns's The Civil War: Historians Respond*, Robert Brent Toplin states, for instance, “Most of them [critics] appreciated Burns’s skill as a master storyteller, particularly his talent for presenting history in fascinating ways [...]. The critics’ disagreements focused particularly on the question: *Which stories* about the Civil War ought to be told and *which conclusions* should be drawn from the evidence?” (vi).

In fact, Toplin poses questions about Burns’ *The Civil War* which resound loudly with those posed about *The War*—a film which Burns produced more than ten years later. These questions include, “Shouldn’t Burns have the right to interpret the war [the U.S. Civil War] in terms of the issues he considers important?” and “Indeed, shouldn’t Burns’s critics recognize that no single documentary can provide a completely comprehensive picture of the war?” (xxvi). Once again, Toplin makes the same point as Edgerton and others have made regarding the reception to Burns’ first war film, which is, “If the opinions registered in this book are highly judgmental, it is because scholars believe that the stakes are very high. *The Civil War* is no ordinary documentary” (xxvi). Moreover, Toplin states, “[...] debates about *The Civil War* became intense, because the documentary represented perhaps the best modern American example of film’s potential to teach history on a mass scale” (xxvi).

In “Noble Women as Well,” historian Catherine Clinton commented thus on the conclusion of Burns’ *The Civil War* series, “Those images of a re-enactment of Pickett’s Charge in 1913 sentimentalized the theme of reconciliation, providing a folksy and

comfortable closure for white Americans—and a racialized distortion of the war’s meaning” (64). Clinton argues that “Ken Burns wanted us to feel good about the Civil War—but which ‘us’ was he thinking of?” (64). Her question also resonates strongly with those posed by the Latino/a community in response to Burns’ exclusionary selectivity in *The War*—initially, Latinos/as as well as American Indians were clearly not included in the “we” of “We the people.” For Clinton, the “us” did not significantly include women. For as she states, “Burns has demonstrated that when it comes to women, he not only doesn’t get it, he doesn’t seem to care” (66-7). Clinton’s claim is based on “*The Civil War*’s wholesale neglect of women—black and white, northern and southern, nurses and spies, disguised in uniform or on the home front” and is furthermore due to the fact that this neglect “is not an oversight” (67).

After conducting an analysis of the extent and nature of the inclusion of women in Burns’ *The Civil War*, Clinton finds that “laziness and ignorance” of women’s contributions to the war effort were not to blame for the omission (68). She states that “Burns provides too little, too late when he admits—in Episode V, Chapter Six—that females mobilized in ways that were crucial to winning the war” (68). Curiously, Geoffrey C. Ward, the script writer for *The Civil War*, responds to claims of women’s minimal presence in the film by stating, “[...] we could never find a way to make their [women’s] appearances seem much more than interruptions in the midst of the complicated, head-long, largely military story we found ourselves trying to tell” (“Refighting” 144). Ward’s explanation that women’s stories would be “interruptions” within the “military story” that is Burns’ *The Civil War* apparently contradicts his own script wherein Clinton states that Burns admits “that females mobilized in ways that were

crucial to winning the war.” Significantly, Clinton then makes the following observation which directly applies to the handling of narrative choices in *The War*: “Unfortunately the selective eye of the creator and editors excluded material featuring women, in an overwhelming if not systematic fashion, in *The Civil War*” (68).

Based on the fact that the same question of ethical inclusion of so-called minority groups in Burns’ productions is posed time and again, one may gather that his point of view as a filmmaker exhibits troubling patterns of cultural myopia. More troubling still is the fact that institutions such as PBS supports this harmful perspective. Burns’ patterns of cultural myopia, though, can perhaps be explained by Burns’ particular use of an interpretive model to documentary viewing.

In “The Civil War: A Battleground of Meaning,” Judith Lancioni shows how Burns employs an interactive model to documentary viewing. Using Dominic LaCapra’s three models of history—documentary, rhetorical, and interactive, Lancioni demonstrates how Burns manages to fuse the various components to create an interactive model which “constructs a multi-dimensional, dialectical sense of history that reconfigures our understanding of the past and complicates our relationship to it” (22). The documentary, or “objective” model, relies on a belief in “an objective reality that can be empirically derived” (23). Lancioni cites Burns’ use of “approximately 3000 photographs [...] together with 2500 first person quotes” as evidence of his application of this model (24). On the other hand, this rhetorical model advances the understanding that “‘history’ is a constructed discourse and is therefore subject to critique and revision. History is interpretation—first, because archival materials are themselves interpretations of reality, and second, because present-day scholars interpret historical artifacts according to their

own temporal and ideological context” (23). To illustrate how Burns fits within LaCapra’s rhetorical model of history, Lancioni discusses how Burns uses the rhetorical strategy of reframing which allows “the filmmaker [to] emphasize, re-order, and re-compose particular sections of the photograph (5), changing its rhetorical impact” (23). To emphasize African Americans within a group shot, for instance, Burns will apply reframing to focus on a few people, or one person, within the group, which in effect, Lancioni argues, “contest[s] the ideology that saw African Americans only as undifferentiated groups” (23). Lancioni claims that Burns, in using both archival materials and reframing as a rhetorical strategy, “juxtaposes two ‘realities’ and two ideologies” (24). This strategy allows Burns to disproportionately widen his otherwise palpable cultural myopia.

Rose and Corely moreover consider the money invested into Burns’ productions and consequently argue for alternative uses for that money, especially in relation to the teaching of history. They state, “Burns competes successfully at the local and state level of educational and tourism dollars, promoting his films both as good educational products and as ways to increase tourist visitation to fuel flagging local economies” (57). They in turn suggest that “It is worthwhile to consider, again, what public monies from local and state education and tourism funds could achieve if given to the historical profession in the form of grants to work with local communities and teachers to showcase historical research skills and the history of the local area” (57). Rose and Corely’s research highlights the reach of Burns’ influence: “Supported by private foundations and public funds, Burns’s company, Florentine Films, has also moved beyond film to soundtracks,

spin-off books, study guides, and web-based teaching activities, effectively blurring the line between filmmaking and history teaching” (51).

Burns’ tremendous success with *The Civil War* firmly established his ethos as a popular historical documentary filmmaker. His success further worked to position him with a great deal of control over his projects, due to his successful acquisition of the necessary funding to carry out his sweeping epic documentary projects and due as well to the support he enjoys from the Public Broadcasting Service. Perhaps Burns had hoped to avoid the criticism aimed at him from historians questioning his work in *The Civil War* by choosing to instead adopt a completely “bottom up” approach, i.e., using first-hand experiences from “ordinary people” in *The War*.

Burns’ ethos, although arguably solid in terms of his skill of creatively implementing filmmaking techniques, is at best questionable due to the lack of sophisticated cultural awareness of minorities as represented through his documentary films. Moreover, Burns’ ethos also merits questioning due to his insistence on obscuring the fact that his choices as a filmmaker do carry a significant rhetorical impact. An example of this insistence is shown by Burns in “Four O’ Clock in the Morning Courage,” when he states that having five years to work on *The Civil War* “[...] worked for us because we were willing to allow the material, the evidence of the past, to speak to us. We listened to what it wanted, to how it wanted itself to be presented [...]” (168). In “Ken Burns’s *The Civil War* as an Interpretation of History,” Toplin responds to Burns’s attempt at neutrality when he states, “[...] he [Burns] does not approach his material from a neutral position; his personal world-view influences the lessons he draws from history” (21). Moreover, Toplin states, “Choice is fundamental in the filmmaker’s work with

sources. [...] Just by selecting specific examples for presentation on the screen, Burns effectively took a stand in explaining the Civil War to the public” (21-2).

Burns, however, would be met with even more intense criticism than what he received from historians in response to *The Civil War*, from representatives of the Latino/a community due to his exclusionary ideological outlook as carried out in his historical documentary on the American experience in World War II. In the next chapter, Burns’ point of view manifests itself through the visual rhetoric he employs as well as by his management of documentary film conventions. By conducting a rhetorical analysis of particular episodes from *The War* series, I show that Burns’ rhetorical use of documentary film conventions—before and even after the add-on segments—serve to advance his ideological outlook, an outlook premised on principles which at best are highly questionable and worthy of a thorough rhetorical analysis.

## CHAPTER IV

### RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF BURNS' *THE WAR*

In *Reception Histories: Rhetoric, Pragmatism, and American Cultural Politics*, Steven Mailloux states, “As theoretical practices, hermeneutics involves placing a text in a meaningful context, while rhetoric requires the contextualization of a text’s effects” (4). In this chapter I conduct an interpretation of *The War* in order to place Ken Burns’ filmic text within the context of the documentary film genre, particularly in relation to his use of documentary film conventions. Regarding Mailloux’s statement about rhetoric requiring contextualization or “the contextualization of a text’s effects,” I also resort to Burns’ own words to help provide the contextualization of *The War*’s rhetorical effects.

In an interview with Doug Fabrizio, as part of a two-part series which aired on August 31<sup>st</sup> 2007 and September 17<sup>th</sup> 2007, on the PBS-affiliate station, KUED’s program *Utah NOW*, Burns remarks on the visual rhetoric involved in his particular use of music and images. As he states in regard to his use of visual elements, “There’s a relationship [the viewers’] to the information that is given” (Burns interview *Utah NOW*). My rhetorical analysis of *The War* examines the argument Burns hopes to advance through his structuring of a particular relationship between his film and the audience. It bears repeating that my analysis is characterized by my rhetorical studies approach as well as by the fact that I identify with the Mexican American community through my

heritage. In addition, my rhetorical analysis is informed by my own understanding of what it means to be perceived as American.

As Burns has discussed in various other interviews, the notion of what it means to be American is a guiding principle throughout his body of work. Both this principle and Burns' own personal perspective and motivations directly inform the choices he makes and the tools he uses to create historical documentaries. In *The Documentary Makers: Interviews with 15 of the Best in the Business*, Burns discusses with David A. Goldsmith his personal perspective as a filmmaker being in part shaped by witnessing the long battle his mother had with cancer:

History is malleable, the facts are not. History is the questions we, in the present, ask of the past. There is a good deal in my adult psychology that is searching the past for some sort of healing. In a sense, I've made the same film over and over again, each film asking the same deceptively simple question: "Who are we? What does the past tell us about those strange and complicated people who like to call themselves Americans?" The question, while never ever answered, only deepens with each film, and mutates and transforms into "Who am I?" It all goes back to being a little boy, watching my mother die and at the same time seeing on television fire hoses and police dogs turned on black protestors in the South during the early '60s. Somehow the cancer that was killing my country helped to mitigate the cancer that was killing my family. (10)

The ideas Burns presents inform his perspective as a filmmaker, namely by exploring the past as a form of healing, examining the ways individual identity is connected to and

represented by U.S. citizenship, and by relating to the effects of the racial conflicts between whites and blacks in America. Each of these ideas will be addressed in my rhetorical analysis of *The War*.

To begin examining the contextualization of *The War*'s rhetorical effects, I believe it is useful to draw upon documentary theory, specifically Bill Nichols' analytical framework of the four modes of representation in documentary films. In *Representing Realities: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*, Nichols presents four modes of representation used to categorize documentary films. Nichols defines these modes of representation as the "basic ways of organizing texts in relation to certain recurrent features or conventions" (32). Moreover, Nichols states that for documentary films, the "four modes of representation [which] stand out as the dominant organizational patterns around which most [documentary] texts are structured" are "expository, observational, interactive, and reflexive" (32). Burns' *The War* operates under both expository and interactive modes of representation. An expository mode of representation, Nichols explains, includes "Voice-of-God commentary and poetic perspectives [which seek] to disclose information about the historical world itself and to see that world afresh, even if these views [come] to seem romantic or didactic" (32-3). According to Nichols, an interactive documentary filmmaker, in turn, uses "interview styles and interventionist tactics" which allow "the filmmaker [to] recount past events by means of witnesses and experts" (33). In addition, Nichols states that in using an interactive mode of representation, "Archival footage of past events be[come] appended to [...] commentaries to avoid the hazards of reenactment and the monolithic of voice-of-God commentary" (33).

In this chapter, to contextualize the effects of Burns' WWII film, I examine the rhetorical aspects of Burns' use of specific documentary film conventions, like his use of both expository and interactive modes of representation. My rhetorical analysis also includes an examination of the narrative structure of *The War* as well as how it informs its intent to craft a sanctioned historical memory. I in addition give careful consideration to the three episodes within which segments featuring Latino soldiers were added on as a result of the protests stemming from the Latino/a community. These episodes include the beginning of the film, Episode One, "A Necessary War" *December 1941-1942*, as well as Episode Six, "The Ghost Front" *December 1944-March 1945*, and the conclusion of the series, Episode Seven, "A World Without War" *March 1945-December 1945*. My analysis is confined to these three episodes in part to examine the structure of the film through the linear chronology of a narrative arc, one which covers the beginning, middle, and end of a story. Burns himself speaks to this chronological approach to narrative structure in his documentaries in his interview with Fabrizio on the program *Utah NOW*. Burns responds to Fabrizio's question regarding his application of a chronological narrative structure in his films with an anecdote regarding the editing of *The Civil War*: "I got a call in the middle of the editing of *The Civil War* series where I had [tied] myself in knots trying to do stuff and was going back and forth in time. Shelby Foote said to me, 'God is the greatest dramatist.' [...] What he's saying is, 'and then, and then, and then' is the basic way you tell a story" (Burns interview *Utah NOW*).

Following Foote's advice, Burns structures *The War* chronologically. Episode One, "A Necessary War" *December 1941-1942*, introduces the narrative structure of the film as well as many of the major characters whose experiences reflect events transpiring

in America's first year at war, including the attack on Pearl Harbor. Episode Two, "When Things Get Tough" *January 1943-December 1943*, chronicles the U.S. industrial war effort and describes the experiences of novice U.S. soldiers in North Africa and of bomber pilots in Europe. Episode Three, "A Deadly Calling" *November 1943-June 1944*, recounts the heavy toll of human life in both the Pacific and European theaters of war, in addition to discussing the racial tensions arising in U.S. "war towns." Episode Four, "Pride of Our Nation" *June 1944-August 1944*, includes the story of D-Day and of the Pacific battle of Saipan. In Episode Five, "FUBAR" *September 1944-December 1944*, the efforts U.S. soldiers in the air and in the dense forests of Germany as well as in Pacific battles, such as on the island of Peleliu, are recounted. Episode Six, "The Ghost Front" *December 1944-March 1945*, describes the Battle of the Bulge and the U.S. victory at Iwo Jima. The conclusion of the series, Episode Seven, "A World Without War" *March 1945-December 1945*, describes the surrender of Germany, the dropping of atomic bombs in the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the return home of U.S. soldiers.

The rationale for my selection of Episode One and Episode Six of *The War* in particular is to examine the episodes in which Burns added the stories of Latino soldiers. I examine, for instance, the relationship that exists between the segments featuring Bill Lansford and Pete Arias—the two Latinos selected for inclusion in *The War*—with the narrative structure of the rest of Burns' documentary as laid out in Episode One. I examine the relationship between the segments featuring Lansford and Arias and the rest of *The War* by also analyzing the application of documentary film conventions, narrative structure, and through thematic elements as presented in both episodes. The first part of

my analysis of *The War* therefore considers the ways Burns' documentary conforms to documentary film genre conventions.

Analyzing the rhetorical effects of documentary film conventions, such as sound, image, character, and narrative storyline, as well as Burns' use of the expository and interactive modes of representation aids in deepening an understanding of Burns' perspective and, consequently, of his intentions. Interestingly, both Burns and Lynn Novick, co-director and producer for *The War*, characterize the management of documentary film conventions as engaging in a game of three-dimensional chess. As Burns states on *Utah NOW*, "you might use music [...]. Or use a still photograph to visually build a story or just follow someone else's narrative. So you're working in [...] three dimensional chess with stories that are going on at many, many different levels" (Burns interview *Utah NOW*). Novick, on the other hand, addresses the choices involved in structuring the documentary: "It is kind of a three dimensional chess game. We have to think about the specific episode's structure, as well as the architecture of the entire series" (Novick "About the Series"). These complicated rhetorical effects all contribute to the overall impact which Burns and Novick intended to make with their documentary.

*Episode One, "A Necessary War" December 1941-1942*

*The War* begins with Episode One: "A Necessary War" *December 1941-1942*. The episode is designed to feature a prologue, a formal introduction effectively serving as the first scene, or chapter, and which then is followed by fourteen additional scenes, or chapters. Significantly, the first documentary film convention which viewers of *The War*

encounter is sound. In *Documentary Film*, Patricia Aufderheide explains that documentary filmmakers have various tools at their disposal to create films. Among those tools is sound, which, as Aufderheide states, may include “ambient sound, soundtrack music, special sound effects, dialogue, narration” (10). During the very brief opening credits and before the viewer sees a single image in *The War*, the viewer hears a soft mixture of birds chirping and crickets, among other insects. The sounds continue as the opening credits fade to black and as the opening image comes into view.

From the commentary for Episode One, provided as a “special feature” by Burns and Novick after and alongside the actual narrative, viewers learn that the opening visual shot is in Minnesota—one of the four states (which include Alabama, California, and Connecticut) prominently featured in the documentary. Burns, in addition, immediately makes the following important claim in the commentary: “This is the opening shot of our film which places us firmly in the realm of a poem and not a textbook—this is not homework” (Episode One). The visual elements which compose this opening shot include a field of tall wheat stalks and a lone windmill silhouetted against what could be construed as either a sky at dawn or dusk. This initial image along with Burns’ opening remark effectively marks a distinctive aspect of Burns’ documentary technique.

In *The Art of the Documentary*, Burns states, “I think we come to a [...] shorthand that fiction is narrative and untrue, and that documentaries are true and objective. And that’s not true. We know from literature that some of the greatest truths emerge from fiction” (32-3). Burns also states, “I work in a medium—documentary—that’s interested in fact-based drama, fact-based narrative, and that’s a huge difference” (32-3). Burns is seemingly critical of the so-called objective stance which documentary films claim when

he states, “for too long it [documentary] was a didactic, essayistic thing; an expression of someone else’s already-arrived-at ends, and not interested in narrative” (33). However, the many choices a filmmaker such as Burns makes in the representation of history—not to mention the personal motivations guiding the focus of a body of work—are in fact “an expression of someone else’s already-arrived-at ends.”

