Spectral Soldiers: Domestic Propaganda, Visual Culture, and Images of Death on the World War II Home Front

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This essay argues against the prevailing historical conception that George Strock's graphic photograph of three lifeless Marines—published by Life *magazine on September 20, 1943—was the definitive point when domestic U.S. propaganda began to portray increasingly grisly images of dead American soldiers. After considering how the visual culture of the home front made the photo's publication a dubious prospect for the government, I examine a series of predecessor images that arguably helped construct a rhetorical space in which such graphic depictions could gradually gain public acceptance and that, ultimately, ushered in a transformation of the home front's visual culture.*

> [The] audience must be *prepared* for a work of art.
>
> –Kenneth Burke[1]

By 1945, grisly depictions of dead GIs were a common sight on the U.S. home front. Many civilians in that last year of World War II doubtless found themselves gazing uncomfortably at a gruesome War Advertising Council (WAC) pamphlet, its cover displaying the photo-

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graph of an American soldier's mangled body. The GI in the photo was slumped on a deserted battlefield, visible blood stains punctuating his painful suffering. An official U.S. Army poster of the same year showed an even more graphic image. In the words of World War II veteran Paul Fussell, it reproduced a photograph of "the awkward, ugly cadaver of a tank crewman sprawled amidst realistically messy battle detritus." This soldier's field jacket, continued Fussell, was "rumpled and torn, covered with spots of dirt—or blood. The point? 'This happens every three minutes. STAY ON THE JOB AND *get it over*.'" Fussell is perhaps too genteel to have noted that in the army's attempt to motivate the home front for the final stages of the war, it had chosen an image in which the GI's legs had been blown off; even more horrifying, the remaining torso was covered with maggots. Truly, the visual experience of World War II on the U.S. home front found its apogee in the disturbing and stark appeals of the war's final year.[2]

Such graphic depictions must have been all the more shocking in their contrast with the images that preceded them. In 1942—the first full year of the war for the United States—civilians on the home front would have found it hard to avoid portrayals of vigorous and fit American soldiers who were enthusiastically training or on their way to a seemingly exciting engagement with the enemy. The cheerful sailors and handsome Marines selling Dot Snap fasteners, Plymouth Cordage ropes, and Hamilton watches somehow managed to seem carefree and vigilant at once. Their handsome, all-American faces and studied poses portrayed an aura of readiness and courage for the thrilling struggles to come, even as the horror and destruction of war remained an invisible subtext.[3]

This contrast between the untroubled imagery of 1942 and the horrific depictions of 1945 has not escaped the attention of scholars who study the visual experience of World War II. Fussell, for example, notes the increasingly violent sequence of the war's images, calling it an "inexorable progress[ion] from light to heavy duty." George H. Roeder Jr. points to the "visual antithesis" between the war's "earlier imagery," which "created an aura of cleanliness, order, and brotherhood," and the violent images of 1945. And Susan D. Moeller remarks on the "considerable change over time in the aesthetics" of the conflict's "images of death," leading, by war's end, to pictures graphically displaying death's "unvarnished facts" and "vividness."[4]

In an attempt to account for the dramatic crescendo of dead U.S. soldier imagery on the home front, several scholars have proposed what has become the default historical narrative on the matter. This explanatory narrative suggests that there was a singular, definitive turning point between the innocent images of the war's early years and the gory depictions at its climax. The turning point allegedly occurred early in the fall of 1943 as a result of the government's growing concern that Allied successes on the war's various battlefronts were fostering a sense of civilian complacency on the home front. Up to that point, newsreels, posters, and media photographs had uniformly spared American viewers the awful reality of seeing their own war dead, a trend made official by government and military censorship standards.

To fight against the perceived sense of domestic malaise, according to the standard narrative, President Franklin D. Roosevelt directed that selected images of American casualties be released to the public from the military's censored "Chamber of Horrors." The administration's hope, explains Peter Maslowski, was that seeing this more graphic side of the war would produce "an informed and inspired public" that "would endure inconveniences without complaint, produce more war materiel, buy war bonds, and participate in Red Cross blood drives." There appears to be general agreement among scholars that FDR's decision allowed *Life* magazine, on September 20, 1943, to become the first publication of the war to print a photograph of dead U.S. soldiers—George Strock's haunting image of three Marines washed up on New Guinea's Buna Beach. As Kenneth Paul O'Brien attests, many other publications followed suit in the succeeding months, all "providing more graphic representations of death and pain than they had before" in support of the administration's aim of shocking the home front from its perceived complacency. In retrospect, the subsequent crescendo of violence and gore that pointedly aimed to reshape the home front's morale is so striking that Life.com recently dubbed Strock's Buna Beach shot "the photo that won World War II."[5]

This standard historical narrative of the war's home front imagery insinuates that by "playing the death card," to use Roeder's phrase, the Roosevelt administration crossed a sort of visual Rubicon in September 1943, a point beyond which slouched the bloody American corpses of 1945. Yet when considered from the perspective of scholarship on visual culture, this account of the visual shift from light to heavy duty (as Fussell put it) is

unsatisfying. Toby Clark argues that war propaganda typically deploys "conventional visual codes *already established* in mass culture."[6] The death card narrative, in contrast, explicitly denies that dead U.S. soldiers were a preexisting aspect of the home front's visual experience. How is it, then, that such images could have emerged so effortlessly as effective propaganda devices, let alone as a deliberate visual strategy? In short, the position that one week dead GIs were not visible on the American home front and the next week they were visible appears to obscure more than it reveals about the rhetorical use of death imagery during the war years.