So the handling of documentary film conventions like sound and visuals serve specific rhetorical purposes. In *How to Read a Film*, for instance, James Monaco points to the function of using sound as Burns has done at the beginning of *The War*. As Monaco states, “It [sound] acts to realize both space and time. It is essential to the creation of a locale; the ‘room tone,’ based on the reverberation time, harmonics, and so forth of a particular location, is its signature” (213). As it functions throughout *The War*, sound indeed marks the signature of locales featured in and throughout the entire documentary. In fact, Burns states in the commentary to Episode One that “the suite that Wynton Marsalis wrote [...] is a [...] magnificent kind of containing of the four towns and their different characters” (Episode One).

The major organizing principle of the narrative structure is also introduced within the opening shot with the following text: “The Second World War was fought in thousands of places, too many for any one accounting. This is the story of four American towns and how their citizens experienced that war” (Episode One). These four towns include Waterbury, Connecticut; Mobile, Alabama; Sacramento, California; and Luverne, Minnesota. The prologue to *The War*, however, serves to immediately disrupt the structural conditions set in place with the statement made in the opening shot. Once again, after the opening shot fades to black and before the viewer is presented with the

next image, sound is presented to the viewer before a visual. An upbeat melody played by a clarinet effectively introduces the prologue to *The War*. A black and white photograph of the small farming town of Fort Deposit, Alabama, is used while a voice-over—i.e., voice-of-God narration—describes the circumstances which led one of the prominent characters of the film, Glenn Frazier, to join the Army in the summer of 1941.

Although Fort Deposit is not in fact one of the four American towns around which *The War* narrative will be centered—Fort Deposit, Alabama, is located approximately 140 miles northeast of Mobile, Alabama—Glenn Frazier is nevertheless used to introduce the narrative and the narrative structure of the documentary. Indeed, despite functioning to disrupt the narrative structure set in place with the opening statement of the film, Frazier's inclusion serves the important function of representing Burns' favored "bottom up" approach to telling history. For instance, after Novick states in the commentary to Episode One how fortunate they were to have stumbled upon the photograph of Fort Deposit halfway through the production for *The War*, Burns states, "I can't help but think that this shot is about the intimacy of the whole film. That [...] the whole story that we tell here is not the gigantic World War II of our imagination—the biggest thing that has ever happened on our planet, but a tiny, single, isolated story that is the approach that we're going to take for the rest of the series" (Episode One).

Regarding the narrative disruption of including Frazier, it is worth noting that even before Burns reluctantly included the additions of the two Latino soldiers and the Native American soldier in *The War*, the story of the documentary featured men and women from cities other than the four which are stated as the frame for and center of Burns' war narrative. This inconsistency is important to consider when one of the major

points both Burns and PBS stressed in response to the abovementioned omissions was that *The War* was not intended to be a comprehensive account; the fact that the narrative structure of the film is limited to the story of only four towns was nevertheless given as evidence of this intent. Based on the structure of the film as it begins, the viewer may gather that the position taken toward the narrative constraints, which were so emphatically evoked during the communication between Burns, PBS, and the Latino/a community regarding the omissions, was indeed flexible.

In fact, Burns himself also speaks to this flexibility regarding the narrative structure in his interview with Fabrizio on the program *Utah NOW*. In response to the observation made by Fabrizio that the closest Burns comes to featuring professional historians in *The War* are Sam Hynes and Paul Fussell, Burns states, “They’re not from the four towns and we very early on decided it was more important to have exceptions than to be hard and fast because there’s a kind of tyranny in that hard and fastness [...]. We wanted the film and our attitude to be much more elastic and I think the film benefits from that” (Burns interview *Utah NOW*).

The prologue to *The War* also serves to introduce the important juxtaposition Burns sets up between the combat theaters of World War II and the home-front in the United States. So, as the first “talking head” of the documentary, Frazier explains that when he volunteered to serve in the Philippines, he “had no idea that we would actually be at a war” (Episode One). He states that since he “thought Germany would more likely be the place where there would be a war,” he “thought it would be safe over there [in the Philippine Islands]” (Episode One). To briefly return to the role of sound as a film convention, I should note that after the viewer is introduced to Frazier through a

photograph of him as a young soldier and then while Frazier in the present is describing his entry into World War II, a foreboding track of music is being played to signal the doom that lies ahead in the film. The foreboding music continues while the narrator gives a brief synopsis introducing the Pacific theater of World War II, which Frazier experienced as a survivor of the Bataan Death March and as a Japanese prisoner of war.

Also, accompanying the narrator's brief overview in the prologue to *The War* are black and white images of soldiers being held as prisoners of war in the Pacific theater. Sound is then used to signal a shift back to a reality before the war, namely the everyday melody of nature led by birds chirping is used once again, as the viewer is shown a photograph of Frazier's home in Fort Deposit, Alabama. The narrator states, "All Glenn Frazier would be able to do is cling to the hope that one day he could come back home" (Episode One). There is a moment of silence before the shot begins to fade to black, while a crescendo of an incredible bomb explosion sound effect takes center stage. The fact that Frazier's childhood home is in view, albeit fading away, while the sound effect of a bomb begins to crescendo serves as a rhetorical device to both aurally and visually activate anxiety in the viewer based on the sense that a way of life is about to be threatened by the war.

Although lasting only a moment, the full blast of the bomb explosion's sound effect is the only film component the viewer interacts with as the screen completely fades to black. As in the sound segue into the opening shot of the film, here the viewer is forced to become an active participant, in the sense that his/her imagination is provoked into providing an image corresponding to the terrible bomb blast. This kind of activation of

the imagination in viewers is not a new technique for Burns, as he has a pattern of using sound in similar ways in his other film projects.

First, the technique of carrying over sound effects from a scene into an interview scene of a talking head, for instance, was introduced in Burns' *The Civil War* (1990) documentary. In his interview with Cunningham published in *The Art of the Documentary*, Burns explains,

The unwritten rule of documentaries is that when you cut away, when you cut to a talking head—for example, we're in the middle of a battle—they cut out the effects. And as I was watching it, I'm going, something is wrong here, I want to be *in* this battle. The whole idea to tell history is to place people in the moment. So I said, run the battle sound effects with the image of the interview. (36)

Second, the technique of isolating the use of sound in order to activate the viewer's imagination was used in the opening of Burns' documentary on the rise of radio, *Empire of the Air: The Men Who Made Radio* (1992). Burns describes these sound techniques as used in his various documentaries as “a way of focusing attention” (37). He employs the technique of foregrounding sound in *Empire of the Air* in order to actualize his rhetorical intentions. As Burns states,

I realized that in *Empire of the Air*, we could begin to suggest [...] that active imagination [...] takes place, where there are no images. So for periods of time in the introduction, it just fades to black. And you hear information. You certainly hear music and sound effects. But *nothing's there*, which is, of course, terrifying for a filmmaker, who's all about

always supplying an image, and certainly terrifying to the powers that be [...]. But I think to varying degrees of success in that film, it does rivet your attention. And that was our intention. (37)

The second character the viewer meets in the formal introduction to *The War* is Sam Hynes. Incidentally, but no less importantly, Hynes' inclusion as a prominent character in *The War* also serves to disrupt the narrative frame as laid out in the opening shot of the documentary. Hynes is from Minneapolis, Minnesota, which is approximately 205 miles northeast of one of the four featured American towns—Luverne, Minnesota. Hynes inclusion, however, serves to provide a foundational belief regarding World War II on which the themes of *The War* are centered. His position is in fact central to Burns' documentary narrative. As Hynes states, "I don't think there is such a thing as a good war. There are sometimes necessary wars. And I think one might say just wars. And [...] I never questioned the necessity of that war, and I still do not question it. It was something that had to be done" (Episode One). As the title to Episode One, "A Necessary War," suggests, Burns' intention is not to focus on an analysis of the events which led to war. Instead, Hynes articulates the assumption on which Burns' documentary rests: World War II was inevitably necessary.

The fact that Hynes provides the underlying assumption of Episode One and of *The War* through a particular interview format is important to note. Burns' *The War* uses a mixture of both expository and interactive modes of representation as evidenced through Nichols' explanation of how the interview functions in both modes. The interview, Nichols states, "testifies to a power relation in which institutional hierarchy and regulation pertain to speech itself" (50). Moreover, he adds that "each choice of

spatio-temporal configuration between filmmaker and interviewee carries implications and a potential charge, an ideological valence, as it were, that deserves attention” (51). To begin, Hynes’ remarks at the start of *The War* are used in order to provide the film’s underlying assumption that war is indeed necessary. Nichols states that in this mode of representation “Textual authority shifts toward the social actors recruited: their comments and responses provide a central part of the film’s argument” (44). One may gather, therefore, that Hynes’ attitudes and beliefs are carefully selected in order to carry out the underlying assumption of *The War*.

Moreover, the specific type of interview technique Burns uses in *The War*, according to Nichols, is the “masked interview.” That is to say, “the filmmaker is both off screen and unheard” (51). In addition, in contrast to the seemingly more natural conversational style between characters as used in other “masked interview” constructions, Burns uses what Nichols calls “the common interview” (52). For Nichols, the general function of the more formal common interview is that “A specific agenda comes into play and the information extracted from the exchange may be placed within a larger frame of reference to which it contributes a distinct piece of factual information” (53). In the case of *The War*, the interviewees all provide information describing their experiences during World War II which in turn carry emotional resonance to the viewer.

The specific way the interviewee is positioned in relation to the viewer carries rhetorical significance as well. For instance, Nichols states, “[...] the common interview normally requires subjects to provide a frontal view of themselves and generally discipline their bodies to oblige the camera’s requirements regarding depth of field and angle of view” (53). In *The War*, interviewees conform to the formal interview

constraints of facing the camera in a “masked interview” setup; that is, both Burns and Novick remain off-screen and are unheard. Another rhetorical device of the common masked interview technique is what Nichols calls a “pseudomonologue” (54). As he states, “The visible presence of the social actor as evidentiary witness and the visible absence of the filmmaker [...] gives this form of the interview the appearance of a ‘pseudomonologue’” (54). “Like the musings directed to the audience in a soliloquy,” Nichols states, “the pseudomonologue appears to deliver the thoughts, impressions, feelings, and memories of the individual witness directly to the viewer” (54). Thus, Sam Hynes—only the second character introduced in the film—may be said to be delivering a pseudomonologue at the beginning of *The War* when the viewer is positioned to hear his thoughts about the necessity of World War II. The effect, states Nichols, is that “The filmmaker achieves a suturing effect, placing the viewer in direct relation to the interviewee, by absenting him- or herself” (54). This positioning encourages a greater level of investment in the characters of the film by the viewer, due to their seemingly direct address.

As the viewer is introduced to additional characters in *The War*, the following element of the interactive mode within the scope of the narrative structure becomes evident. As Nichols states, “The individual identity, autobiographical background, or idiosyncratic qualities of those interviewed become secondary to an external referent: some aspect of the historical world to which they can contribute special knowledge” (53). In the case of *The War*, the over forty men and women interviewed refer to an American experience of World War II which once again functions to support the assumption that the war was inevitable. For example, a voice-of-God narration immediately follows

Hynes' pseudomonologue regarding his belief—informed as it is by the fact that he is a World War II veteran—that there are “just wars.” A narrator states the following, while a series of photographs depicting war victims—women, children, and men—is shown:

The greatest cataclysm in human history grew out of ancient and ordinary human emotions: anger and arrogance, and bigotry, victimhood, and the lust for power. And it ended because other human qualities: courage, and perseverance, and selflessness, faith, leadership, and the hunger for freedom, combined with unimaginable brutality to change the course of human events. (Episode One)

Thus, the narration represents the emotional “aspect of the historical world” which Burns is interested in showcasing throughout his documentary on World War II. This approach is in turn carried out through the local and situated knowledge of the men and women, like Hynes, whom he selects and who speak to this overarching idea:

I'm not sure I can speak about why human beings in general go to war. I think that is a pretty large category. I can only speak about why eighteen year olds from Minneapolis go to war. They go to war because it's impossible not to. Because a current is established in the society so swift—flowing toward war that every young man who steps into it is carried downstream. (Episode One)

Hynes' stance, as illustrated by his statements in the formal introduction to *The War*, therefore serves as an example of the deliberate selection of interviewees based on how well their testimony supports Burns' particular vision. Regarding viewer expectations further, viewers of documentaries should know that the special knowledge

interviewees share with the viewer characterizes the distinguishing element of the interactive mode of representation. As Nichols states, “Viewers expect conditional information and situated or local knowledge” (56). However, these individual testimonies additionally serve the purpose of informing the themes in *The War*. “When the interactive film takes the form of oral histories strung together to reconstruct a historical period or event,” Nichols states, “the reconstruction is clearly the result of assembling these discrete pieces of testimony” (56). Novick speaks to this assembly process as it relates to her work on *The War*: “[...] the film doesn’t work if it is just a collection of great moments that we happened to collect. It has to have some larger purpose. How do you thread these disparate stories together so that the film, the whole series in its totality, adds up to more than the sum of its parts?” (“About the Series”).

Before examining the ways *The War* may be said to be operating under an expository mode of representation, we first need to address the intersection Nichols sees between the two modes of representation in documentary film:

Although such films [*In the Year of the Pig, Who Killed Vincent Chin?*] continue to make a case about the historical world, just as an expository documentary might, they do so in a distinctive manner. Both the specific ways and means individuals have of telling their part of a story and the filmmaker’s tactics for combining each account into a larger picture draw our attention. We shuttle between these two points of authority, authorship, and rhetorical suasion. (53)

Burns, in his interview with Fabrizio on *Utah NOW*, speaks about his use of both traditional and creative narrative elements in his films. Burn’s use of both traditional and

creative documentary film components points to the expository and interactive modes of representation found in his films.

For example, Fabrizio asked Burns when it was that he began to use the narrative device of using letters in his documentaries. Burns responded with the following:

From the very beginning. [...] it's usually just a third person narrator. It's called in our business "The Voice of God." The person who's just on high. And it's sort of people giving you homework or telling you what you should know. But I thought that [...] you could engage in what I call the "first person chorus..." regular people writing, what they sounded like in their letters, newspaper accounts, the military dispatches, whatever it is, and mix that in with the third person voice. (Burns *Utah NOW* interview)

Although letters, as do interviews, serve to provide individual "situated or local knowledge" to offset the suggested objectivity of the voice-of-God documentary film convention, these interactive mode elements function rhetorically within a larger argument designed by the filmmaker. Hynes' pseudomonologue, as delivered in the masked interview at the beginning of *The War*, thus serves as an example of testimony chosen for its rhetorical support of Burns' general stance on World War II. As Nichols states, "Exposition can accommodate elements of interviews but these tend to be subordinated to an argument offered by the film itself" (37).

In addition, Nichols states, "The voices of others are woven into a textual logic that subsumes and orchestrates them. They retain little responsibility for making the argument, but are used to support it or provide evidence or substantiation for what the

commentary addresses” (37). Burns explicitly reveals his views regarding the inevitability of World War II in his interview with Fabrizio. He states,

I think there is a tendency as artists that you can make a great anti-war statement and yet you're confronted with the fact that wars are very much a part of what human beings do to solve their problems. And more to the point, there's lots of wars that actually had to be fought. I mean I've made two of them; the Civil War had to be fought. This war obviously had to be fought. [...] But this is the worst war ever and we need to remind people what wars are actually about. It's turning these young men, the only people we can get to do this stuff, impressionable young men and now women [...] and send them [into] harm's way and hope to God that we're in the right and that they survive [...] worst of all, they don't always survive [...]. Sam [Hynes] is absolutely right that human beings will not, not go to war. Then we just have to be sure that it is, as he says in the opening moments of this film, a necessary war. (*Utah NOW* interview)

Based on Burns' remarks, the viewer of *The War* is from the onset made to operate from an assumption that war is inevitable.

And according to Nichols, this type of viewer expectation is in fact a rhetorical element at work in an expository mode of representation. He states, “The viewer of documentaries in the expository mode generally holds expectations that a commonsensical world will unfold in terms of the establishment of a logical, cause/effect linkage between sequences and events” (37). Burns relies on these viewer expectations as evidenced by his reliance on Hynes' declaration that World War II was a necessary war,

rather than foregrounding his own decision to make that belief central to his film's narrative structure. Nichols provides particularly relevant examples to illustrate the rhetorical power of this type of viewer expectation: "Recurrent images or phrases function as classic refrains, underscoring thematic points or their emotional undercurrents, such as the frequent montages of artillery fire and explosions in combat documentaries that stress the progression of a battle, its physical means of implementation, and its human cost" (37).

Another element of the expository mode of representation in documentary film present in Burns' *The War* is taking a "poetic perspective" toward historical events, even, as Nichols states, "if these views [come] to seem romantic or didactic" (32-3). As examples, Nichols refers to the work of documentary filmmakers "Flaherty, Jennings, and Wright, among others," who "sought to promote a social or collective subjectivity based on these often taken-for-granted cornerstones of middle-class life ['enterprise and valor, reserve and determination, compassion and civility, respect and responsibility'] and a humanistic-romantic sensibility" (36). The documentary film conventions of sound, image, character, and narrative structure can therefore and indeed all work to present a poetic perspective of the four towns which Burns selected to feature in *The War*.

During a brief historical overview describing the United States' participation and casualty rate in World War II—compared to other countries'—for instance, the voice-of-God narrator states that every town in America was affected by the war. The use of selected images is also important to note here. A black and white photograph depicting rows and rows of troops in the foreground and the Champs-Élysées in the background is onscreen when the narrator states the following: "The American economy only grew

stronger as the fighting went on, and by the time it ended, the United States would be the most powerful nation on earth. And a once insolated and insular people would find themselves at the center of world affairs” (Episode One). The very next series of images is of the four featured towns: Luverne, Minnesota; Sacramento, California; Waterbury, Connecticut; and Mobile, Alabama. In the commentary to Episode One, Burns marks the progression, both in the film’s script and with the images representing a broad entity—the United States—to the more specific—the four towns, with the following comment: “And here becomes how we do our film, right now we introduce what’s different” (Episode One).

So before the film proper begins after the prologue and formal introduction, the title screen featuring a photograph of Burns’ father in uniform fades to black, and the viewer is once again presented with the sounds of nature. The next image is of the well-kept porch of a house with flowers out front. Visually, the house is bathed in the soft, romantic hue of sunset. The viewer then learns it is a house in Luverne, Minnesota. Unlike the rest of the scenes in Episode One, this first scene features the subtitle “The Four Towns.” Using an inter-title here serves both to emphasize the narrative structure of the film and to promote this important section introducing the featured towns of the film.

From the accompanying commentary, the viewer learns that in each of Burns’ previous documentaries, each chapter is introduced through an inter-title on the screen. So, initially, the inter-title for chapter four, “How Did This Happen?” was included, but Burns decided to delete it. He explains why: “We kicked [it] out [because] it was unnecessary scaffolding and false work. And [we] said with the exception of the very first inter-title, “The Four Towns,” and the last one at the very end of Episode Seven, we

would do without the interstitial things so that the experiences became paramount” (Episode One). Despite the absence of text in the form of the inter-titles, Burns continues to mark the passage from one chapter to the next by other means. Other tools he uses to mark this change are visual, e.g., fading the last scene in a chapter to black, changing images to conclude the themes of one chapter to an image which introduces the ideas of the subsequent chapter; and aural, e.g., marking a shift through a dramatic change in music and/or sound effects.

To open the film, Tom Hanks reads a piece from the *Rock County Star Herald*, a newspaper column written by Al McIntosh, an important character in *The War*. Hanks reads the following which represents the opening quotation of *The War*:

Luverne, Minnesota. August 1941. Ms. Agot Ryland who is in town visiting her brother knows what it is to see vast sections of a city ripped to ruin by German bombs. And she remembers the nights that London burned, how she could read a letter by the unbelievable glare of the far off flames. She knows what it is to have high explosive bombs blast their big craters right outside the doorway of the shelter in which she was sleeping. She has had her best friends killed. Looking out at the peaceful countryside from the Thompson porch, she said it was hard to believe that the rest of the world was at war. (Episode One)

In a September 13, 2007 interview with Michael McCall writing for *American Profile*, Burns states that he discovered the writings of McIntosh while conducting research for *The War*. McCall states, “Burns came across the archives of the local newspaper, The Rock County Star Herald, and the sweeping, profoundly resonant, World War II-related

columns of editor Al McIntosh, whose poignant chronicles during the conflict set the exact tone that Burns had been looking for” (“Ken Burns”).

In addition, McCall quotes Burns on the discovery of McIntosh’s writings: “‘We read his columns and thought, ‘Oh my God, here’s our Greek chorus.’ His writing is the single greatest archival discovery we’ve made in 30 years of doing this kind of work” (“Ken Burns”). To further emphasize the role McIntosh’s words play in *The War*, McCall quotes Burns stating, “‘Al’s words are the first heard and the last heard in the series. I can’t overstate his importance to the way we tell this story” (“Ken Burns”). McIntosh, states Burns in the commentary, “‘becomes in a way the Greek chorus of the film. If the prologue about Glenn Frazier and the introduction sets us up, the film really begins at this moment with this quote” (Episode One).

Before continuing on to discuss the inclusion of Luverne, Minnesota, in the documentary, it is important to note the rhetorical effect of having someone like actor Tom Hanks read the all-important opening quotation for *The War*. Due to the cultural impact of Steven Spielberg’s blockbuster, *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and of Tom Hanks’ principal role as Captain John H. Miller in that film, audiences of *The War* are likely to grant the film a heavy dose of credibility, or ethos, simply by the inclusion of Hanks’ voice-over. In *The Art of Documentary*, Cunningham asks Burns why he “cast[s] celebrities to read the voiceover of everyday citizens’ diaries and letters” (34). Burns responds, “‘First of all, I don’t cast celebrity, I cast talent. [...] People who are in my films are extremely talented people who also happen to be, in many cases, celebrities” (34). Burns stresses that he seeks to avoid casting celebrities with the intention of distracting his audience with celebrity, e.g., “‘Oh, isn’t that Arnold Schwarzenegger reading the

thing?” (34). He claims that the “hyperaware” viewer might identify a celebrity voiceover in his films, but “mostly, you’re struggling to hear what they say. These people are so good they inhabit the words” (34). While this may be true, it could be easily argued that most viewers today need not be hyperaware in order to recognize the voice of superstar actor Tom Hanks.

So the film finally begins with the small farming town of Luverne, Minnesota, which is one of the four locales highlighted in *The War*. In general, Burns points to geography as a criteria for selecting the towns he did: “They [the four towns] are sort of haphazardly chosen but with some method to our madness. There is a northeast town, there is a southern town, there is a western town and there is a Midwestern town” (Burns “About the Series”). Burns adds a disclaimer regarding the selection of the particular four towns chosen. He states,

We understood that we couldn’t be all things to all people. There were just so many stories, so many battles, so many campaigns, so many constituencies that could not be included, but were representative enough that we get a sense of the totality of human experience that goes into a war. The poet William Blake said that you could find the universe in a grain of sand. So we essentially were looking for an American universe in four small towns. (Burns “About the Series”)

The American universe Burns sought, while encompassed through the locales of the four towns he eventually chose, is truly represented by the characters which drew him there.

In general, Burns states that the basic element he focuses on while constructing a narrative is character. As he states, “biography is the constituent building block, I believe,

of narrative. That's just a choice I've made. You need to be communicating about the lives of other people all the time, and that becomes the bricks. There's other mortar, but characters are the bricks of making a narrative" (Cunningham 35). In the case of Luverne, Minnesota, fighter pilot Quentin Aanenson is the brick representing Burns' narrative move to include the small town. After meeting Aanenson in the Washington, D.C., area—where he lived—they discovered he was from Luverne (Burns interview *Utah NOW*). While conducting research at the archives in Luverne, they made the other discovery of Al McIntosh's writing (Burns interview *Utah NOW*). These characters, in addition to Luverne's geographic location, served as the criteria used for its selection.

Jim Sherman, from Luverne, is the third talking head of *The War*. Sherman was six years old when the U.S. entered World War II. During his introduction, he speaks of Luverne as a "close knit community" and a place where "everybody knew pretty much everybody else in town" (Episode One). Burns comments that Sherman functions as "[...] one of the important anchors, a kind of emotional [anchor] of the film that give[s] us a sense of what Luverne was like" (Episode One). Another important way Burns chooses to describe Luverne is through the inclusion of an image of a text titled "The Cross Roads Of The World/Luverne, Minn. 1938" (Episode One). Burns states that this text functions as a "magnificent sort of jingoistic, wonderful self-promoting view of Luverne" (Episode One). This self-promoting view works to place Luverne as "the center of the world. And why not?" Burns states, "Every human being thinks they're the center of the universe; why can't Luverne, Minnesota, feel the same way?" (Episode One).

Burns chose to approach the retelling of World War II through four towns representing four regions of the United States, and more importantly, through characters

who led him to the particular four towns he features. Before coming across the writings of Al McIntosh, editor of the *Rock County Star Herald*, Burns was drawn to Luverne by former resident and WWII pilot Quentin Aanenson. Quentin Aanenson, the fourth talking head of *The War*, is introduced in Episode One in tandem with one of the most powerful rhetorical appeals used throughout the documentary—the pathos evoked through the documentary film’s main musical theme “American Anthem.” Before Quentin is introduced, a black and white photograph of a man and young boy walking across a wide field is onscreen as the theme music first begins to play. Burns states in the commentary, “And this is the first moment that we’re introducing you to the main theme of our film: ‘American Anthem’ by Gene Scheer. It will be played, I think, more than any other tune in the series—very soft, and in the background, but nonetheless central to what we think is the emotional, beating heart of the series” (Episode One). After the narrator explains that the Aanenson family owned a 120-acre farm just outside Luverne, Burns identifies Aanenson as one of his film’s “major star[s]” (Episode One). Burns states that Aanenson “will, in later episodes, take over our film—in the best possible sense of the word” (Episode One). It is important to note that Burns claims Aanenson will “take over” the film, once again masking his own role as a director and producer very much in control of choosing Aanenson’s story in the first place and then how much time it receives throughout the series.

While Burns states that “biography is the constituent building block [...] of narrative,” *The War* moves from Luverne, Minnesota to the second town introduced in Episode One—Sacramento, California. Lynn Novick explains in the commentary one reason why Sacramento was chosen: “[...] we felt like it was a town you could pick that

you could get to know. It was small enough that you could really understand even though it was bigger than Luverne” (Episode One). Burns also identifies the size of a town as among the many criteria for choosing a location to feature in his film. In his interview with Fabrizio, Burns states, “We wanted to pick cities, towns really, that our audience would have no associations with. And the filmmakers would have no associations with. We would come in completely free of preconceptions” (Burns interview *Utah NOW*). Interestingly, Burns follows up his reasoning for making the choices he made with this comment: “I mean I wish I could tell you that it was just a dart on the map. Because that would have been the perfect way to do it” (Burns interview *Utah NOW*). Geoffrey C. Ward, writer of *The War*, echoes Burns in an interview with Allen Barra in *American Heritage*. He states, “The subject is so vast we needed some simple organizing principle, and four towns seemed like a good one. But the war was so universally felt that I suspect we would have had the same impact if we’d thrown darts at a map” (Barra).

Burns, Novick, and Ward all describe an involved process used to select the towns which were eventually chosen. However, both Burns and Ward allude to the desire to have instead used darts arbitrarily marking a map to select the small sample of four towns to represent the American experience of World War II. Although their comments were perhaps delivered in a nonchalant and lighthearted manner, they point nonetheless to a potential lack of awareness of the intense rhetorical effects of these “arbitrary” choices on a national audience. This seeming carelessness is somewhat surprising coming from a Ken Burns production team which has seen the economic effects, for instance, reaped by locations featured in one of Burns many productions. In addition to suggesting that a random selection process would have been just as effective, Ward’s comments also

suggest that World War II was “universally felt” by all Americans. The film’s script states in the formal introduction, namely, that World War II “grew out of ancient and ordinary human emotions [...], and it ended because other human qualities: courage and perseverance, and selflessness, faith, leadership, and the hunger for freedom, combined with unimaginable brutality to change the course of human events” (Episode One). When combined with Ward’s comments, the script points to a reductive explanation for a rather complex and uniquely felt experience, to explain their selection of the four principal sites for the documentary.

Earl Burke, the fifth talking head of *The War*, describes Sacramento before the U.S. entered the war: “It was a tremendous time. Everybody knew each other. All [...] ethnic groups were just perfect” (Episode One). Burns subtly introduces class distinctions in the U.S. during the 1940s with Burnett Miller, the sixth talking head, when the narrator states, “18-year-old Burnett Miller lived with his family in a comfortable neighborhood at 3643 West Lincoln Avenue” (Episode One). The word “comfortable” clues the viewer in to Miller’s middle-class status.

Another important introduction takes place with the Sacramento segment in *The War*—Japanese Americans. As Burns states on the program *Utah NOW*, he wanted to showcase the Japanese American story because they

unlike the [...] German or Italian Americans, were interned in ten inland relocation centers, internment camps, concentration camps, some people called them. And then the men later recruited as cannon fodder in [a] specific combat duty [unit] rather than a branch of the service. And we wanted to tell that story and didn’t want a familiar town like Seattle or

Portland, San Francisco or LA or San Diego and picked Sacramento.

(Burns Interview *Utah NOW*)

The seventh talking head, Sasumu Satow, first talks about his mother and father: “My mother didn’t speak English. My father spoke broken English” (Episode One). Satow next talks about his relationship to baseball and states, “As a youngster, by the age of by eight or nine [...], I used to walk down the railroad track to a place called Mills. And Mills had a semi-pro baseball team. And so I grew up in a sort of baseball environment, I guess” (Episode One). While Satow is speaking, archival film in color of a couple of baseball games in action is shown. During this shot, Novick states in the commentary, “All-American game played by everybody in Japanese American and every other background” (Episode One). It is interesting to note that of all the details gleaned from Satow’s childhood, his association with the “all-American” game of baseball is one of the primary facts that is emphasized.

The third featured town, Waterbury, Connecticut, is introduced with a lively upbeat tune and an aerial photograph of downtown. The narrator introduces the town with the following statement: “In Waterbury, Connecticut, on the banks of the Naugatuck River, a skilled workforce, mostly immigrants and immigrants’ children, turned out screws and washers and buttons [...]. Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, its citizens had proudly called their town ‘Brass City’” (Episode One). The two characters from Waterbury featured in this “Four Town” scene both represent immigrant groups—Ray Leopold, “the son of a Jewish immigrant from Latvia,” and Olga Ciarlo—“The Ciarlo family lived at 1032 North Main Street, in the Italian section of town” (Episode One). In his brief opening remarks, Leopold highlights the highly skilled workforce: “There were

individuals there who could do one ten thousandth of an inch on anything” (Episode One). Ciarlo also highlights the business entrepreneurialship of the Italian community: “Well, Waterbury where we lived there were a lot of Italian people. They had made a good business for themselves and were very well liked. We had a wonderful neighborhood” (Episode One).

The fact that the fourth town, Mobile, Alabama, is introduced through the “American Anthem” music is evidence of its importance to the narrative of *The War*. In fact, Burns states in the commentary, “And now we return to the American Anthem theme, and introduce the final town, Mobile, which was a gold mine of a city for us” (Episode One). Burns explains on the program *Utah NOW* what led him to Mobile: “We’d read a memoir by [...] Eugene Sledge about his harrowing experience on Peleliu [...] and Okinawa [...]. And arrived in Mobile where he was from [...] just after he had passed away. Very upset and unhappy, we were able to get someone, the great actor Josh Lucas to read his memoir” (Burns Interview *Utah NOW*). Burns then explains that Sledge’s son introduced him to his father’s best friend, Sid Phillips, and his sister, Katharine Phillips—both would become major characters in *The War* (Burns Interview *Utah NOW*). The selection of Mobile is further evidence that Burns and his team prioritized characters that would be able to tell the stories they wanted to tell before honing in on location.

Another thematic thread of the narrative taken up in the section on Mobile is that of race relations. As Burns states in the commentary on why Mobile was a gold mine of a city for his team, “[...] of course, at the heart—always—of American history is the tension about race, and [it] was not absent in Mobile” (Episode One). The narrator states

that “Once a center of cotton and slave trading, Mobile was best known for its azalea festival and its leisurely southern air” before introducing the tenth talking head of *The War*, John Gray. The narrator states, “John Gray and his family lived on the south side of town [...]. He would soon be asked to fight a war for freedom though his own country’s definition of freedom did not include him” (Episode One). John Gray then provides testimony to this fact when he states, “Whites and blacks got along pretty good as long as they had the status quo. But you could not eat at the counter at Woolworth. You had to go down to the end and order your sandwich and take it out [...] to eat” (Episode One).

The commentary by both Novick and Burns regarding Gray is important to note due to the fact that it betrays a narrow perception of people of color. As Novick states, “I think John Gray really has a very deep understanding of all those things [tensions about race], and it’s not as simple as sometimes you might think he—he could see pretty deeply into all of it” (Episode One). First, Novick suggests that Gray’s style of communication might lead some people to draw the conclusion that he offers a simplistic understanding of race relations. Novick’s conclusion, however, is based on the results of comparing a way of communication, or storytelling, with which she is familiar, to Gray’s, and then assuming that a “simpler” style cannot offer a deep comprehension. Second, it is remarkable that Novick—a white woman, who according to her biography web page on the PBS web site, “was born in London in 1962 and grew up in New York City” (“About the Series”)—positions herself as able to evaluate how effectively a black man growing up in the South is able to understand racial tension—e.g., “[...] he could see pretty deeply into all of it” (Episode One). Burns, on the other hand, is surprised by Gray’s acumen. As he states, “I love the fact that he was an amazing fount of quotes—Biblical and

Shakespearean and other—he knew poems. And [...] really was such a great surprising find for us” (Episode One).

The eleventh and final talking head for the “Four Towns” section is Katharine Phillips from Mobile. Phillips, like Earl Burke from Sacramento, recalls a wonderfully idyllic childhood growing up in the United States. As she states, “On a hot summer evening—of course there was no air conditioning—[...] daddy would load us in the car, and we’d drive downtown to Brown’s Ice cream [...], and then we’d drive out to Arlington and park out by the bay and sit there and enjoy the sea breeze. [...] It was a wonderful way to grow up” (Episode One).

The “Four Towns” section wraps up with the nostalgic glow of the lights on, inside a home, as night begins to fall, with the sound of nocturnal insects roused from their sleep. This shot fades to black before the next shot of the vibrant blue hue of ocean surrounding the underwater wreckage of an airplane onscreen. In the commentary, Burns explains the choice to include this shot: “it [underwater airplane wreckage] was to me the tangible manifestation of what went on. We’ve cleaned up the world—there’s very little places that still remind us of what [...] went on, and this sort of sense of us being submerged now that we’ve wrapped this war in bloodless gallant myth and we now have to uncover it, was part of this. And brings us to the moment after nineteen minutes of when it all begins to happen” (Episode One).

After the prologue, formal introduction, and the “Four Towns” section, the film marches on with the next section, beginning with the image of the underwater wreckage with the superimposed title, “Episode One: A Necessary War.” The next sequence of archival black and white film footage is of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Burns’

commentary for this section on the bombing of Pearl Harbor reflect his understanding of various categories of “Americans.” As Burns states,

So there’s a traditional way of telling the story of perhaps the most important date in American history—December 7<sup>th</sup>—and it’s usually told from the American point of view—either from the servicemen who experienced the devastating attack or from people on the mainland, or sometimes from the Japanese point of view, but never, I think, from a Japanese American point of view on the island. (Episode One)

Burns is referring to the testimony of Daniel Inouye, the twelfth talking head of *The War* who was seventeen and a Red Cross volunteer when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor.

In his commentary, Burns distinguishes between the American perspective of Pearl Harbor and the Japanese American perspective. We learn from the narrator that Inouye is “the son of a Japanese immigrant” (Episode One). Thus, Burns makes the distinction between Americans and Japanese Americans based along either racial or cultural lines. Burns later states in the commentary that Inouye “realized as the attack [on Pearl Harbor] begins that his life is about to intersect with a cataclysm that is going on elsewhere in the world, but a cataclysm that is about to draw *his* country inexorably into the biggest struggle in the history of human kind” (Episode One, emphasis mine). In one regard, Inouye is considered American, but he is still under a different category, according to Burns. Later, after the end of Episode One, Burns changes his tune and argues against distinct categories of Americans in the context of Mexican Americans with his comments on the Latino addition to the episode.