My contention in this essay is that more clarity on the visual progression from light to heavy duty is available when one studies the home front imagery that emerged in the months *before* the Buna Beach photograph appeared. Scrutiny of the home front's popular publications throughout the first half of 1943 points to the striking emergence of what might be dubbed *medium duty* images. These portrayals, although they generally relied not on photography but on detailed drawings, nonetheless add a vital element to the historical understanding of the progression of graphic propaganda on the home front. At the same time, this subgenre of depictions provides important insight into the public rationale for the display of such disturbing imagery to citizens who had previously been shielded from the war's most graphic material.

The most prominent of these images appeared as part of the "Every Civilian a Fighter" campaign—a national advertising effort that was the result of collaboration among the Office of Civilian Defense (OCD), the WAC, and the Magazine Publishers of America (MPA).[7] I examine three of the campaign's ads—each with its graphic image of a dead or dying American soldier—as a case study of the ways in which the Roosevelt administration's September 1943 death card gambit tacitly relied on the visual precedents established by prior imagery. In the case of OCD's ubiquitous ads, I argue that their potentially shocking nature was strategically attenuated in at least two ways. First, the campaign modulated the images' ostensibly profane depictions of death by emphasizing the related themes of *sacred* and *sacrifice*, thereby offering a palatable means for those on the home front to interpret the drawings. Second, the campaign used the images to disentangle a widespread preexisting trope, the CIVILIANS ARE SOLDIERS metaphor, doing so in a way that was less threatening to viewers who identified strongly with the nation's military. Although the immediate

impact of these ameliorating strategies was to frame the disturbing images in OCD's campaign as more acceptable to those on the home front, I argue that their long-term impact was to help construct a rhetorical space for graphic images of American battlefield death, a space that was exploited by the government with increasingly stark appeals throughout the remainder of the war.

The essay develops these claims in three movements. The initial section focuses on both the troubled practice of thanatography and the metaphoric connection between civilians and soldiers on the U.S. home front, emphasizing the complex relationship of these factors to the domestic visual culture of the early 1940s. The second section turns to the case of OCD's "Every Civilian a Fighter" campaign itself, exploring the means by which it mitigated the potentially volatile impact of its death imagery even as it constructed an elaborate appeal involving both guilt and redemption. The concluding section then reconsiders such medium duty images within the long-term context of the home front, suggesting that their potential influence on what it was possible to see during the war points to the inevitable malleability of visual culture.

World War II Visual Culture, Thanatography, and War Metaphors

Due to the vast distances between the American home front and World War II's various battlefronts, the only way that most civilians at home could see the ongoing war was through a mediated filtering process. The Roosevelt administration had good reason to want to avoid losing control over the visual content of those media sources. As Dickran Tashjian explains, the nature of the war effort "necessitated the government orchestration of visual images, deemed more dangerous than written commentary because of their potentially broad impact."[8] In illustrated magazines, newspaper photographs, movie house newsreels, and advertisements, U.S. civilians thus encountered a potent, prepackaged means of visualizing the war. Because such images were the primary (and usually the only) means by which civilians could see depictions of the conflict, the images' ability to impact those at home was tremendous. Hence, a thorough understanding of the home front relies on the comprehension of the wartime visual experience.

Yet scholars who study the notion of visual culture contend that comprehending such imagery in retrospect is a challenging undertaking. The primary reason, as Nicholas Mirzoeff avers, is that a "visual image is not stable but changes its relationship to exterior reality" as a culture evolves. Visual phenomena make the most sense, agrees Roland Barthes, when one takes into account their "period rhetoric," the situated milieu when the "code of connotation" of a particular historical context was in effect. To understand the complex imagery of the home front, then, it is useful to follow Cara A. Finnegan's admonition to "pay attention to how the ways of seeing" in this specific culture "are privileged or limited."[9] In this sense, trying to understand in what ways home front viewers were able to see and comprehend the visual imagery in which they were immersed requires an investigation of that visual culture's relevant characteristics.

So just how does one characterize the visual culture of the World War II home front in the United States? While its characteristics are countless in some respects, two elements from the war's earliest years are especially pertinent in analyzing the conflict's initial images of America's war dead: contemporary attitudes toward death and thanatography, and the metaphoric relationship between civilians and soldiers.