This change in tune by Burns notwithstanding, in order to create a sense of intimacy with the characters in his film, Burns approaches the retelling of the attack on Pearl Harbor in *The War* with the first-person account of Daniel Inouye. Another strategy Burns uses to create a sense of intimacy and immediacy between the viewer and the subject matter is sound effects. Specifically, the black and white photographs of the attack on Pearl Harbor are enhanced through the addition of sound effects which Burns hopes cause the images to come alive for the viewer. As he states,

And the effects become a hugely important thing that take[s] away, in the case of [...] still photograph[s] like [these], the arms length relationship you sometimes have as if it was a slideshow [...]. But the forcefulness of the effects and the complication of the sound effects track in its totality with the music and commentary have a chance of [...] reinvesting meaning in images that may have, over time, grown stale and familiar.

(Episode One)

So after Inouye's introduction in which he describes his experience of the attack on Pearl Harbor, Burns introduces Sid Phillips, Katharine Phillips' younger brother, who learned of the attack from a radio address while in Mobile. In addition to using aural strategies such as sound effects to create a connection with viewers, throughout the commentary Burns also describes his use of literary forms and conventions:

This scene—very much like the four towns scene, is a kind of continuation of what would be called in a Shakespearean play the dramatist personae, the introduction of all the characters that are [going] to be part of this film. [...] And we begin to collect throughout Episode One most of the people

we're going to meet in the series—not all, and some very important people will come later, but we'll begin to sort of collect a variety of characters who will populate this complicated drama in which we are trying to interweave forty or fifty lives in front of this great event called World War II. (Episode One)

And one of the lives Burns and his team interweave in *The War* is that of Japanese American, Asako Tokuno.

Tokuno is the first character during Burns' dramatist personae to become emotional during the recollection of a memory at the time the United States entered World War II. As Tokuno states,

That was about the time we had finals. It was my first semester at UC, Berkeley. [...] I travelled by bus to go to school, and as I'd stand on that corner, I would get this terrible feeling that people were watching—looking at me. And you just get so self-conscious you know—so much more aware. I had never been aware of my ethnicity, and so, that was very strange. That was the first time I really felt, you know, that this was not good. (Episode One)

Novick, who conducted most of the interviews for *The War*, states in the commentary that sometimes interviewees would not expect for certain emotions to resurface while recounting a memory (Episode One). Novick states, “When Asako Tokuno started telling this story [waiting for a bus], she got very emotional remembering how people would look at her and [...] realizing all of a sudden her Japanese American identity could be complicated. [...] But she didn't expect it. It was so long ago she thought she was safely

[...] past those feelings” (Episode One). So, through Tokuno’s testimony, Burns adds another instance of history showing up in the present moment.

Tokuno’s emotional recollection of a painful memory is also significant in that it specifically describes an experience produced by an ethnic identity. In *Against Amnesia*, Nancy J. Peterson expands Fredric Jameson’s assertion that “History is what hurts” through her work on women writers of color. Peterson states that contemporary women writers of color “have approached history as a wound” (1). Moreover, as she states,

“History is what hurts” for these writers [...] because the history they remember is painful, because minority histories have never come into full cultural consciousness, because mainstream American history is so relentlessly optimistic and teleological that it has become painfully difficult to articulate counterhistories [...], and because postmodern culture works against the sustained engagement with memory and commitment to complexity that is crucial for these histories. (1)

So it is significant that Tokuno is the first talking head of *The War* to visibly show this relationship to history as a wound. Although she demonstrates a desire to connect with the audience by using the phrase “you know” after describing the painful self-consciousness due to her ethnicity, it is questionable whether a large percentage of the PBS-viewing audience does in fact know—the way she knows—what she is describing. Tokuno’s unique pain is one shared by many if not most Mexican Americans, Native Americans, African Americans, among other ethnic minority groups in the U.S., and clearly represents an experience which merits a critical understanding by all Americans.

Another important chronological disruption occurs approximately thirty minutes into Episode One. After Burns covers the attack on Pearl Harbor, he decides he needs to address the question of how World War II came to be. As he states in the commentary,

How if you begin a film on World War II at Pearl Harbor as we necessarily did after spending twenty minutes setting the table with Glenn Frazier and the introduction and the four towns, [do you] go out and answer the question: how did it happen? [...] And so we had to backtrack in a back story that needed to bring in the last eight or so years of international history from Europe to Asia. (Episode One)

Novick then explains that the idea of including a broad geopolitical coverage may be credited to the efforts of writer Geoffrey Ward, when she states, “condensing [...] this complicated international history into sentences that you can understand while you [are] looking at this complicated footage was genius as well” (Episode One).

Burns takes the opportunity to once again set the distinction he states he sets up with the opening shot of the entire series, namely that *The War* follows the tenets of a poem rather than a textbook. As Burns states,

I think [...] that makes clear what we’ve tried to do throughout—that this was not going to be a textbook that would have a definitive nature to it, but more like an epic poem, which in a couple of lines of verse or a stanza you can actually communicate powerfully complex information. And not feel obligated to make it an entire chapter as this would be in a textbook or in another documentary about the causes, capital C, of the war. (Episode One)

Thus, using the epic poem as a structuring device and being uninterested in the causes of war also serve Burns' underlying assumption that World War II was inevitable.

Specific moments of chapter nine, titled "Death March," halfway through Episode One, are also important to note. First, despite spending the first hour of Episode One "setting the table," it is at the beginning of this section wherein Burns feels the film has truly begun:

I know that Pearl Harbor is the beginning. I know the enlistment, [...] I know that the battle of the Atlantic is all part of it, but somehow when we come [...] to the Philippines and we begin to engage in real battle, that our film in a way has begun. That the full force of how we will do [sound and visual] effects, the complication of the story—you know, Glenn Frazier is no longer just a patriot fighting, but it becomes what war is about—the thing, the very thing that we wanted to do in this film, begins right here.

(Episode One)

What Burns is referring to with his remarks about Frazier is the moment when Frazier explains that his initial desire, which was punctuated primarily by patriotism, i.e., "like everybody else, you say 'Good 'Ole United States [...] we're gonna fight. We're gonna whip these Japanese in a matter of six months or so,'" shifted to the realization that his aim was "pretty much to protect myself and my fellow Americans. And I think I was fighting more to save my own life" (Episode One).

Both Frazier's testimony and voice-of-God narration are used to describe the situation for American troops stranded on the Bataan Peninsula while they received assurance from General MacArthur that help was on the way. It is within this historical

context that Burns inserts the “epic lines of verse” as quoted from the diary of the Secretary of War, Harry Stimpson: ““There are times when men must die”” (Episode One). The images shown while this verse is read are of archival film footage of rows upon rows of white crosses dug into the dirt with those in the foreground bearing “Unknown No. 14” and “Unknown No. 15,” followed by another cross with the text “Died 2-3-42 Bataan.” The next white cross to be shown has the name “Pedro Vargas, Pvt., Co. G,” written on it in black text. The cross bearing the name of Pedro Vargas, positioned directly in the center of the frame, is onscreen and begins to fade into another cross as the line “men must die” is read by the narrator. Although the images of crosses are film footage, the rhetorical implications of the use as well as the composition of the frames constituting this film footage are similar to that of archival still photographs.

In “The Rhetoric of the Frame: Revisioning Archival Photographs in *The Civil War*,” Judith Lancioni argues that Burns’ techniques of mobile framing and reframing function as visual rhetoric to advance his claim that “history is about the confrontation of the present with the past” (406). According to Lancioni, Burns achieves this effect through mobile framing i.e., allowing the camera to slowly move over the still photograph and reframing i.e., focusing on particular aspects of the photograph before or after revealing the entire image because these techniques encourage audiences to be active rather than passive viewers. In addition, Lancioni argues that “Both mobile and reframed shots have rhetorical implications because they invite viewers to recognize that the photographs are versions of the past that can be evaluated for the ideological implications of their composition” (401). As examples, Lancioni draws upon Burns’ application of the mobile framing and reframing techniques in *The Civil War* on several

photographs which—in their entirety—depict slave life in America in such a way as to disregard the individuality and family ties of African Americans.

As Lancioni states, “In deconstructing these photographs, the film invites viewers to question their own formulation of abstractions like individuality, community, family, and freedom” (399). Moreover, Lancioni states, “This deconstruction is crucial to the depiction of the slave experience because it can stimulate audience awareness that these concepts are absent from archival photographs of African Americans” (399). Lancioni argues that *The Civil War* “crafts a polysemic critique that discloses the alternative (and sometimes contradictory) meanings latent in the visual artifacts it explores” (411). In addition, she explains that “Invention, in the rhetorical sense, involves the filmmakers’ selection of archival photographs and their pinpointing of those issues [...] that have salience for modern audiences” (412). However, she does not foreground or explore the notion that Burns’ own beliefs, values, and assumptions meaningfully guide precisely how the mobile framing and reframing techniques are applied.

Also, as previously noted, reception studies have traditionally been concerned primarily with normative audiences, which Lancioni also adopts with her references to “audiences” and “viewers.” She only briefly states, at the conclusion of her analysis, “Of course, ethnic, class, gender, and racial differences make it impossible to assume that all viewers interpret a text in exactly the same way” (411-12). It is crucial, however, to entertain a non-normative perspective over such a text as a Ken Burns historical documentary. Beginning an analysis such as Lancioni’s with such a non-normative perspective would offer a deeper critique of not only the ideological implications embedded within the still photographs, archival footage, narrative structure, and

characters found within a film, but also of the ideological implications of the filmmaker's own appropriation of these elements.

A couple of moments within the initial Episode One of *The War*—before the addition of the Latino soldiers' stories, offer an opportunity to build upon Lancioni's argument that Burns' rhetorical use of the frame advances the claim that history is indeed a part of the present. The shot featuring the grave of Pedro Vargas in the middle of Episode One is one such moment. It is significant that in the context of the Latino/a community protests over having been excluded from *The War*, one finds instances where Latinos/as are in fact briefly featured, albeit in silent and/or stereotypical ways. The shot of Pedro Vargas's white cross may, for a normative audience, successfully serve to evoke the emotions of anger and grief over the loss of so many lives in the Bataan Peninsula—"some men must die." However, the meaning of the shot stands to be considerably more nuanced when constructed from a Latino/a viewing audience's point of view.

Several useful ideas with which to begin considering a Latino/a perspective may be found in Toni Morrison's collection of essays, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. I specifically draw from her essays "black matters," "romancing the shadow," and "disturbing nurses and the kindness of sharks" as well as from remarks from the preface of her collection. Morrison investigates the relationship between what she calls the American "Africanist" presence within selected literary texts of canonized American literature. For Morrison, the term "Africanist" means, "the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, reading and misreading that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people" ("black matters" 6-7). Regarding normative and non-

normative audiences, Morrison offers the following insight as it relates to American literature: “For reasons that should not need explanation here, until very recently, and regardless of the race of the author, the readers of virtually all of American fiction have been positioned as white. I am interested to know what that assumption has meant to the literary imagination” (xii). Based on the rhetorical implications of Pedro Vargas’s inclusion in *The War*, it may be argued that the mostly white PBS audience and consumers of Burns’ historical documentaries had no doubt functioned to sustain his imagination regarding U.S. Latinos/as and their being little more than a silent and self-sacrificing constituency.

Burns’ telling use of Latinos in *The War*, that is, in the instances before he was forced to give them a somewhat more significant voice and story, conveys to viewers, especially Latino/a viewers, a meaningful but not necessarily a good understanding of their place within U.S. history and the U.S. imaginary. Morrison similarly explains how the inclusion of non-white characters within canonized American literary texts provides a critical subtext. As she states, “Linguistic responses to Africans serve the text by further problematizing its matter with resonances and luminations. [...] They provide paradox, ambiguity; they strategize omissions, repetitions, disruptions” (“disturbing nurses” 66). “In other words,” Morrison states, “they give the text a deeper, richer, more complex life than the sanitized one commonly presented to us” (66). One linguistic strategy “employed in fiction,” which Morrison outlines and which is particularly pertinent in relation to the shot of Pedro Vargas’ grave and cross, is what she calls the “economy of stereotype” (67). Morrison states, this linguistic strategy “allows the writer a quick and easy image without the responsibility of specificity, accuracy, or even narratively useful

description” (67). In the case of Burns’ eloquent yet efficient shot of Vargas’ cross, we have such a stereotype of how little use Burns had for Latinos.

Another way Latinos are featured in *The War* is through anonymous inclusion. During the formal introduction to *The War*, Novick’s comments regarding a particular photograph of a seemingly endless line of soldiers provide further information on their rationale behind having an anonymous kind of inclusion. As she states, “And this is these anonymous young men—who are not anonymous to their families, but in this picture, it’s [...] the line of troops stretching to infinity [which] shows you that each individual gets [a] part of this enormous [...] living being of the military [...], but they still are human beings, they’re still individuals” (Episode One).

An example of this anonymous inclusion of a Latino soldier in *The War* is suggested through a reader comment posted on a *San Antonio Express-News* blog hosted by Elaine Ayala: “Defend the Honor will protest Ken Burns’ SA visit” on March 23, 2009. Defend the Honor is a national grassroots organization created in February of 2007 to rally support during the protest over Burns’ controversial omission of Latinos/as in *The War*. Ayala’s column pertained to the planned presence of members of Defend the Honor at a screening of Burns’ latest film, *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*, in San Antonio, Texas. In response to the piece, a reader with the screen name “Danny Gonzalez” commented the following:

I feel for those Familias [sic] who are protesting the lack of Latians [sic] in Ken Burn's documentary 'The War'. And [while I] don't disagree with their position[,] [...] I have been fortunate and Blessed to have my own Dad, Fred Gonzales appear in this Documentary ! [...] although [sic] there

is no 'interview' portion involving my Dad, he appears on Disk #2 of Ken Burns Documentary. The Episode in which [he] appears in is titled, 'When Things Get Tough'. You can see my Dad clearly in that episode when the invasion of Italy is covered. The narrator says, "Boulder by boulder, hill by hill, the Allies battered [sic] their way through the German Defenses". You will then see 2 American Soldiers in close-up coming up a hill; as the 1st Soldier moves off screen, the 2nd Soldier comes up in full view, my Dad ! ! ! ("Defend the Honor")

This reader, although understanding the nature of the protests, is proud his father was included in a Burns documentary, despite his father not having a speaking role. As demonstrated by the ultimate inclusion of two Latinos soldiers with speaking roles, many in the Latino/a community were not satisfied with an anonymous inclusion.

In response to Novick's comment about the anonymous soldiers, Burns states the following in the commentary: "I think that's [...] the hallmark of what all of this is about, taking the particular and finding in the particular, the general. And having the general, but then isolating the particular in a moment so that we're all invested—deeply invested—in what happens" (Episode One). The issue for some viewers may be that the use of the reframing or mobile framing technique to isolate a Latino soldier's grave, for instance, carries rhetorical implications which suggest an investment that is not necessarily favorable and perhaps not what Burns imagined.

Moreover, Walter Benjamin, in "A Short History of Photography," states that "The illiteracy of the future,' someone once said, 'will be ignorance not of reading or writing, but of photography.' But must not a photographer who cannot read his own

pictures be no less accounted an illiterate? Will not the caption become the most important part of the photograph?” (75). Paula Rabinowitz answers Benjamin’s rhetorical question when she states that the caption “in cinema comes in the forms of voice-overs, intertitles, interviews, archival footage, montage, and so on” (125). The captions for the instances when Latinos appear in the original version of *The War* convey a limited understanding on the part of those responsible for producing it of the Latino/a war effort. The caption in the case of Vargas’ grave and cross does include voice-overs serving to represent Latino soldiers as cannon fodder—“some men must die,” even while it did not initially include the non-stereotypical interview presence among the forty or so talking heads representing the American experience of World War II.

To return to the chronological advancement of the narrative in Episode One, near the end of the initial version, we see that the narrative returns to the four towns to sum up the effects the first year of fighting in the war had. Although Burns in later interviews emphasizes the limited perspective of the four towns approach to adequately tell the story of Americans and World War II, in the commentary during this wrap up section of Episode One, he states the following: “And so, what we do is we round up our personal towns so the war has a real effect on this place, and this iconic main street that we’ll return to again and again, probably the most repeated image in the film, becomes our home, as well” (Episode One). The iconic main street to which Burns refers is that of Luverne, Minnesota. In light of Morrison’s study on the nature of the scarce and otherwise exploited American Africanist presence in American literature and the concomitant implications on white American writers’ imaginations, one wonders if Burns

could have imagined an iconic main street in El Paso, Texas, as his own home as well, for instance.

After two hours into the first episode of *The War*, Burns states in the commentary that the film, “In some ways [...] now begins in earnest” (Episode One). Moreover, he states, “the table setting that we have been doing for the last two hours is now over. We have now introduced you to a lot of our characters—there’s a lot more to be introduced, but we have sort of wound it up” (Episode One). This attention to structure is a distinct characteristic of Burns’ filmmaking style. In *The Art of the Documentary*, Burns speaks to this preference for structure in relation to the tenets of the spontaneous, captured-on-the-street, style of cinema verité. As he states, “It’s a very noble idea to capture the story on the fly without narration and without interviews, but I believe there’s an inherent limitation to it. It’s just not my style. I see really great verité films, but I have to work in a much more structured environment, and, I don’t think, any less true” (21).

The initial version of Episode One thus concludes with the main musical theme “American Anthem” performed by Norah Jones. Burns considers the verses and chorus of this song to function as an additional structuring device at work in *The War*. As he states in the commentary, “[...] this first verse and chorus at the end of Episode One [...] begins to be a table of contents of what we are going to see for the rest of the film” (Episode One). The statement displayed in the shot before the song begins is as follows: “By the end of 1942, after a year of war, more than 35,000 Americans in uniform had died. Before the war could end, ten times that many would lose their lives” (Episode One). While Jones sings the first line of “American Anthem”—“All we’ve been given by those who came before,” the archival film footage shown includes the black and white

images of paratroopers filling the skies. In another segment of archival film footage, the viewer sees a group of men handling and loading tank ammunition while Jones sings the verse, “What shall be our legacy, what will our children say?” (Episode One). The song answers itself with the next couple of verses and then with the final verse, “America, America, I gave my best to you” (Episode One).