From Death to Images of Dead Soldiers

First, consider the gradual banishment of death in the opening half of twentieth-century America. People have always faced death, of course, but death's cultural place in the Western world has changed dramatically over the centuries. Traditionally, human death was intricately linked with human life. Most people rarely strayed far from familiar places, and so death often took place in or near the home. Relatives cleaned and dressed the body of their loved one, and the wake, funeral, or other observance often took place in the home itself, with burial in close proximity. In a very real sense, death was a common and even ordinary feature of public life. By the mid-nineteenth century, according to Drew Gilpin Faust, "the concept of the Good Death" had fashioned dying into "an art," complete with "rules of conduct for the moribund and their attendants." Meanwhile, as Philippe Ariès points out, torture and executions were far from private but were rather "a public spectacle from which no one would have thought of hiding and which was even sought after at times."[10]

As the twentieth century neared, however, Western attitudes toward death began to evolve. With the gradual introduction of scientific medical practices, hospitals, mortuaries, death, and everyday life became uncoupled. In the view of Sigmund Freud, modern society had begun to develop "an unmistakable tendency to put death aside, to eliminate it from life." Ariès notes that as people became more likely to die in virtual privacy, what once had been a vital part of human life eventually became "forbidden death," an "evolution [that] accelerated markedly" from 1930 to 1950. In his study of American attitudes in that timeframe, Roger Callois points to an unwritten cultural decree about death: "it must absolutely not be thought about, much less spoken about." Geoffrey Gorer agrees with that observation, writing that "the ugly facts are relentlessly hidden; the art of the embalmers is an art of complete denial." In many respects, then, death had gradually transformed into a cultural taboo, a point made explicit in Gorer's references to "the pornography of death." By the time America entered into World War II, this taboo was well established; death on the home front early in the war was, to a great degree, an issue that was not discussed unless absolutely necessary and an event that was kept from sight when possible.[11]

The cultural restriction of death extended to imagery as well. The practice of depicting the dead to the living—often referred to as *thanatography*—had been a popular business practice in the nineteenth century; as Barbara P. Norfleet explains, bereaved families in the United States would routinely hire a photographer to capture the likeness of their dead loved ones, keeping the images in albums, or, frequently, placing them on display. Yet in twentieth-century America, death gradually became not only unspeakable but also essentially unseeable. Society had reached the point of "the invisible death," to use Ariès's phrase. While some families continued to photograph deceased loved ones, the images were increasingly kept private. By the eve of World War II, publicly available images of the dead had largely diminished to photographs that had been taken, ironically, when the subjects were still alive.[12]

Like most social taboos, however, the disappearance of death early in the twentieth century had its paradoxical exceptions—what Georges Bataille calls "transgressions." On the one hand, when images of death did emerge in public, they generally acted as a means of reinforcing the taboo by featuring the seemingly profane corpses of society's underclass. Dead criminals, for example, occasionally appeared in sensational pictures in the years before

World War II, such as when Ruth Snyder's 1928 execution in the electric chair was secretly photographed by the *New York Daily News*, or when John Dillinger's brutal 1934 death made for lurid front pages across the country. Lynching photographs also had a sporadic circulation in the United States, both in newspaper accounts as well as on graphic postcards. From the perspective of most of those who sought out these images, lynching photographs depicted dehumanized Others with whom such viewers could hardly identify.[13] These transgressions of the taboo, then, served a voyeuristic purpose even as they paradoxically strengthened the social stricture on visual depictions of death.

On the other hand, a very different kind of death imagery was readily available in the form of Christian symbolism. The most popular messianic depiction throughout World War II was probably Warner Sallman's *Head of Christ*, an innocuous portrait distributed by the millions to mobilizing soldiers. However, sober and (at times) bloody depictions of Christ's passion and crucifixion circulated as well. Aside from classic works of graphic Christian art distributed as part of the public's recent fascination with photographic picture books, the best-known example was likely Thomas Hart Benton's *The Year of Peril* series (completed in early 1942), which featured the painting *Again* and depicted the shocking portrayal of a crucified Christ being strafed by a Nazi fighter plane even as he is jabbed with a spear by monstrous caricatures of Hitler, Tojo, and Mussolini.[14] In such cases, the depiction of Christ's sacrificial death was of a different symbolic order than those of the underclass. If the images of dead or dying Others constituted a *profane* transgression of the social taboo against depictions of death, the socially sanctioned images of Christ's execution formed a *sacred* alternative. While both sets of images ultimately reinforced the taboo on thanatography, they did so in very different ways.