It is also interesting to notice the progression of color used with the film footage as it corresponds to the song lyrics in this closing section. The archival film footage begins in black and white but then progresses to full color as soon as the last line of the chorus “America, America, I gave my best to you” is sung (Episode One). The image onscreen when the phrase “I gave my best to you” is sung is of a dead soldier more than half submerged in a slope of dirt and gravel (Episode One). And the final film footage consists of images bathed in the nostalgic hues of sunset orange as the silhouettes of two soldiers help a third who is unable to walk unaided.

The progression from black and white to full color and to the nostalgic glow of shadow and orange is suggestive of the argument Burns advances in *The War*. This argument, resting on the assumption that the war was inevitable and necessary, begins in the far reaches of memory, in black and white, before it resurfaces in color, as demonstrated by the visceral reactions to the memories in the present. After confronting the brutality and slaughter of World War II through the many images of the dead in Episode One, one can see that a higher point is advanced—that men were willing to heroically sacrifice everything for their country—“America, America, I gave my best to you.” After all, this song, as Burns previously states, conveys the “emotional heartbeat”

of the series, even as the series then draws to a close, as the scene fades to black and the song ends.

After a short pause, the viewer again hears the faint sound of birds chirping, followed by sounds of distant gunfire. The image that then comes into view is of a jungle backdrop, as the following statement is superimposed onscreen: “More than sixteen million American men and women would serve in uniform during the War. They came from everywhere and *each* had a story to tell” (Episode One). In the commentary, Burns explains the apparent restart of the episode when it was clearly concluded with the previous scene. As he states,

This is a new scene that we’ve added to the end of Episode One a little over a year after we finished the film. We became aware that some Hispanic groups were upset that the film had excluded Hispanics from it, and that had not been our intention or our desire, but we listened to their concerns and figured out a way that we could, without altering the content of our film, add new stories. In fact, we’re in the business of stories, so we felt, in some ways, that we had been thrown into the briar patch and had the luxury of having to tell new stories. So working with producer Hector Galán, we began to identify stories that we might tell that would add to this. (Episode One)

As evidenced through the conclusion of the previous section as well as the break in chronological order at the beginning of the next segment, Burns’ intention, as he stated—was to add new stories and not integrate them into the original narrative structure.

The previous scene had ended in December 1942, and the narrator states at the beginning of the add-on, “Back on November 4, 1942, as Sid Phillips and the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division continued to try to hold Henderson Field on Guadalcanal, a unique force began landing 31 miles to the east, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Marine Raider Battalion, best known as Carlson’s Raiders” (Episode One). This major disruption in the chronology of the narrative serves to show that the Latino characters were not integrated into the very structured original narrative. Although the handling of documentary film conventions, such as sound, image, and character, within the added segment are stylistically consistent with the rest of the episode, the basic yet tacky narrative move to simply tack on the Latino stories is evident. Burns states in the commentary that a connection to the rest of the episode is made through the referencing of Sid Phillips and the climax of Episode One, which is the Battle of Guadalcanal (Episode One). In addition to that narrative connection, Burns also uses photographs to tie the two parts together. As he states in the commentary, “[...] we repeat [...] images [from the previous scene] to tie it—to bind this story to the film that we finished a year ago” (Episode One).

After the setting in Guadalcanal is established through archival film footage and through the narration, the first Latino character, Bill Lansford, is introduced. The viewer hears the music of Spanish guitars before seeing a black and white photograph of a building with a banner across the entrance stating, “The Theatre of Mexican Pictures” (Episode One). The narrator then provides a brief biography stating that Lansford’s father was a policeman and was not involved in his son’s life, and that his mother, Rosalina Melendez, originally from Juarez, Mexico, but moved to California (Episode One). Lansford, who grew up in the Boyle Heights neighborhood in East Los Angeles, states

that he grew up speaking Spanish—learning English when he was fourteen, and because of this, he “was not really aware of the Anglo world at all” (Episode One).

After the Navy rejects him, Lansford decides to join the Marines. The narrator states, “At first, like many Latinos, he did not feel entirely welcome in the Marine Corps” (Episode One). Lansford describes his initial experience with the Marines thus:

I think it was Little Texas in the Marine Corps. And as you know, Texans and Mexicans weren't exactly bosom buddies in those days. As the war advanced and we went on through, these Texan guys began seeing that we weren't what they thought we were. And we began seeing that they weren't what we thought they were. And being Marines was a kind of a melting pot. And we all got together—it's like a mini-United States, you know, you got Jews, you got Italians, you got Indians. And they all learn to live together. (Episode One)

Lansford's sentiment therefore is that after a time and in the context of extreme conditions where lives were on the line, the “Texans” and “Mexicans” in the Marine Corps began to rethink their assumptions and attitudes about one another.

It is important to note a shift from the anonymous and voiceless inclusion of Latinos in the original version of *The War* to a more conscious treatment of Lansford's experience, for instance. While Lansford speaks about the initial discriminatory animosity that he and other Mexican Americans experienced in the Marine Corps, a black and white photograph of Lansford is onscreen. The shot is a closeup of his face. As Lansford continues to describe his particular experiences, the camera zooms out, and the viewer notices that the photograph is actually that of a group of men—the man directly

beside Lansford, in fact, is resting his arm on Lansford's shoulder. In this instance, the caption includes both interview testimony of a Latino soldier and an archival photograph of him as well as the application of the reframing technique wherein Lansford's visage is deliberately focused on before the rest of the men are introduced into the frame.

Significantly, Burns' different application of the reframing technique and of the interview, specifically in relation to this kind of Latino/a presence in *The War*, seems to have been directly the result of protests from the Latino/a community.

In this add-on, Burns takes the opportunity to highlight the fact that eventually, the two groups learned "to live together"—as well as to allude to his own successful handling of the protests from the "Hispanic" groups with the following statement in the commentary:

And yet he [Lansford] seems so much a part of the film. That is to say, what he is speaking to is universal human experiences. And he himself, as a Mexican American, now finds himself a part of a group of people whose identities are eliminated. That the very distinctions that we now spend so much time focusing on evaporated in basic training, and they became one unit. And that was of course the theme of our film; it is, of course, the thing that unites all of us. And I would suggest one of the reasons why we're ultimately victorious was that we were able to include so many different groups and work for a common purpose. (Episode One)

The "thing" Burns is perhaps ironically referring to in his comments above is simply survival—that the will to live provided the learning opportunity for white and Mexican American soldiers to function as a unit and which Lansford speaks about. Immediately

after his comments about the Marines serving as a “melting pot,” Lansford contradicts himself by laying out cultural distinctions unique to Mexican Americans. As he states, “The Latinos have a culture just as the Japanese had—you know their own form of Bushido code which is not as extreme, but certainly just as firm [...]. And that’s that they wanna prove that they’re up to whatever job is given to them. And they want to show that they’re as patriotic as anybody, as some blue-eyed blond guy” (Episode One).

In setting up the comparison between the Latino and Japanese cultural values of honor and patriotism, Lansford offers evidence against a “melting pot” phenomenon in the U.S. Armed Forces. In addition, Burns himself, as well as Novick, state in various interviews that from the start, they were interested in the unique experiences of both Japanese Americans and African Americans during World War II. For example, in a September 26, 2007 interview with Jeffrey Brown on the show *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*, Novick responds to the question about why Latinos were initially excluded, when from the outset there was an intention to think “in terms of groups and identity:”

There was. And, as we have said before, the reason for that was really that [...] their [Japanese American and African American] experiences are totally unique. There are no other groups that had the experiences that they had in the war, and their experiences are important for us to understand, in terms of the hypocrisy of our country fighting against tyranny and fascism and then turning 100,000 people, solely for the basis of their ancestry, and then expecting them to fight in the segregated infantry units. That—there's nothing else like that. That's unique in the history of the United States, I believe, and a very important and shameful episode that really felt we

would be remiss if we didn't include. And African Americans, in a slightly different way, being asked to fight for freedom in a segregated army, in a segregated country, as well—those are unique experiences. (Novick interview *NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*)

From the narrative and character choices Burns and Novick made in order to feature the experiences of Japanese Americans and African Americans during World War II, it more than appears contradictory for them to also state that “identities are evaporated” during basic training. There are numerous poignant examples from character testimony throughout *The War* which directly contradicts their claim that identity distinctions somehow evaporated after basic training.

While Bill Lansford is introduced through his association with Carlson’s Raiders, Pete Arias, the second Latino character to be included in *The War*, is introduced speaking about James Roosevelt, the president’s son, and second in command of the special combat group—Carlson’s Raiders. Also, while Lansford begins his speaking role while a photograph of him as a very young boy with his mother is presented to the viewer, in contrast, Arias begins his speaking role while the mobile framing technique is applied to move over a photograph of a group of three men to hone in on the face of James Roosevelt. Only after Arias first functions to provide further elaboration on the U.S. president’s son is his biography introduced. The narrator informs the viewer that Arias is a “farmer’s son from Los Angeles County [...] who had joined up to get away from home,” while mobile framing is applied to zoom in on a photograph depicting Arias as a young soldier (Episode One).

Through Lansford and Arias' testimony, that is, in addition to the requisite Burnsian use of documentary film conventions, the viewer learns of the guerrilla warfare tactics unique to a group like Carlson's Raiders. Lansford describes "chopping away at [them], and it was just that simple. It was chopping away pieces of an animal until the animal died" (Episode One). Arias recounts an event wherein he was the only survivor after his squad was ordered by the captain to cross a field, despite the squad leader's misgivings (Episode One). In addition, Lansford describes when Carlson extended the invitation to his men to kill Japanese prisoners of war after their own men had been tortured and killed—"we were supposed to be the good guys" (Episode One).

The conclusion of the revised version of Episode One of *The War* consists of a story Lansford tells wherein one of the men of his group is wounded by a single shot at night while on the island of Bougainville. Lansford recalls the gradual tortured ravings of the wounded soldier throughout the night, all the while he eventually hoped the man would just die so they could all get some sleep (Episode One). The last shot is of Lansford in the masked interview set up, stating, "We were so tired; we just wanted to sleep. When you wish a guy dead and it turns out to be your best friend, you know, it's the pits" (Episode One).

*Episode Six, "The Ghost Front" December 1944-March 1945*

As in Episode One, Episode Six begins with a prologue. In this instance, Ray Leopold of Waterbury, Connecticut, provides an anecdote which potentially serves as evidence for the underlying assumption set forth at the very beginning of the series, that

is, that World War II was a necessary war. Leopold describes learning from a German prisoner that the soldier was in fact familiar with Waterbury as a result of Hitler's plans to eventually rule America (Episode Six). Leopold's selection, based on this particular memory, placed as it is in the prologue, reinforces the notion that *The War* functions under Nichols's expository and interactive mode of representations. The fact that Burns chooses a first-person account rather than with voice-of-God narration signals the interactive mode; however, Leopold's story is instead chosen due to the fact that it serves to carry out the task of converging one of the film's overall assumptions.

The formal introduction to Episode Six is also structurally similar to Episode One in that it follows the disclaimer featured in the first shot, i.e., "This is a story of four American towns and how their citizens experienced that war" (Episode Six). Just as Sam Hynes disrupted the principal organizing principle set up around the stories of men and women from the four towns, in Episode Six, Paul Fussell, from Pasadena, California, does the same. Fussell's comments, as delivered through his masked interview, pertain to his description of the drudgery of daily life as a soldier. While Fussell talks about his experience, the musical track—a slow nostalgic tune—as well as the archival photographs of the war work together to create the mood.

In Episode Six, the scene titled "Pin Up" begins with black and white photographs of soldiers admiring worn photographs or illustrated images of pin ups tucked into their helmets. Also, the song "If You Can't Smile and Say Yes" by The Nat King Cole Trio is playing at the start of the scene. Dolores Silva, a Latina born in Sacramento, begins speaking while a pin up photograph of Betty Grable in a swimsuit is onscreen. Silva explains that she wanted her boyfriend, Norman, to have his own "pin up" photograph of

her in her bikini, so she enlisted the help of her mother to take the picture. She amusingly recounts the fact that Norman later told her that his buddies would ask “what does she see in you?” (Episode Six). She then states she had a photograph of him taken while he was in France, so “I was with him, and he was with me” (Episode Six).

The scene functions in part to offer a lighthearted respite from the brutal images and sequences of warfare. However, as the only Latina talking head in *The War*, Silva continues to satisfy the stereotypical representation of Latinas as the exotic, sultry other. An alternative could have been to have interviewed Carmen Contreras Bozak, the first Latina to serve in the Women’s Army Auxillary Corps (WAAC). According to her profile at the U.S. Latino and Latina World War II Oral History Project, Bozak was born in Cayey, Puerto Rico, and later moved with her family to New York (Bozak interview). Her employment in the War Department led to her desire to enlist in the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps. As she states, ““Oh, I had to go. I thought, it’ll be a change. I’ll get to travel. I was so happy that I did join, that I got a good job”” (Bozak interview).

Before the second and final segment begins in Episode Six featuring Lansford and Arias, Tom Hanks reads the words of Al McIntosh describing the longing family members on the home front felt in March of 1945 for the war to end. The scene ends with Hanks’ voice and a fade out of a black and white photograph of a woman standing on the porch of her home with two young children nearby. Once again, as in Episode One, the statement, “More than sixteen million American men and women would serve in uniform during the War. They came from everywhere and *each* had a story to tell,” appears in the opening shot. The connective tissue with the rest of the episode is marked through a

reference that Lansford and Arias will next fight on Iwo Jima—just as Ray Pittman, one of the original characters of *The War*, had already been shown as doing.

Both Lansford and Arias are depicted as exhibiting great courage and leadership; however, the nuances of their depiction suggest deeper implications for how we should understand their inclusion. The narrator informs viewers that after their combat group, Carlson's Raiders, had been disbanded, Lansford and Arias found themselves engaged in a different kind of warfare (Episode Six). Lansford begins by describing his doubts regarding being able to make it, both physically and mentally, through yet more battles. He states that the first thing they witnessed upon landing were "a whole bunch of wounded guys coming towards us. People were carrying them, and they were all bloody" (Episode Six). Despite describing the landing as being "the worst thing [he] had ever experienced," Lansford nonetheless found the strength to assist the "poor kids who didn't know any better" and who were "trying to dig in under the artillery" (Episode Six). Lansford describes that he and other more experienced soldiers would "grab them by the neck and kick them and say, 'move, move, get out of here'" (Episode Six). Having now been at war for years, Lansford thought he "was gonna lose [his] mind" (Episode Six).

Arias's unit, the narrator explains, had been "stopped by relentless fire by a Japanese pillbox" (Episode Six). Arias begins by describing how he urged another soldier, Danford, to join him in an attempt to destroy the fortified structure. Although it was due to the actions of these two men which effectively eliminated the threat of the pillbox to the entire unit, Arias simply states, "so we crawled up there to that place [...] that was holding us up and we took it out" (Episode Six). On their way back, Arias was seriously wounded in the leg while Danford was killed.

What occurs to Arias next carries remarkable resonances to a scene Morrison examines from Ernest Hemingway's novel, *To Have and Have Not*. In "disturbing nurses and the kindness of sharks," Morrison analyzes the scene between the protagonist, Harry, and Wesley, the black crewman, in light of her larger project of examining whiteness as it informs the American literary imagination. Before marking the similarities, the following is Arias' account of what occurred after he was seriously wounded in the leg:

Pretty soon this corpsman came over [...]. He wasn't from our outfit. He says, "You been taken care of Sarge?" [...] He says, "Let me look at you." So I had to get up, and I laid down there, and [...] he gave me a shot of morphine [...]. He couldn't bandage this up [because] I [had] big wounds all over the place. Then I heard this one [bomb] come up. (Episode Six)

At this point in the scene, a loud bomb sound effect is used while a black and white photograph focused in on a helmet on the ground is onscreen. The narrator then informs the viewer, "The corpsman had thrown himself over Arias to protect him" (Episode Six). The corpsman's name or ethnicity is not revealed to the viewer by either Arias or through the narration. However, when the phrase "to protect him" is uttered by the narrator, the mobile framing technique is applied to shift focus from the helmet to the face of a dead white soldier nearby. While the camera adjusts to center on the face of the dead white soldier, Arias states, "This poor guy. He took the full blast, you know, and that killed him right there. You know, I always [...] remember him. I wonder who in the hell he was" (Episode Six).

The decision to feature this particular memory from Arias' experience serves to carry important rhetorical implications further. Similarly, Morrison notes a particular

dynamics at play between Harry and the largely silent—at least in the first part of the novel—black crewman, Wesley, in Hemingway’s *To Have and Have Not*:

The serviceability of the black man’s speech [...] is transparent. What he says and when he says it are plotted to win admiration of Harry. [...] We hear the grumbles [...] as Wesley’s responses to his gunshot wounds for three pages before we learn that Harry is also shot, and much worse than Wesley is. By contrast, Harry has not only not mentioned his own pain, he has taken Wesley’s whining with compassion and done the difficult work of steering [...] in swift, stoic gestures of manliness. [...] Finally, our patience and Harry’s exhausted, we get this exchange: “Who the hell’s shot worse?” He asked him. “You or me?” “You’re shot worse,” the nigger said. (75)

Burns’ documentary film imagination, and by extension that of his editors and crew, may be similarly seen at work here, much like in Hemingway’s novel through the myriad rhetorical choices made to depict Arias being wounded the way it ultimately is depicted on film. The choice to select a photograph of a white soldier to represent an otherwise unnamed, raceless corpsman encourages viewers to assume that the man who sacrificed his life for Arias was a white man.

He may very well have been a white soldier, but the choice to represent him as such, when that information is not given, rather than select, for instance, a photograph of a dead soldier turned away from the camera, thereby rendering his race or ethnicity unintelligible, conveys important information. This information serves as an example which contradicts Burns’ claim that, specifically in the case of Mexican Americans going

through basic training, “[ethnic] identities are eliminated” (Episode One). Through the rhetorical choices made with the use of documentary film conventions as approved by Burns in this scene in *The War*, he effectively contradicts his own statement “That the very distinctions that we now spend so much time focusing on evaporated in basic training, and they became one unit. And that was of course the theme of our film, it is, of course, the thing that unites all of us” (Episode One).