By the 1940s, these thanatographic principles began to play out in the context of the emerging world war. The existing imagery of dead criminals and lynching victims converged with grisly depictions of Axis soldiers who had died in battle only to find their remains displayed in American newspapers and picture magazines. Many civilians found the wartime depictions to be unsettling, to say the least. As *Life* reader Milt Rosner told the editor, a photograph of an immolated Japanese skull was "uncivilized, repulsive, morbid, barbarous, sickening, foul, nauseous, horrid, obnoxious, abominable, odious, offensive, shocking, disgusting, malicious, revolting, savage,

and vulgar." Such a profane transgression, in other words, merely reinforced the forbidden nature of thanatography.[15]

Depictions of dead GIs, in contrast, were more or less unthinkable on the home front early in the war. Consistent with the government's policy back in World War I—when the censorship on images of wartime death had been so strict that the military even forbade its battlefield artists from *drawing* American war dead—the Roosevelt administration acted aggressively after Pearl Harbor to ensure that images that could potentially harm morale did not appear in public. In November 1942, for instance, the War Department objected to a proposed ad campaign for a Philadelphia textile manufacturer, one proof of which showed a GI unaware that a Japanese soldier was about to stab him in the back. The government censor deemed the image "morbid and defeatist in its conception," concluding not only that it might "have an unhealthy effect on the morale of some impressionable individuals" but also that it was too similar to "the cruder type of Axis propaganda designed to terrorize opponents."[16] The possibility that viewers might contemplate the imminent death of an American soldier was apparently too risky.

The reasoning behind such a cautious censorship policy is not hard to divine. By this point, governments had begun to understand that images of the dead and dying could be used with great effectiveness by those *opposed* to armed conflict. Consider that in 1862, after viewing stereographs of the gruesome Antietam battlefield (sold to the public from a series by Mathew Brady), Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote that they gave "some conception of what a repulsive, brutal, sickening, hideous thing it is, this dashing together of two frantic mobs to which we give the name of armies." A few generations later, Germany's Ernst Friedrich published previously unseen photographs from World War I in his *Krieg dem Krieg!* As the title—translated as *War Against War!*—implies, the book is a devastating statement against modern warfare, using what Susan Sontag calls "heartrending, stomach-turning pictures" from the battlefronts as a means of showing what war really is.[17]

Thus, by the time the United States entered World War II, powerful visual norms left little room for a middle ground to interpret the occasional public image of death. Such images would generally be seen as either sacred (as in depictions of a dead or dying Christ) or profane (as in depictions of the bodies of brutal criminals, marginalized victims of lynching, or Axis combatants). Both Brady's Civil War photographs and Friedrich's World War I montages came to be coded as essentially profane, fostering wholly

negative reactions to the very concept of war. No wonder, then, that the Roosevelt administration and the military strictly rationed death imagery throughout 1942. By initially censoring rather than displaying thanatographic images of American casualties, the government was acting prudently; with the war effort going poorly at first, the most shocking images of battle could only have harmed morale. Here, then, was a powerful variable in the home front's visual culture, one with enormous implications for the Roosevelt administration's 1943 deliberations over the display of dead soldier imagery.[18]

Civilians, Soldiers, and Metaphors

A second vital aspect of the early 1940s visual culture on the home front was the ubiquitous presence of comparisons between civilians and soldiers. Roeder describes this phenomenon as the "home front analogy," while Cynthia Lee Henthorn calls it the "home front/front line juxtaposition." Both authors are referring to a trope that emerged in countless home front media sources. Considered from a rhetorical perspective, this prominent home front mode of discourse amounted to a series of systematic variations on the metaphor CIVILIANS ARE SOLDIERS. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson have contended, such metaphors are based not in language but in human cognition. Vivid metaphors like CIVILIANS ARE SOLDIERS thus can appear in verbal *or* visual forms—and sometimes both at once.[19]

Historically, the emergence of CIVILIANS ARE SOLDIERS has coincided with the relatively recent practice of total war, with civilians becoming more and more embroiled in conflicts, however distant. Since at least the nineteenth century, war efforts have increasingly relied on civilian production, financing, morale, and support. By the time of World War I, the concept of a *home* front—to complement the *battle*front—was well established, at least in the West. Governments began to find it expedient to depict civilians at home as a kind of soldier, active in the war effort and as vital to victory as any combatant. Because civilians were not actually combatants, of course, those coming across these sorts of appeals needed to interpret them using CIVILIANS ARE SOLDIERS as an interpretive frame.

During World War II, home front propagandists seized upon this metaphor, privately stressing the strategic importance of continuously depict-

ing civilians as being akin to soldiers. The Office of War Information's (OWI's) operating policies, for example, advised staffers to emphasize that "not only is the war production worker a soldier, but so, too, is the housewife, the desk worker, the men and women in every corner and kind of American life." Similarly, WAC advised its copywriters to stress "that the industrial worker, the soldier in overalls, is essential to [the] prosecution of modern warfare." Chester J. La Roche, WAC's leader, had no doubts about this strategy. "We must," he concluded, "create a *civilian* mass army—an army that man for man and woman for woman will beat Germany and Japan at their own game."[20]

Not surprisingly, then, verbal and visual iterations of the CIVILIANS ARE SOLDIERS metaphor were pervasive on the U.S. home front. Domestic propagandists created workplace posters referring to laborers as "soldiers of production," while other posters told readers that they could "shoot straight [along] with our boys." Little Orphan Annie's cartoon Junior Commandos inspired countless children to form their own local scrap brigades, even as over 20 million of the young scrappers' mothers became members of the Women in National Service—an organization whose uniforms and literature evoked a military operation and whose official song celebrated "fighting on the home front." Numerous advertisements likewise depicted laborers as GIs, their rivet guns and drills transformed into rifles. Meanwhile, one of the most prevalent images of the war was the U.S. Treasury's Minute Man insignia—present in nearly every war bond appeal—that tellingly portrayed a Revolutionary-era civilian turning away from his plow and raising his musket to fight. Still other images turned the home front's war bonds, scrap metal, kitchen grease, and even food into weapons for use by America's home front soldiers against the Axis. The metaphor thus intruded into nearly every aspect of home front life as factory workers, homemakers, children, and executives routinely read about and saw themselves in direct comparison with GIs.[21]

What is particularly intriguing about the underlying metaphor is that it has a built-in potential to rupture. At the outset of war, it might well be romantic and even thrilling for civilians to imagine themselves as soldiers, putting forth a tremendous and courageous effort for their country. Yet as wars progress, frontline combatants often suffer painful wounds, lose limbs, or die in agony on stark battlefields. Because the bodies of these soldiers are "central to definitions of national identity," as Paul Achter attests, their

disfigurement or death inevitably "threatens the connection between civilians and injured service members."[22] Hence, what is doubtless a motivating and uplifting metaphor for the home front as a war commences develops an uncomfortable tension as civilians find themselves united conceptually with those who are being injured, maimed, or killed in battle. Visual depictions of such casualties, of course, only compound the tension.

This inherent fissure in the CIVILIANS ARE SOLDIERS metaphor was a second powerful variable underlying the 1940s visual culture as the Roosevelt administration deliberated over the initial release of its gory battlefield imagery. Even before Pearl Harbor, the government had been favorably comparing Americans to their military counterparts, and so the metaphor was deeply entrenched in the home front's language and consciousness. Now, however, officials were considering a drastic policy change, one that could dramatically alter how civilians understood their role in the conflict. After all, it is one matter to identify with the depiction of a dauntless, heroic GI; it is another matter to identify with the depiction of a mangled, bullet-ridden corpse.

Therefore, by 1943 the Roosevelt administration, itself conversant in the visual culture of the time, seemed to recognize that it might be in a rhetorical corner. Government officials were well aware that as the fortunes of war gradually turned toward the Allies, the public's assurance of victory was turning into complacency. Worse, after months of being metaphorically valorized as healthy, vibrant soldiers, the home front was seemingly oblivious to its own malaise. Ironically, however, the most obvious course of action—for the administration to release graphic imagery of the country's war dead as a means of shocking the public—would have both violated a cultural taboo and come up against the important conceptual link between those on the home front and those on the battlefront.

For these reasons, the release of the Buna Beach photograph and its follow-ups was a tremendous risk. The government hoped that the images of American death would electrify civilians in such a way that the home front would overcome its growing complacency and embrace the war effort with renewed dedication. However, the gruesome images could just as easily have shocked viewers into a resentful awareness of war's costs and perhaps even fostered an antiwar mood. Simply put, the government's use of visual imagery was at an important crossroads, one with significant implications for the remaining course of the war.[23]

Looking back several generations later, the administration's internal debate on these issues is fairly familiar to historians. What is also familiar is the eventual fruits of those deliberations: the shocking and graphic images of the war's final months. What remains unclear, however, is just how the administration managed to open the Pandora's box filled with spectral soldiers in the unwelcoming visual culture of the moment without activating widespread antiwar sentiment or without causing a sullen and shocked silence on the home front. The following section accordingly turns to a case study of the three drawings that appeared in OCD's "Every Civilian a Fighter" campaign. Considered separately, the three ads are beautiful, if disturbing, specimens of realistic art. Considered together, however, they construct a tacit narrative, one that arguably worked to transform the visual interpretation of dead GI imagery away from the profane and into the realm of the sacred, even as it contributed to a gradual shift in the visual culture's prominent use of the CIVILIANS ARE SOLDIERS metaphor so that it became an ironic barb requiring redemptive action.

OCD's "Every Civilian a Fighter" Campaign

The OCD's most vibrant days during the course of World War II were the months following the Pearl Harbor attack. Fears of a possible Axis strike on the mainland initially gave citizens a strong incentive to support the organization's efforts. Sensing an opportunity, OCD's publicity fervently emphasized the need to develop civilian protection against enemy air raids, the organization's most familiar responsibility. It did not take long for large numbers of volunteers to answer the call. In February 1942, just as James M. Landis was taking charge at OCD, some six million Americans had already registered to work in one area of civilian defense or another.[24]

However, OCD's fortunes began to wane late in the summer of that year. The Allies gradually began to see battlefield successes, such as the U.S. Navy's pivotal June defeat of Japanese forces at Midway Island. On the home front, writes Robert Earnest Miller, the growing number of victories meant that "the perceived threat of enemy air raids diminished." Landis realized that to continue to emphasize protection against Axis bombers was a self-defeating proposition. He thus began to push OCD's volunteers to "engage in other types of community service programs," such as child care for war workers, war bond efforts, agricultural programs, and salvage oper-

ations.[25] Late in 1942 and into 1943, Landis even took a number of nationwide trips on which "he gave pep talks, reviewed endless parades, and 'bullied people into not leaving their [civilian defense] jobs at this stage.'"[26] Although public awareness of the organization seemed to be slipping, OCD's leadership was fighting to stay relevant.