Burns is willing not only to entertain racial distinctions, but he intentionally suggests them when they are not even apparent, in order to emphasize the idea that a white soldier heroically gave his life for Arias, a Mexican American man. To accomplish this intention within Arias’ scene, Burns is not willing to “enforce racelessness” as he had done earlier. In “romancing the shadow,” Morrison ponders an important question in this regard: “The act of enforcing racelessness in literary discourse is itself a racial act. Pouring rhetorical acid on the fingers of a black hand may indeed destroy the prints, but not the hand. [...] What happens in that violent, self-serving act of erasure to [...] the fingerprints of the one who does the pouring? Do they remain acid-free?” (46). Hardly, would be Morrison’s answer.

Episode Six concludes with a very brief description of the end of World War II for Lansford and Arias. As the narrator states, “Both Arias and Lansford would survive Iwo Jima, and, eventually, get to go back home” (Episode Six). Unlike Lansford, Arias does not have a speaking role in this section and is therefore unable to state that he also fought in Korea and Vietnam—information gleaned from the film’s website (*pbs.org*). Also, unlike the characters featured at the end of Episode Seven, Lansford and Arias both

do not receive nearly the same coverage of their experiences after their return home or what they went on to be.

Lansford, however, does describe the sense of kinship he felt “with all the other guys who had been in the service” (Episode Seven). As he states, “Somehow we had become a separate entity from the people who were civilians. [...] We had all done what we were told to do. And most of us, you know, were characterized as heroes, but we weren’t heroes. We were just guys who were there, and we did what we were supposed to do” (Episode Seven).

*Episode Seven, “A World Without War” March 1945-December 1945*

The final episode of *The War* employs the same documentary conventions which Burns uses to start the series. The same opening statement is made during the opening shot of Episode Seven: “The Second World War as fought in thousands of places, too many for any one accounting. This is the story of four American towns and how their citizens experienced that war” (Episode Seven). In this instance, instead of a field in Minnesota, the shot consists of a barn with a low sun behind it and clouds dotting the blue sky. The slow, wistful melody, titled “Concerto for Clarinet & String Orchestra” by Benny Goodman and Aaron Copland, is playing while a black and white still image of a German soldier pointing a gun at the head of man facing a pit full of dead bodies is onscreen.

Once again, in the prologue, Sam Hynes provides testimony to support the assumption that for human beings, war is inevitable. As he states, “The world contains

evil. And if it didn't contain evil, we probably wouldn't need to construct religions. No evil, no God, I think. No, of course, no evil, no war. But this is not even a possibility that we need to entertain. There will always be plenty of evil. And there will always be wars because human beings are aggressive animals" (Episode Seven).

The final thirty minutes of the final episode chronicle the lives of several characters after the end of World War II. Eugene Sledge, one of the major characters whose secret diary entries and photographs are introduced in Episode Five, states the following, "War is brutish, inglorious, and a terrible waste. Combat leaves an indelible mark on those who are forced to endure it. The only redeeming factors were my comrades' incredible bravery and their devotion to each other" (Episode Seven). Sledge's ideas are important to consider in light of the experiences of American racial and ethnic minority soldiers. Robert Kashiwagi, for instance, who was "wounded four times in Italy and France," encountered racism after he returned home (Episode Seven). He explains one incident which occurred while he worked for the California Highway Department:

When I showed up in the shop, this one fellow from the floor went to his foreman [...] he says, "hey if that Jap is going to work here, then I'm quitting." [...] A foreman told me that. And I [said] "well, you know, I passed my test, and I served overseas, and I think I did what I was supposed to do, so I'm going to hold my position, and I'm going to remain here, you know." And I did. (Episode Seven)

Kashiwagi states that the man who complained subsequently quit.

African Americans also faced similar discrimination after they returned home. John Gray, who eventually became a school principal, explains what continued segregation meant to him:

It would be a matter of disgust—distaste, really, when we found out that the fruits of victory were not yours. I never did appreciate going to work at night, and the police officer would stop you at night and say “Hey boy, where you going?” And you come up to answer him. “You got your hat on. Take your hat off when you talk to a white man.” And that kind of stuff. And I had worked all night just about at the railroad, and didn’t have a car, so I had to walk home. I cried all the way home. It was, it was hurt.  
(Episode Seven)

Katharine Phillips recalls listening to the men in the neighborhood telling stories about their experiences in World War II. As she states, “We would just sit and listen, we wives. We learned more about our husbands and what they did by listening to them exchange stories. But I realize, as I’ve gotten older, this was a healing for them” (Episode Seven).

The song “American Anthem,” performed by Norah Jones, begins to play a final time while the same shot which opened Episode One—the field in Minnesota—is used once again as a backdrop to the following dedication: “A thousand veterans of the War die everyday. This film is dedicated to all those who fought and won that necessary war on our behalf” (Episode Seven). A series of photographs previously shown in other episodes are then shown again depicting various characters featured in *The War* posing with their family or friends. As the final verse—“America, America, I gave my best to

you” is sung, the photograph of Burns’ father when he was a young soldier is shown again. This is the final image the viewer sees in *The War*.

## CHAPTER V

### LATINO/A VIEWER RECEPTION TO BURNS' *THE WAR*

In the previous chapter, I examine Burns' *The War* through Mailloux's interpretive technique of rhetorical hermeneutics by placing a text in a meaningful context to rhetorically gain a "contextualization of a text's effects" on an audience (4). My interpretation serves to place Burns' filmic text, *The War*, within the context of the documentary film genre, particularly in relation to his rhetorical use of documentary film conventions. I conducted Mailloux's approach to rhetoric or "the contextualization of a text's effects" in the previous chapter through my rhetorical analysis of the implications arising from Burns' distinct use of documentary film conventions like narrative structure and the selection of characters.

In this chapter, I broaden the scope to place *The War* within a different context, that is, within the historical moment just before, during, and after the film's premier in September of 2007. I apply in this chapter Mailloux's understanding of rhetoric, i.e., "the contextualization of a text's effects," to analyze the dynamics of the rhetorical situation which functions to both describe and eventually create the final version of Burns' *The War*. In particular, I examine the contextualization of *The War*'s effects on a Latino/a audience through a rhetorical analysis of the appeals certain Latino/a community representatives use in order to persuade PBS and Ken Burns to revise a popular yet myopic historical documentary. The first section of this chapter lays out the theoretical

apparatus I use to conduct my rhetorical analysis. While the texts I then examine are primarily official press releases and business letters between different organizations sometimes with competing interests, I also include certain weekly update reports issued by the grassroots organization, Defend the Honor, in addition to major newspaper and online accounts covering the issue. These documents serve to constitute competing ways over how the public's memory of the past is presented and re-presented to the public.

In "Reading, Rhetoric, and the Texture of Public Memory," Stephen H. Browne reviews several books on the subject of public memory. While Browne states that each of the four works he reviews is distinct from the other, he contends that "In one respect, however, there seems to be general agreement: public memory signifies and gets signified in multiple ways" (237). Browne moreover states that public memorializing "is a textual practice; to speak of it at all is to put into play an interpretive procedure [...]" and "However varied those procedures, they collectively stress a sense of the text as a site of symbolic action, a place of cultural performance, the meaning of which is defined by its public and persuasive functions" (237). I am interested, therefore, in examining the rhetorical situation which led to the reshaping of *The War* as a filmic text and as a "site of symbolic action" and "a place of cultural performance." To interpret *The War* in these ways, it is necessary to examine the rhetorical appeals employed by a Latino/a audience as a result of their reception to and understanding of the initial version of the film.

Browne states that John Bodnar's *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, one of the works he reviews, explores the political dynamics which come into play in the interpretation of public memory (243). Moreover, Browne states, "For if public memory is productive of

collective identity, it is also productive of debates over the ownership of memory—its regulation, placement, and assignment of meaning” (243). “When Bodnar reads the texts of memory,” asserts Browne, “he [...] sees rhetorical battlegrounds; and there, as usual, those with the most power not only win but then get to tell the story” (243). Bodnar defines terms like public memory, official culture, and vernacular culture which are useful for the purposes of my rhetorical analysis of the Latino/a response to *The War*. Bodnar defines public memory as “a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future” (15). Bodnar further states that public memory is produced “[...] from a political discussion that involves [...] fundamental issues about the entire existence of a society: its organization, structure of power, and the very meaning of its past and present” (14).

According to Bodnar, the two groups which intersect to form public memory consist of what he calls “official culture” and “vernacular culture” (13). An official cultural expression, maintains Bodnar, “originates in the concerns of cultural leaders or authorities at all levels of society. [...] [T]hese leaders share a common interest in social unity, the continuity of existing institutions, and loyalty to the status quo” (13). Bodnar states that official culture functions by “promoting interpretations of past and present reality that reduce the power of competing interests that threaten the attainment of their goals” (12). In addition, Bodnar states that “Official culture relies on ‘dogmatic formalism’ and the restatement of reality in ideal rather than complex or ambiguous terms. It presents the past on an abstract basis of timelessness and sacredness” (14).

“Vernacular culture, on the other hand,” maintains Bodnar, “represents an array of specialized interests that are grounded in parts of the whole. They are diverse and

changing and can be reformulated from time to time [...]” (14). As occurred with the Latino/a audience response, if seen as an example of vernacular culture, subgroups within this category “[...] can even clash with one another” (14). Moreover, Bodnar states, “Defenders of such cultures are numerous and intent on protecting values and restating views of reality derived from firsthand experience in small-scale communities rather than the ‘imagined’ communities of a large nation” (14).

In *Against Amnesia*, Peterson also presents similar categories—i.e., “*official* histories” and counterhistories, or “*unofficial* histories” (5). Peterson claims that “Collective historical memory in America has always been more attracted to the mythic [...] than to the realistic” (5). Here, collective historical memory interested in heroic myths could be aligned with “official histories” or what Bodnar calls “official culture,” while realistic narratives could be aligned with “unofficial histories” or what Bodnar calls “vernacular culture.” Peterson explains that since the 1960s, “through such vehicles as the civil rights and women’s liberation movements, Vietnam, and Watergate—heroic narratives of America have been increasingly called into question” (5).

Peterson characterizes the moments when heroic narratives have been questioned as “events.” As Peterson states, “These events have created fissures in dominant national narratives, and these fissures have made possible the articulation of various counterhistories by those previously relegated to the margins of society” (5). Browne makes a similar and important point in his review of Bodnar’s text: “memory is not a thing, an object to be described sheerly by its formal properties; it is an event, the interpretation of which must account both for its formal embodiment and its history of receptions” (244-5). Characterizing the interpretation of collective historical narratives as

“events” serves to further mark that fact that historical memory, in this case that of World War II, is an activity with important cultural implications in the present.

Also, in “Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” Barbara A. Biesecker argues that “memory texts” such as “the World War II Memorial, *Saving Private Ryan*, *The Greatest Generation*, and the Women in Military Service for America Memorial” hold important cultural implications in the present through the rhetorical dynamics of their composition. She specifically argues that

[...] these extraordinarily well-received reconstructions of the past function rhetorically as civics lessons for a generation beset by fractious disagreements about the viability of U.S. culture and identity. By manufacturing and embracing a particular *kind* of American, a certain idea of what it means to be a “good citizen,” these popular cultural texts, best understood as technologies of national cultural transformation, promote social cohesion by rhetorically inducing differently positioned audiences—by class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender—to disregard rather than actively seek to dismantle the inequitable power relations that continue to structure collective life in the United States. (394)

And among those groups in the U.S. in the recent past as well as today, Chicanos/as are often fully aware of the implications of such hermeneutic events because of the erasure and loss of a presence in most mainstream historical accounts involving Mexican Americans. The damage such accounts have inflicted upon Mexican Americans’ understanding of their place within this country has been, to say the least, immensely

painful. In “Nuestra América: Latino History as United States History,” Vicki L. Ruiz states that “[...] despite a florescence of scholarship on the Spanish borderlands [...], U.S. historians frequently give both the region and the era no more than a passing glance” (656). Ruiz further states that one “reason [for that erasure] harks back to the Black Legend” (656). According to Ruiz, “With roots in the Reformation and in the competition for New World empires, the Black Legend counterpoised virtuous English families against rapacious Spanish *conquistadores*” (656).

Ruiz points to a salient connection made between the debates on contemporary immigration issues related to the U.S.-Mexican border and the remnants of belief in the Black Legend made by Tony Horowitz in the *New York Times*. As Horowitz states,

This national amnesia isn’t new, but it’s glaring and supremely paradoxical at a moment when politicians warn of the threat posed to our culture and identity by an invasion of immigrants from across the Mexican border. If Americans hit the books, they’d find what Al Gore would call an inconvenient truth. The early history of what is now the United States was Spanish, not English, and our denial of this heritage is rooted in age-old stereotypes that still entangle today’s immigration debate. (656)

In the September 21, 2007 Defend the Honor weekly update, a similar chord is struck by a statement made by Angelo Falcon, president of the National Institute for Latino Policy in New York City, as featured in the “Quote of the Week” section. Falcon’s quotation is cited from *New York Daily News* columnist Albor Ruiz’s September 16<sup>th</sup> 2007 piece and is as follows, “Of course, by blotting us out this way [in the historical

documentary *The War*], Burns and PBS only feed into the anti-immigration and anti-Hispanic sentiment so rampant in this country today” (“September 21, 2007”).

Moreover, as Ben V. Olgún demonstrates in “Sangre Mexicana/Corazón Americano: Identity, Ambiguity, and Critique in Mexican-American War Narratives” that the relationship between Mexican Americans and their participation in U.S. wars is much more complex than what the sanctioned national historical narratives are interested in depicting. Not only is this relationship complex, but Olgún provides a historical background illustrating a long past of its literary representations. For example, as Olgún states, “Since the publication of Américo Paredes’s foundational 1958 study on the epic heroic *corrido*, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*, war has figured prominently as a historical reference point and as a metaphor in theorizations of Mexican-American history, culture, and identity” (83). Paredes, in fact, the founder of Chicano literary and cultural scholarship, himself was a World War II veteran.

In *The Borderlands of Culture: Américo Paredes and the Transnational Imaginary*, Ramón Saldívar includes a chapter, “Life in the Borderlands,” of autobiographical material collected in the form of interviews with Paredes. In this chapter, Paredes describes working for Pan American Airways between 1940 and 1944: “My job was quality control, checking the mounting of .50-caliber machine guns on fighter-bombers being ferried to the front in England” (93). Although receiving a deferment from the draft due to his work being classified as “defense-related,” Paredes decides he wants to go ahead and get drafted (93). Paredes states that based on his Army IQ test score, he was “immediately accepted into the Criminal Investigations Division of Army Intelligence and sent to Camp Robinson in Little Rock, Arkansas, for special

training” (93). However, by the time Paredes made it to Japan, it was late 1945, and the war was already over (93). Paredes states that “probably because of [his] experience as a newspaper man in Brownsville [Texas] and because of the newsletter that [he] had edited, [...] [he] was transferred to *Stars and Stripes* in Tokyo in early 1946” (96). While at the *Stars and Stripes*, Paredes eventually became the political editor. Through a series of events, he also “had the memorable experience of being allowed to interview Hideki Tojo,” former supreme general of the Japanese Imperial Army who was on trial for war crimes (97). Of the experience, Paredes states, “In a way, I felt sorry for him because I knew that he was being accused of war crimes that had in fact been committed by both sides” (99). Paredes’ post war experience in Japan more firmly implanted what he already knew about American imperial justice, as he has seen, first-hand, the tensions war had inflicted on Mexican Americans along the U.S.-Mexican border. He knew first-hand how U.S. domination along the borderlands had left a wound in the consciousness of Mexicans on both sides of the border.

A specific example of a concept exemplifying Peterson’s notion of “history as wound” is that of “Chicano melancholy” as posited by Rafael Pérez-Torres in *Mestizaje: Critical Uses of Race in Chicano Culture*. Pérez-Torres explains that Chicano melancholy is

[...] a human consciousness powerfully formed as a result of a double loss of innocence. [...] Mexican national ideology places at the center of Mexican identity the Spanish violation of the Indian mother and the inevitable abandonment by the Spanish father. To graft this psychosocial dynamic onto the Chicano psyche in the United States does not take a

great leap of imagination. The loss implicit in Chicano discourse within this frame is compounded by the sense of distance experienced by the orphaned Chicano left bereft of both a national fatherland and a native language. Betrayal and abandonment are compounded in the experiences of Mexican-descended populations north of the border. (199)

Although describing a position of loss, Pérez-Torres cites the ideas of José Muñoz which point to the potential for recovery and recuperation inherent in such a position.

As Pérez-Torres states, “The ensuing tension—one experienced by Chicanos/as as ‘strangers in their own land’—leads, potentially, to a type of productive engagement with new forms for understanding the self” (201). In addition, Pérez-Torres states that “Muñoz proposes that melancholia [...] be seen ‘as [...] a mechanism that helps us (re)construct identity and take our dead with us to the various battles we must wage in their names—and in our names’ (1999, 74)” (201). The positionality marked by the concept of Chicano melancholy in part enables a Latino/a audience to “(re)construct [their] identity” during the “event” of questioning the intentions of a historical narrative, like Burns’ historical documentary on the American experience of World War II, *The War*.

The event which marked the first questioning of Burns’ initial version of *The War* occurred at a screening hosted by The National World War II Museum in November of 2006 in New Orleans, Louisiana. According to Arian Campo-Flores writing for *Newsweek*, members of the Native American community as well as Raquel Garza, the project manager for the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project, first became aware of omissions in *The War* at the screening for the film (“A ‘War’ for Inclusion”). “When a Navajo veteran asked if Native Americans were included in the film, the

directors said no,” Campo-Flores states, “[So] Garza asked Novick afterward if they'd included Latinos, 500,000 of whom served in the war, by some estimates. The answer, again, was no” (“A ‘War’ for Inclusion”).

Garza’s position—both as an ethnic minority in the United States and through her work helping to preserve the stories of the Latinos/as of the World War II generation—enabled a particular reception at the screening of Burns’ mainstream historical perspective. The specific rhetorical framework for understanding the reception of Latino/a audiences, as illustrated by Amaya’s non-normative audience reception approach, is at work here. Due to the fact that Garza is situated as a non-normative viewer, she immediately questions the authority of the filmic text based on her own knowledge of the service of Latinos/as during World War II. Another way to characterize this knowledge is by using what Pérez-Torres refers to as “special knowledge” (197). As Pérez-Torres states, “[...] some special knowledge is born among those dispossessed by history, those discriminated against and excluded from power [...]. Words, of course, fail to convey the rage and exhaustion that this history engenders” (179).