WAC and MPA were also hoping to stay relevant. The advertising industry, ever uneasy with the Roosevelt administration and its New Deal philosophy, had founded WAC just after Pearl Harbor—with the unstated goal of establishing a long-term relationship with Washington insiders. It operated as a facilitator during the war, bringing proposed governmental campaigns to volunteer advertising agencies, copywriters, and illustrators. For their part, magazine publishers were similarly determined to overcome the administration's negative perceptions. Government officials felt that magazines as a group had provided lukewarm support for the war effort in the early going and were not afraid to say so. While the White House felt a special antipathy for publisher Henry Luce, the entire industry felt that it was in danger of becoming "an unimportant war medium."[27]

The magazine industry's precarious position was an important matter of discussion at MPA's annual meeting in September 1942. Albert E. Winger, the Crowell-Collier Publishing Company's executive vice president (as well as a founding member of WAC), suggested that the organization's hundreds of constituent magazines could mollify the Roosevelt administration by voluntarily organizing an eye-catching advertising campaign on behalf of a government initiative. Eight other influential magazine executives agreed to support this idea. Winger thus set to work: he talked with officials at the OWI, who referred him to OCD as an organization in need of good publicity. By December, Winger was reporting on "the great enthusiasm which Mr. Landis had shown" for the developing campaign.[28]

Beginning in January 1943, "the magazine industry's whopping new campaign," as the trade publication *Tide* put it, published full-page advertisements in 444 home front magazines with aggregate circulation figures topping 90.5 million (equivalent to about 68 percent of the country's 1940 population). The effort's goal was ambitious: to "dispel lethargy and rouse people into war activity" by "impress[ing] home front citizens with [the] meaning of total war and their stake in victory." True to its aim of using "hard-hitting" and "starkly realistic" material, three of the ads featured drawings of dead or dying American GIs and were thus potentially incen-

diary material for magazine editors to publish.[29] Yet if one considers these provocative appeals in the same sequence as they emerged on the national scene, three less abhorrent readings emerge. The readings are interrelated, but to appreciate how an individual grounded in the visual culture of the time might have interpreted the ads, I will punctuate them in sections: *the sacred and the dead; the distant and the guilty;* and *the willing and the redeemed*.

The Sacred and the Dead

Given the visual culture of the early portion of the war, initial reactions to OCD's images of American soldiers and death would have involved a series of emotional, hermeneutic tasks. As with any new and striking image, viewers had to determine precisely what they were supposed to see in each depiction, what it meant, and how they should react to it. Under normal circumstances those interpretive steps would likely have led a typical civilian viewer to conclude that in OCD's ads they were witness to unwelcome and profane images of death. The temptation to look away must have been powerful.

But the ads immediately managed to suggest that the circumstances were not normal. In fact, they provided numerous interpretive cues indicating that their artwork was not profane but actually sacred. The most obvious cues in this respect were in John Falter's *By His Deeds . . . Measure Yours*, which depicts a dead American GI on a nondescript battlefield (see fig. 1). Even a casual glance at the ad immediately suggests that its soldier represents a Christ figure: barbed wire winds around his head in a battlefield version of the crown of thorns; his left palm has a visible wound, akin to a stigma; his arms are slightly outstretched, suggesting crucifixion; a battlefield grave marker—in the shape of a cross—stands sentinel to the right; and the GI himself bears a facial resemblance to traditional depictions of Christ in Western art. The drawing all but holds up a sign touting its sacred nature.[30]

The image's sacredness relies on its rather literal depiction of a sacrifice. Etymologically, a *sacrifice* is *a performance of the sacred*—and Falter's image offers a compelling performance of what would have been for many readers the most sacred act of all. Joseph Raguckas Jr., an officer candidate at Fort

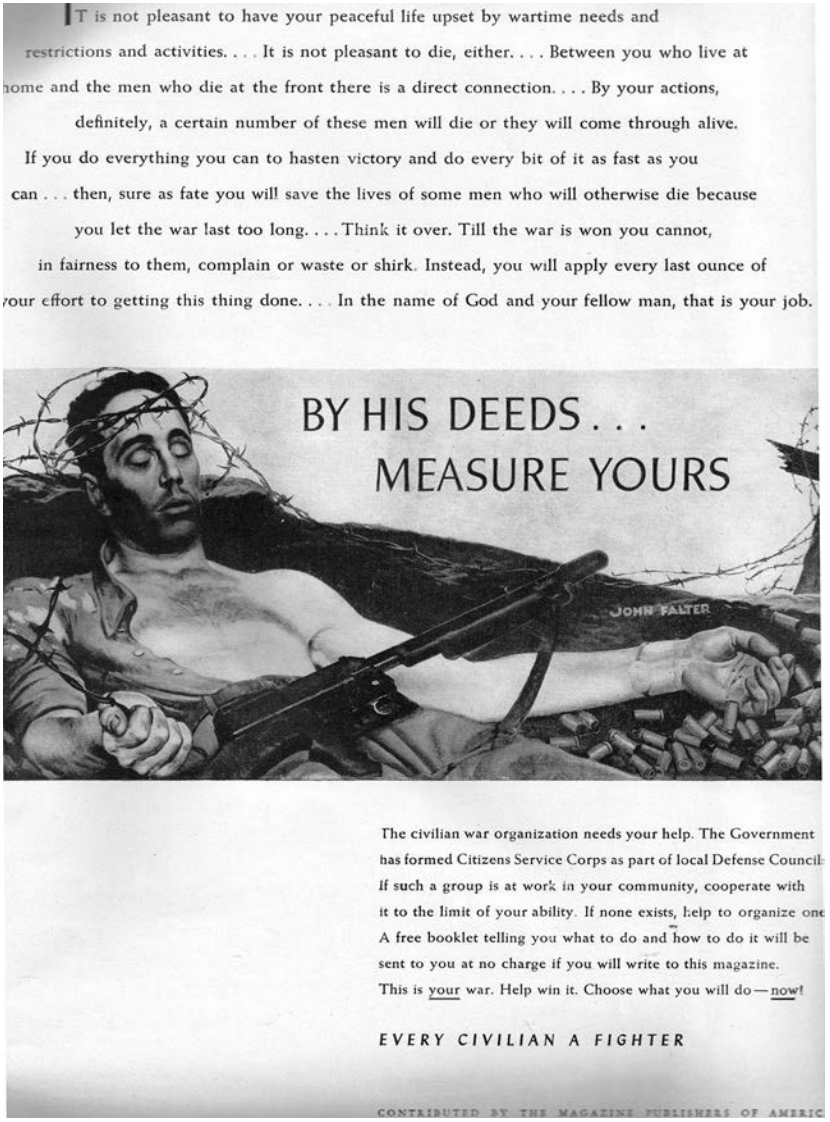

Fig. 1. John Falter's Christ-like GI offered a relatively comforting perspective on American battlefield death. Courtesy of MPA - The Association of Magazine Media.

Benning, was particularly impressed by the religious allusion. As he wrote to Falter, "the allegory was quite noticeable to anyone who saw that wire, like thorns, and the blood on the palm." Indeed, he continued, the "fallen

warrior" in the ad shows "much of the spirit of Christ's sacrifice." This casual conflation of a dead American soldier and the sacred nature of the biblical crucifixion betrays a remarkably transformative moment in that the viewer is openly gazing at an image of battlefield death even as he experiences a reassuring revelation. Far from being disturbed by the depiction of a fellow GI's death, then, Raguckas was comforted. He even noted that the drawing "has a pervading atmosphere of a long, silent and welcome peace."[31] If other viewers shared even some of this perspective, then Falter's image might have been much easier for home front readers to contemplate. Perhaps more importantly, the revelation underlying the sacrificial image served as an invitation for viewers to begin thinking about such imagery in a new way.

The other two OCD ads also established an acute relationship between America's war dead and the notion of sacrifice. Frederic Stanley's *What Did* You *Do Today* shows a dead Marine whose contorted fingers and awkward position are suggestive of his dying agony (see fig. 2). The image, by itself, would have been a blatant violation of the visual norms of the time. Yet the accompanying text hastens to offer a rationale for the depiction: the end of this soldier's life, while both tragic and heart-rending, was meaningful because he gave it up "for Freedom." Meanwhile, the third ad, Ray Prohaska's *Would You Turn Your Back on a Wounded Soldier?* offers a glimpse of a soldier who is still alive. However, his tattered uniform, vulnerable position on the ground, and the text's reference to his wounded status suggest that death might not be far away (see fig. 3). The justification for his suffering and probable death is by now familiar: he and his compatriots "are sacrificing lives to win" the war. Not unlike the reassuring fate of the Christ-soldier, the emphasis on worthy sacrifices in both drawings offers an unexpected interpretation of candid imagery involving U.S. casualties, one that arguably transforms revulsion into respectful contemplation.[32]

It is important to note that the sacredness of the three soldiers in these ads derives not just from their suffering and death but also from the *chosen nature* of their sacrifice. Falter's text intones that "it is not pleasant to die," but of course the Christ-soldier has done so anyway, apparently in the most selfless manner possible. The death of Stanley's Marine is framed as a noble, performative act, not a random instance of battlefield violence. The ad's implication is that through his determined final actions, the soldier willingly made a painful and transcendent sacrifice. The Prohaska ad similarly explains that through a "gigantic effort," such dying soldiers are "giving up"

Fig. 2. The graphic nature of Frederic Stanley's dead Marine must have given many home front viewers pause. Courtesy of MPA - The Association of Magazine Media.