As the rhetorical appeals presented to both PBS and Ken Burns demonstrate, members of the Latino/a community certainly did attempt to put into words the “rage and exhaustion” caused by a national history which continues to render invisible their presence and history in the United States. In an interview with Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez, broadcast on April 13th 2007, on the program *Democracy NOW!*, Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, professor of journalism at the University of Texas at Austin as well as director of the U.S. Latino & Latina WWII Oral History Project, described becoming informed of the omission of Latinos/as in *The War*. This important discovery happened

after Garza, Rivas-Rodriguez's project manager, attended the November screening in New Orleans. Rivas-Rodriguez outlines the main events after the November screening:

So within a few weeks we heard from another source that they had also gotten the same information, so in January, we were trying to nail it down. In mid January we heard back from Ken Burns's publicist that the documentary was not structured that way [around specific ethnic groups]. The only groups that were given any special attention were Japanese-Americans because of their experiences and African Americans because of their experiences. And I sent back an e-mail to *WETA*; I had been in contact with the sponsoring station in Washington, D.C., and to Ken Burns's publicist and said—well the experiences of Latinos of the World War II generation were unique and rich and certainly should be included in this documentary. (Rivas-Rodriguez *Democracy Now!* interview)

The result of this discovery of omission caused a flurry of cross-communication between several Latino/a groups, like Defend the Honor and PBS officials, particularly with Paula Kerger, PBS president and chief executive officer. These communications, often conveyed on the official business letterheads of several organizations, would increase as time went on and got closer to the documentary's debut.

The first letter I examine in this exchange is from Frederick P. Aguirre, co-founder of Latino Advocates for Education, Inc. based in California. Aguirre wrote to Ken Burns on January 31, 2007 after becoming aware of the initial Latino/a omission in *The War*. Aguirre first praises Burns by stating, "I applaud your patriotic and historical fervor in preserving our American experience through your films such as *The Civil War*,

*Jazz and Baseball*” (Aguirre). He then goes on to state, “I am deeply dismayed to learn that you did not include the Mexican American experience” (Aguirre). The rhetorical appeal Aguirre employs in order to attempt to persuade Burns is that of referencing democratic appeals like patriotism. Aguirre, for instance, states:

Over 400,000 Hispanic Americans proudly served our country during World War II fighting and dying in every major battle in the Pacific and European Theatres. Their patriotism has been chronicled in several books including *Legacy Greater Than Words* [...] and *Undaunted Courage: Mexican American Patriots of World War II* [...]. Significantly, Mexican Americans fought and gave their lives at a time when they, like African Americans, were subjected to segregated public schools, were not allowed full use of swimming pools and public accommodations, were denied equal access to voting and serving as jurors and faced open discrimination in public and private employment. (Aguirre)

In order to prove his case, Aguirre then provides examples of both U.S. Federal Court and U.S. Supreme Court cases like “*Lopez v. Seccombe* (1944) 71 F. Supp. 769 which required San Bernardino, California to open its public swimming pools to Mexican American children” (Aguirre).

Another example of the discrimination Mexican Americans faced after their service in World War II and which Aguirre provides in his letter to Burns is that of Felix Longoria. He states,

In 1948, his [Longoria’s] family requested that his remains be returned to Three Rivers, Texas to be buried in his hometown. However, the owners

of the mortuary and cemetery refused to bury this American in their cemetery simply because he was of Mexican descent. A young Congressman, Lyndon B. Johnson stepped in and assisted the American G.I. Forum, a Mexican American servicemen's national organization, in having the body of Felix Longoria buried with full military honors in Arlington National Cemetery. (Aguirre)

In addition, Aguirre provides Burns with an example of an extraordinary story of a Mexican American he could feature in *The War*—a provocative story with parallels to that of Quentin Aanenson who Burns prominently featured. He states, “You can interview and include in your film at least one Mexican American from the Sacramento, California area—Lt. Col. Henry Cervantes, retired. His parents were migrant farm workers. He volunteered for the U.S. Army Air Corps and as a B-17 pilot flew 25 bombing missions over Germany” (Aguirre).

In closing his letter to Burns, Aguirre describes the social and cultural context within which *The War* is released in relation to Latinos/as and their identity as United States citizens:

Given the fact that Hispanic Americans are now the largest ethnic minority group in our nation, [...] that historically Latinos have been subjected to second class citizenship in our country but have patriotically served in every war that we have fought, and to promote PBS's mission, it is proper and fitting that the Mexican American experience be documented and included in *THE WAR*. (Aguirre)

In this last appeal, Aguirre also refers to “PBS’s mission,” that is to say, its responsibility to the public through their programming. I have quoted Aguirre at length here because his argument for and supporting evidence of the patriotism of the World War II Latino/a generation in the face of discrimination at home is one that many Latinos/as and their organizations repeat to Burns and PBS in their own letters. As the name of his organization—Latino Advocates for Education—suggests, Aguirre’s letter marks the beginning of a quest to educate both Burns and PBS of an aspect of American history of which they seemed to be ignorant.

The next letter I analyze presents different rhetorical dynamics by virtue of the size of the organization it represents. On February 16, 2007, Rafael Olmeda, president of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists (NAHJ) and Iván Román, NAHJ executive director, wrote to Paula Kerger, PBS president and chief executive officer. Olmeda and Román immediately provide their ethos by informing Kerger that they are “writing to you on behalf of the National Association of Hispanic Journalists, a nonprofit organization representing more than 2,000 Latino journalists across the United States [...]” (Olmeda and Román). They add, “An important part of NAHJ’s mission is to foster and promote the fair treatment of Hispanics by the media. Fair treatment includes an accurate documentation of a history that too often has gone untold” (Olmeda and Román).

Olmeda and Román then cite an early PBS news release description of *The War*—“ [The film] explores the history and horror of the Second World War from an American perspective by following the fortunes of so-called ordinary men and women” (Olmeda and Román). They then argue for the inclusion of Latinos/as by stating that “Latinos are

among these ‘ordinary men and women’” (Olmeda and Román). They then note the range of Latino groups involved in the war effort:

Many of us remember the pride in our elders’ voices as they recalled their roles in ensuring an Allied victory. It is estimated that as many as half a million Latinos—U.S. born as well as immigrants—fought in WWII.

Puerto Ricans, U.S. citizens by birth, had high rates of military service, as did many Mexican Americans from the southwest and California who saw combat in the Pacific. (Olmeda and Román)

Like Aguirre, Olmeda and Román use the appeal to patriotism and additionally mark the diversity of the Latino/a communities which served in World War II. They then make another point other Latino/a community members made to PBS and Burns: “Eleven Mexican American and two Puerto Ricans earned Medals of Honor” (Olmeda and Román). Not only did Latinos/as serve, but their service during World War II was exemplary and worthy of the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. military.

Based on the evidence they present regarding the varied and exemplary Latino/a service during World War II, Olmeda and Román state, “So it escapes us how Ken Burns could have made a seven-part series that does not mention the contributions of Latinos” (Olmeda and Román). They further point to Burns’ own ethos as a documentary filmmaker: “His usually thorough work is seen as the contemporary documentation of U.S. political, social and cultural history on a wide variety of themes” (Olmeda and Román). Like Aguirre, Olmeda and Román then appeal to PBS’s responsibility to their viewers: “For PBS to air the series as is would be a disservice to its viewers, giving them a skewed version of this important part of American history” (Olmeda and Román). They

close the letter by urging that the documentary be revised in order for it to be “historically accurate”—especially, they state, in light of “[...] the irony that PBS plans to begin airing this series on the second day of Hispanic Heritage Month” (Olmeda and Román).

Lea Sloan, vice president of communications for PBS, responded to NAHJ in a letter on March 2, 2007. Sloan states that “It is unfortunate that a misunderstanding about the intent and structure of this series has caused apprehension” (Sloan). She then points out that the structure of *The War* is being driven by the intention of the “producers [...] to tell the events of World War II through the intimate stories of a handful of individuals drawn mostly from four small American towns” and, as a result, “millions of stories are not explored in the film, which is not, and never was intended to be, the definitive history of the Second World War” (Sloan). As a note, citing the structure of the film would be referenced many times by PBS apologists for Burns as the reason for the omission of Latinos/as and Native Americans in *The War*.

Sloan also introduces another point used over and over in the official responses to the Latino/a community by PBS—that of the intended community outreach associated with the release of the film. As Sloan states, “To capture and record individual stories on the local level, PBS, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and public television stations nationwide have spent more than a year planning one of the largest community engagement and education outreach initiatives in its history [...]” (Sloan). Before noting that a meeting between PBS officials, including Kerger, and representatives of the Latino/a community would take place on March 6, 2007, Sloan attempts to downplay the status that a Ken Burns production enjoys on a national level. Sloan states, “PBS has presented many films on World War II. Ken Burns and Lynn Novick’s film is one

compelling view of this far reaching event” (Sloan). In addition, she states, “We also believe no single film can begin to cover the enormity of the Second World War; thus PBS will continue to present other documentaries on this subject and seek out important untold stories by other filmmakers” (Sloan). The weakness of Sloan’s attempt to downplay Burns’ celebrity status is betrayed by PBS’s own press releases regarding *The War* which promote the very status she describes as only “one compelling view.”

An important part of the rhetorical situation created by and as a response to the original filmic text, *The War*, is the participation of members from groups like the Congress of the United States and within it, the United States Senate. Such involvement, especially by Latino U.S. Senators, points to the element of power differentials between the groups communicating back and forth over the issue of the omission of a meaningful presence of Latinos/as in a national historical text. An example of this participation is a letter written by Congressman Silvestre Reyes to PBS president, Paula Kerger, on March 7, 2007. Reyes, as others before him, appeals to the public standards to which PBS is held. He states, “I know PBS is committed to producing accurate, quality programming, and failing to include the experiences of even just one Latino veteran seriously compromises your work. I strongly urge you to reconsider your decision to air ‘The War’ until the legacy of Latino veterans is appropriately honored in the film” (Reyes).

Congressman Reyes’s letter is an example of the power held by certain ethnic minority participants in this controversy by virtue of how they are situated within particular groups. Congressman Reyes, for instance, is a member of the United States Congress—an entity which oversees the funding and operation of entities like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) as well as for PBS. This funding, in turn,

enables the work of such filmmakers like Ken Burns. Both groups, PBS and the U.S. Congress, in turn, have a responsibility to the mainstream public—the intended audience for these letters. Another example from this group of Latino/a representatives is the March 30<sup>th</sup> 2007 letter from U.S. Senators Ken Salazar and Robert Menendez to Paula Kerger, PBS president. They too appeal to the fact that PBS has a responsibility to the mainstream public when they state, “It [airing *The War* during Hispanic Heritage Month] demonstrates an insensitivity to the Hispanic American experience, and this is unacceptable for a non-profit media enterprise, that receives public dollars to carry out its mission ‘to enrich the lives of all Americans that inform, inspire, and delight’” (Salazar and Menendez).

On March 13<sup>th</sup> 2007, after the March 6<sup>th</sup> meeting between Kerger and members of the Defend the Honor Campaign, Kerger issued a letter with her response to the questioning of Burns’ *The War* over its omission of Latinos/as and Native Americans. In a letter addressed to Gus Chavez, Angelo Falcón, Marta García, Maggie Rivas-Rodriguez, and Ivan Román, Kerger reiterates Sloan’s explanation, “As indicated during our discussion last week, THE WAR was never intended to be a comprehensive or definitive television series on the subject of World War II” (Kerger). Consequently, Kerger states, “While we acknowledge and respect the concerns you have raised, we do not agree that going back into production to revise a completed series that represents one filmmaker’s vision is the appropriate solution” (Kerger). Once again, PBS representatives, in the context of their responses to a community group questioning one of its filmmakers, chooses to downplay the influence and status of Burns’ work—an ethos which they readily acknowledge and elevate in other contexts.

Kerger goes on to list elements of a community outreach initiative in her letter which “includes grants to every public television station in every state that will allow communities across the country to produce programming [...]” (Kerger). Representatives of the Defend the Honor Campaign responded to Kerger in a letter on the same day addressing the reference to community outreach associated with *The War*. They state,

[...] your offer to compensate for this discriminatory exclusion of Latinos by offering to include Latinos in local programming that will support the Burns’ documentary simply tells our community that PBS continues to see Latino participation as a side show—and not the main attraction. This is further marginalization of Latino images in PBS programming. (Defend the Honor Campaign)

They further state, “The ‘diversity’ initiatives that you outlined in your letter cannot substitute for your inaction on the matter of the Burn’s WWII documentary” (Defend the Honor Campaign). Just as the anonymous and silent—and dead—Latino/a soldiers depicted in *The War* before eventually adding material, the response by the Defend the Honor organization to continued marginalization made clear that the Latino/a community did not intend to tolerate being marginalized any longer. As they state, “We regret that PBS has chosen to squander this opportunity to strengthen its relationship to Latinos and instead chose to further antagonize our community in this manner” (Defend the Honor).

In an official press release issued on March 13<sup>th</sup>, the Defend the Honor campaign introduced additional appeals to try to persuade PBS and Burns to revise *The War*, namely, to boycott PBS, and put pressure aimed at entities providing substantial funding to the creation of such filmic texts. According to their press release, “Various Latino

groups and individuals are calling for a boycott of PBS, while others plan to pressure the corporate, foundation and government sponsors of PBS and Ken Burns, said Chavez, a Defend the Honor Campaign organizer out of San Diego, CA” (Defend the Honor).

As Peterson analyzed the fiction of contemporary women writers of color through the framework of Jameson’s concept of “History is what hurts,” Rivas-Rodriguez’s statement in the Defend the Honor press release indicates that this kind of history is very much a part of the present: “All Americans feel a deep, personal, connection to WWII [...],” and in addition, “These are our parents, our grandparents, aunts and uncles. We know their contributions and sacrifices. And we are painfully aware of how the[y] have not had the recognition they deserve. It is our duty to right this wrong” (Defend the Honor). Rivas-Rodriguez’s statement helps to contextualize the effects of *The War* for Latinos/as and their subsequent motivation to ensure its revision.

In addition to the governmental entities, such as Latino/a representatives within the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives, professional organizations also participated in and added another dynamic to the rhetorical situation engendered by *The War*. On April 5<sup>th</sup> 2007, the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility—a coalition of thirteen major Latino/a organizations including the American GI Forum (AGIF), League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), National Council of La Raza (NCLR), and the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (USHCC), among others—issued a letter to Kerger. The language used in this letter represented the strongest, most strident position against Burns’ “structure and intent” of *The War*. Manuel Mirabal, chair of the HACR board, states,

It is inconceivable that during the six years of research Mr. Burns found no evidence of Hispanic American contributions that merited inclusion in his documentary. This factually inaccurate representation was not just a mere omission; it required a decision by Mr. Burns to ignore the contributions of Hispanics, and further reflects the bias he has shown against Hispanics in his past documentaries. This documentary makes it appear that Hispanics were absent from this great conflict, and the accompanying book which will be sold to the public and distributed to our schools will further escalate this egregious misrepresentation [of] our nation's history. (Mirabal)

Mirabal furthermore calls attention to the fact that “[...] 90% of your [PBS’s] viewing audience being non-Hispanic, millions of Americans will be given the wrong impression that Hispanics were not on the battlefield, did not participate in homeland war relief and support efforts, and are not patriotic defenders of the United States of America’s democratic values and principles” (Mirabal). The acknowledgment of a particular audience addressed through this rhetorical situation—the mainstream “non-Hispanic” public—is important to note for its strategic rhetorical importance. The public discourse circulating as a result of the controversy is disseminated as a strategy to ensure that the knowledge missing from the text in question, *The War*, is provided through another medium, in this case, through letters released to a public forum.

Founded in 1968, The Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), according to their web site, “[...] promotes equality and justice [of the Latino community] through litigation, advocacy, public policy, and community education

in the areas of employment, immigrants' rights, voting rights, education, and language rights" (*MALDEF*). On April 9<sup>th</sup> 2007, this entity also issued a letter to Kerger. Pointing to the creation of faulty myths, Ricardo Meza, *MALDEF* regional counsel, states, "Regardless of the reason for the omission of Latinos in Mr. Burns' documentary, the perpetuation of the myth that Latinos do not contribute to this great country would only be fueled by airing a documentary that excludes reference to their contributions" (Meza). Meza also takes a strong stance when he states, "This gross error must be corrected prior to the airing or distribution of Mr. Burns' documentary, regardless of the additional cost or time incurred" (Meza).

Perhaps as a response to the pressure launched by Latino organizations from around the country and in a key reversal of position, PBS issued a letter to the Defend the Honor Campaign on April 11<sup>th</sup> 2007 stating that Burns had agreed to revise *The War* to include Latino and Native American perspectives. Kerger responded to the appeal to PBS's responsibility to the public by stating, "As we discussed, the mission of PBS is to serve the American public with programming and services of the highest quality, using media to educate, inspire, entertain and express the diversity of perspectives in our nation" (Kerger). Based on this mission, Kerger states that

PBS, Ken Burns and his co-director/producer Lynn Novick have decided to create additional content that focuses on stories of Latino and Native American veterans of the Second World War. The new narratives will be included in the broadcast of the series, as well as in *THE WAR*'s DVD, Web site and educational outreach materials. (Kerger)

The only information Kerger provides in the letter regarding the nature of the changes is that “The additional content will be incorporated within the footprint of the series without changing the existing film” (Kerger). Significantly, Kerger notes that the accompanying book, *The War: An Intimate History* “is not part of the educational materials and will not be distributed with them. It is a companion book by historian Geoffrey C. Ward, co-authored by Ken Burns and published by Alfred A. Knopf, independently of PBS” (Kerger). The fact that the companion 450-page book was left unrevised to ensure the exclusion of the Latino and Native American perspectives stands as an example of the true position taken by PBS and Burns regarding its mission to serve the public with quality programming and services. In other words, the inclusion of Latino and Native American perspectives was not of genuine concern for PBS—or Burns.

The Defend the Honor Campaign’s response to Kerger, on April 11<sup>th</sup> 2007, covers a couple of important points. First, they acknowledge Kerger for having “taken our concerns seriously and [making] the decision to include, in a substantive manner, the Latino, as well as Native American, experiences in *The War*” (Defend the Honor). Second, a detailed proposal of the changes was requested: “[...] we need more information about the extent to which the Latino story will be told in an expanded version of *The War*” (Defend the Honor). The letter then acknowledged the significance of the moment: “We realize that this is a process, but we also recognize, and hope you appreciate, the progress that this moment represents” (Defend the Honor).

According to a *Washington Post* article on April 18<sup>th</sup> 2007, Burns “has never before changed a film in response to public pressure” (Farhi “Ken Burns Agrees”). Burns’ apparent unprecedented move to change his film is important to note, but the

moment of this negotiated change also marked by the extraordinary consensus among various Latino/a organizations representing a myriad of interests and constituencies—a fact that indeed reflects the growing power of Latinos/as in the U. S. Thus, the statement referring to this moment in the letter to Kerger undoubtedly carried much more resonance for the Latino/a public reading it than it did for a non-Hispanic mainstream public.

The excitement over the apparent triumph to meaningfully include the Latino and Native American perspectives in *The War* was short-lived, however, when the nature of the changes began to be discussed. In the same article by Paul Farhi for the *Washington Post*, he quotes the PBS spokeswoman Lea Sloan saying, “new material would be ‘seamlessly’ integrated into the film” (“Ken Burns Agrees”). Although Farhi states that a meeting on April 17<sup>th</sup> served to introduce “Austin documentarian Hector Galán, who will work with Burns to produce additional footage,” Rivas-Rodriguez continued to have misgivings about the seeming intent “that new material would appear ‘as an add-on before a break’” (“Ken Burns Agrees”). Farhi quotes Rivas-Rodriguez explaining that this type of inclusion would not be acceptable, because ““We didn’t want it to be an afterthought’” (“Ken Burns Agrees”).

In a story the following day, on April 19<sup>th</sup> 2007, Farhi reports that “Some of the disagreement over Burns’s—and PBS’s—intentions turns on small but critical semantic distinctions, particularly whether the unproduced new material will be a ‘part’ of ‘The War,’ or instead air as a supplement” (“Burns Won’t Reedit”). Furthermore, Farhi reports, “Latino advocates [...] insist that the new material should be part of the story itself, which focuses on the wartime experiences of four towns or cities in different regions of the country” (“Burns Won’t Reedit”). Farhi’s story in addition states, “But that

[meaningful inclusion] will not be the case, according to Burns's representative [...]” (“Burns Won’t Reedit”).

In response, Congressmen Joe Baca and Ciro D. Rodriguez of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHS) urged Kerger in a letter dated April 20<sup>th</sup> 2007 that “The only appropriate course of action is that the documentary entitled ‘The War’, fully incorporate within the body of the documentary the integral role of Hispanics” (Baca and Rodriguez). Additionally, in a May 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 statement by Raul Yzaguirre, HACR founder, the coalition states that “What PBS and Mr. Burns have proposed as solutions marginalizes and will not integrate through voice or narrative the significant contributions of Hispanic patriots. This is unacceptable!” (Yzaguirre).

The next important development of this story occurs on May 10<sup>th</sup> 2007 with a press release announcing “The American GI Forum, HACR, and Florentine Films Agree on Integrating the Voices of Hispanic Veterans into ‘The War’” (“The American GI Forum”). In this press release, Burns states, “The role of Hispanic American veterans in WWII is one that lends itself to the universality of this film [...] and merits being included in my film” (“The American GI Forum”). However, Burns also states that “[...] they [additional stories] can be incorporated in a way consistent with the film’s focus on individual experiences and in a way that means nothing in the film that already exists will be changed” (“The American GI Forum”). According to the “compromise” described in the press release, Burns states that “This has never been about changing my vision for the film. It is adding another layer of storytelling that will only enrich what we already have” (“The American GI Forum”).

Curiously, the remarks by Antonio Morales, National Commander of the American GI Forum, seem to be referring to a different agreement: ““Latinos have never been an addendum to American history. They always have been, and always will be an integral part of our nation’s military”” (“The American GI Forum”). Burns’ remarks emphasize otherwise, that is to say, that the narrative integrity of the film—one which excludes meaningful representation of Latino and Native American perspectives and which does treat Latinos as an addendum—will remain intact. Another curious fact is the eventual endorsement to this sort of inclusion by HACR—a group which previously strongly stated that the add-ons were unacceptable. Mirabal, HACR chairman of the board, states in the press release, ““Together, corporate America, Latino leaders and visionary artists can leave a lasting imprint on American culture that will resonate with the vast majority of Americans today and for generations to come”” (“The American GI Forum”). The hierarchy Mirabal employs in his statement—corporate America followed by Latino leaders and then artists—suggests that, ultimately, corporate sponsorship is more persuasive to inducing action, i.e., ““compromise,”” than accurate historical representation.

The Defend the Honor Campaign, it can be construed, was left out of the negotiations resulting in the May 10<sup>th</sup> 2007 agreement revealed in the official press release on that day. In a May 10<sup>th</sup> letter to Kerger, Rivas-Rodriguez wrote to inquire about the details of the agreement or ““compromise.”” She states, ““We are glad that some of our colleagues have come to some agreement with Mr. Burns, but it is unclear how this latest development differs from announcements of three weeks ago”” (Defend the Honor). Kerger offered a response on June 14<sup>th</sup> 2007 in a letter addressed to Congressman

Estaban Torres and Professor Yzaguirre, where she states, “According to the statement released by the groups [Florentine Films, (AGIF), and (HACR) on May 10<sup>th</sup> 2007], the agreement commits Mr. Burns to adding the voices and narratives of Hispanic and Native-American veterans to the film, while recognizing that all artistic decisions about the content of this film are Mr. Burns’ alone to make” (Kerger). Kerger also states, “While PBS was not involved in the negotiation of this agreement, we fully endorse it and encourage all to honor it” (Kerger). Kerger, and thus PBS, demonstrated through their support of the eventual nature of the inclusion of the Latino and Native American segments to *The War* that the concerns and appeals raised by representatives of the Latino/a community were not persuasive enough to cause meaningful change at the institutional level—much less in *The War*.

The Defend the Honor Campaign, however, did not cease its effort to protest the proposed changes as evidenced by a July 26<sup>th</sup> 2007 letter to U.S. Senators Ken Salazar and Robert Menendez. In this letter, members of the Defend the Honor Campaign outline sections of the original “proposal requesting funding for THE WAR documentary [...] submitted to the National Endowment For The Arts by WETA” (Defend the Honor). Through the excerpts, one sees that Latinos/as were excluded from the very beginning. Due to this fact, the Defend the Honor Campaign urges U.S. Senators Salazar and Menendez to “continue voicing our strong concerns for meaningful and honorable inclusion in the public and corporate funded THE WAR documentary” (Defend the Honor).

Armando Rendón, representing the Northern California Defend the Honor Campaign group, wrote to Bruce Cole, chairman for the National Endowment for the

Humanities on July 27<sup>th</sup> 2007. Rendón effectively filed a “complaint against the National Endowment for the Humanities for misuse of public funds in the underwriting of a flawed documentary, “The War,” produced by Ken Burns and Florentine Films” (Rendón).

Rendón further states, “Because the Public Broadcasting Service has already dictated to its affiliates that they air the series beginning September 23 [...], we urge that you take prompt action to defer its broadcast until the legal and ethical concerns prompted by this controversial documentary are resolved” (Rendón). Through the premier of Burns’ *The War* on September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2007, as scheduled, one may gather that the NEH did not entertain the complaint raised by the Defend the Honor group in any meaningful manner.

The final document I examine here is a news release issued by the Defend the Honor Campaign on August 20<sup>th</sup> 2007. The title of the release, “The ‘War’ Against Ken Burns/PBS’ ‘The War’ is Not Over,” conveys the sentiment many in the Latino/a community felt regarding the add-ons to *The War*. Rendón states that ““We are very uncomfortable with taking Burns and PBS’ word that they have addressed the Latino community’s concerns before actually seeing the product”” (Defend the Honor). Moreover, he states, ““The anger in the grassroots Latino community continues unabated by the manner in which he and PBS have handled this matter”” (Defend the Honor).

The Defend the Honor organization continued the dialogue with its representatives all over the nation after the premier of *The War* on September 23<sup>rd</sup> 2007. With the exception of references pertaining to the inadequacy of the add-on segments through the Defend the Honor weekly releases, however, no official press or news release or letter was issued by the organization after the premier of *The War*. The organization nevertheless remained active by the continued effort of urging people to send in their

protests to PBS officials. The Defend the Honor website also continued to feature newspaper editorials on the controversy.

## CONCLUSION: LESSONS LEARNED

John Bodnar's statement in *Remaking America* regarding the potential for subgroups within the "vernacular culture" to clash resonates with the story over the Burns controversy as it unfolded among the various players. In the end, the various Latino/a organizations succeeded in assembling a united front against the omission of the Latino/a and Native American perspectives in *The War* in order to force the issue with PBS and Ken Burns. Although the unified front ultimately did not hold—as demonstrated in part by the May 10<sup>th</sup> 2007 agreement between the American GI Forum, the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility, and Florentine Films—the rhetorical negotiation itself serves to reveal important lessons.

Stephen H. Browne points to one such potential lesson at the conclusion of his book review of several titles, Bodnar's text being one of them, which relates to the nature and ownership of public memory. Browne states that all four authors in a sense "read as many rhetorical critics are beginning to read" (249). Bodnar explains that "Together, they [the four authors] negotiate—they do not resolve—productive tensions between form and content, text and context, coherence and fragmentation; by seeking to avoid reductions and yet to provide a basis for generalization; by candidly identifying their own history and role in the given enterprise" (249). Although Browne's insight pertains to textual negotiations, extending that line of thought allows one to see that through their rhetorical reception to Burns' *The War*, representatives and individuals from the Latino/a

community actively engaged in the negotiation over the historical memory of the American experience of World War II.

*The War* created the opportunity to foreground the continued ignorance and amnesia of popular mainstream historical documentary filmmakers like Burns and of national organizations that support him like the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) and PBS. The public debate which ensued as a result of the initial omission of Latino/a and Native American perspectives in *The War* was used by many from the Latino/a community to educate mainstream organizational leaders, or what Bodnar calls the “official culture,” about an important aspect of American history. Adopting this assertive stance, which aimed at educating and which also came with the intention of forcing a revision of exclusionary national narratives, is the lesson I have learned from analyzing the rhetorical dynamics involved in the Latino/a reception to Burns’ *The War*.

It is important to note, however, that in addition to ignorance, popular mainstream filmmakers like Burns may very well also be operating from a debilitating position of self-centeredness. That is to say, powerfully influential people like Burns are making choices without acknowledging that there are other ways to think about things. Burns’ commentary in Episode One regarding the self-centeredness of human beings—through the inclusion of a text assigning Luverne, Minnesota, as “center of the universe,” for instance—is actually the theme of a commencement address delivered by author and keen observer of American contemporary life, David Foster Wallace, to the graduating class of Kenyon College in 2005. In his commencement address, Wallace offered his thoughts on the relationship between the true value of a liberal arts education and the human tendency of each individual to—as Burns states, think “they’re the center of the universe.” As

Wallace states, “It’s a matter [teaching one how to think] of my choosing to do the work of somehow altering or getting free of my natural, hard-wired default setting which is to be deeply and literally self-centered and to see and interpret everything through this lens of self. People who can adjust their natural default setting this way are often described as being ‘well-adjusted’” (“Commencement”).

Wallace further contends,

I have come [...] to understand that the [...] cliché about [a Liberal Arts education] teaching you how to think is actually shorthand for a much deeper, more serious idea: learning how to think really means learning how to exercise some control over how and what you think. It means being conscious and aware enough to choose what you pay attention to and to choose how you construct meaning from experience. (Wallace “Commencement”)

Wallace’s remarks resonate with my rhetorical analysis of *The War* with regard to Burns’ relationship to his awareness of the effects of his choices. The controversial omission of Latinos/as and Native Americans from his original version of *The War* centered on the issue of the particular choices Burns made to represent the American experience in World War II.

In “The Historian, the Filmmaker, and the Civil War,” historian Leon F. Litwack speaks to the negotiation of historical memory he believes is not only possible, but necessary between filmmakers and historians Litwack states, “Both filmmakers and historians need to engage the public in the social complexity and diversity of the past, and

to do so in ways that are conceptually persuasive, using a variety of individuals, events, ideas, and cultural documents” (139). Litwack moreover, states,

They need to bring into historical consciousness the perceptions and experiences of people—women and men—ordinarily left outside the framework of history [...] some of whom chose to dissent from the national consensus and opted for the highest kind of patriotism and loyalty to their country—a willingness to unmask its leaders and subject its institutions and ideology to critical examination. (139)

In his own piece in the same collection of essays where Litwack’s essay is found, Burns states that he believes his series, *The Civil War*, was already complex enough.

“Interestingly,” Burns states, “we also found in the Civil War series that creativity was complexity” (“Four O’ Clock” 167). Burns further states, “Too often we manipulate the facts of history to paint a simplistic, often rosy, view of what happened. We found that by lifting up the rug of history and sweeping out the dirt, we did not in any way diminish the force of our narrative” (167).

One of the “great lessons” Burns claims to have learned due to the reception to *The Civil War* was “[...] how much we had to question assumptions, doubt easy solutions, verify continually what already seemed to have worked, and constantly avoid the notion that we knew what the truth was in advance” (166). Moreover, Burns claims to believe that “[...] in simplification we murder, in complexity we are faced with untidiness, to be sure, but also a good deal of truth” (167). Based on Burns’ comments in reaction to the questioning of his perspective in *The Civil War* from academic historians, it seems apparent that he is interested in striving for only partial truths which conform to

documentary film conventions to produce a harmonious tune. More than this, Burns seems to believe that his understanding and treatment of such complex events as the U.S. Civil War and the U.S. involvement in World War II are complex and nuanced. Audience reception has shown him time and again that his cultural understanding indeed is far from sophisticated or complex enough because he does not have access to—and does not seem all that interested in until pressured—the experiences of ethnically-diverse Americans beyond that of African Americans or, as in the case of *The War*, Japanese Americans.

Perhaps Geoffrey Ward states the terms of the negotiation—for filmmakers—best when he explains, “Television is better at narrative than analysis, better at evoking emotions than expounding complex ideas. It requires simplification—which can easily lapse into *over*-simplification” (“Refighting” 148). Ward further states, “One must resist the temptation to lecture the viewer—or must disguise one’s lecturing so skillfully that the viewer’s thumb, hovering always now over the channel-changer on his or her remote control, does not take that fatal plunge” (149). One lesson which audience reception—both that of historians in response to *The Civil War* and Latinos/as as well as Native Americans to *The War*—has imparted to Burns and his team is that the United States viewership consists of a much more diverse and complex community than they have traditionally imagined and evoked, that is, “older, white, male, and upscale.”

Although the strongest rhetorical appeal Latinos/as used to try to persuade—that of appealing to democratic principles—was not ultimately strong enough to move the “official culture” in 2007 to make meaningful revisions to a national narrative, the U.S. Latino/a community nevertheless did succeed in making a strong impact on the cultural landscape through their protest and remarkable initial consensus. It is this attempt to force

change in the name of progress and ethical inclusion in the context of a relentlessly exclusionary “official culture” which holds the lesson and inspiration for me. Pérez-Torres states that “At its most productive, Chicano culture seeks to make present a moment of insight, an ethical awareness. This critical awareness may, in the end, prove the most enlightening legacy of our conflicted and tenebrous colonial past” (219).

Despite the fact that many of the Latino/a representatives may not refer to themselves as “Chicano,” they nevertheless functioned as a culture “seek[ing] to make present a moment of insight” which was borne out of a contemporary reflection on the past, specifically on the sacrifices made by Latinos/as of the World War II generation.

Another lesson imparted to Burns and his crew by the Latino/a audience reception to *The War* has to do with Dirk Eitzen’s argument that people also evaluate historical documentaries through the non-rational criteria of whether or not they are moved by watching the film. So even on the grounds of Burns’ strength and skill in symbolically representing “emotional” truths as a so-called “emotional archeologist,” *The War* failed in its principal intention to move audiences by the courage and heroics of “ordinary” Americans. Burns failed in executing his signature move in *The War* because he failed to imagine that Mexican American and other Latino/a viewers—as well as Native American viewers—would demand, in 2006 and 2007, to be included in his epic as “ordinary” Americans. Burns did not, however, fail to move them into action in protest of his film.

Fabrizio asked Burns if there is “one particular center of gravity for the war series” in his interview with him on *Utah NOW*. Burns states that

This [the film] is about how a nation, who when those guys land at Omaha beach they’re not after reward or empire or conquest, they are after an

idea. And I want to know what that idea is, what makes you get off that boat. You're some farm kid from the Middle West, what makes you get off that boat in the face of those odds and do that for an idea. And that's what we've been about. (Burns *Utah NOW* interview)

If Burns is genuinely interested in the “idea” that makes young men and women risk their lives, he ought to expand his imagination to meaningfully include Mexican Americans as well as other Latinos, for instance, when he refers to “those guys [who] land at Omaha beach.” One reason he ought to do so is in order to treat his own wounds, i.e., the remnants of the cancer which he states in an interview overpowered both his mother and, as he saw, a United States clashing over civil rights when he was a young boy. This cancer has in turn prompted Burns to work out a particular question through each of his projects: “The question, while never ever answered, only deepens with each film, and mutates and transforms into ‘Who am I?’” (Goldsmith 10).

Burns certainly stands to gain by at least listening to the stories and experiences told from a Mexican American perspective because they tell the tales of the men and women who risked their lives for a country where they were discriminated against before and even after their service in World War II. The stories of the Mexican American and Latino soldiers of the World War II era also significantly point to a cancer which continues to consume the United States today when “official cultures” work to keep Mexican Americans invisible in national narratives. The lesson for Burns as a result of his controversial historical documentary films is to perhaps focus on a deeper understanding of the “idea.” If Burns wants to forcefully address Jameson’s notion that “History is what hurts,” one place he ought to start is by asking Mexican American and

Latino veterans the question: “what makes you get off that boat in the face of those odds and do that for an idea.”

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