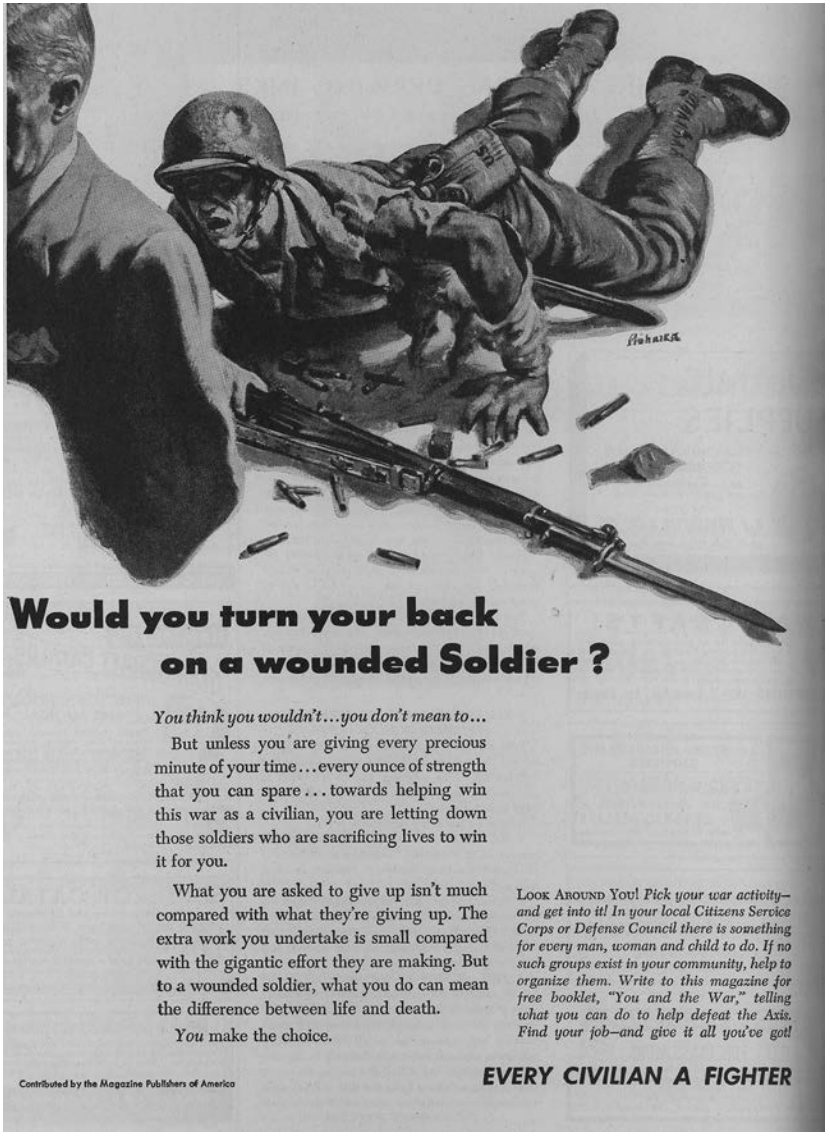

Fig. 3. This depiction, by artist Ray Prohaska, presented a dying soldier being ignored by a civilian. Courtesy of MPA - The Association of Magazine Media.

quite a bit, including their lives—all so that they can win the war "for you." These American soldiers are thus doubly sacred. Not only are they making a paramount sacrifice but their blood has been freely given, the ultimate gift of themselves for others.

In the profound nature of their sacrifice, then, these three soldiers present not a profane appeal but rather a sacred one. Civilians who might have been tempted to avert their gaze by the existing societal strictures on thanatography were immediately offered good reasons to look more intently instead. Not unlike contemporaneous depictions of Christ's crucifixion, the three OCD ads justify looking at and even celebrating these particular soldiers' deaths. It is a dissonant kind of appeal, to be sure. Yet it was vital to the purpose of the ads, which explicitly aimed to use these graphic images as a means of motivating home front civilians to undertake more intense sacrifices of their own.

The Distant and the Guilty

Those civilians, however, had another reason to look away from OCD's three ads. The CIVILIANS ARE SOLDIERS metaphor, as I have suggested, had by this point in the war casually and incessantly equated the average civilian on the home front with the heroic and steadfast soldiers of the battlefield. But such a common connection was obviously problematic when viewing the wholly unexpected depictions of OCD's dead and dying. To wit, even if these drawings were not profane, they still could have offered readers an uncomfortable extension of the visceral links between home front and battlefront and between civilians and soldiers. As the *By His Deeds* text pointed out, "between you who live at home and the men who die at the front there is a direct connection."

Yet Falter's text quickly went on to specify that it was referring to a *new* kind of connection between the home front and the battlefront. It was not emphasizing that civilians were soldiers at all but rather that home front behavior had a direct impact on the fortunes of those Americans engaged in battle. The conceptual link was therefore no longer a one-to-one equation but one of distant causality. In this revised view, civilians were only soldiers in the sense that their daily choices continued to affect the nation's fighting forces. Such a partial dissociation between home front and battlefront

presented a pragmatic means of dealing with the angst of witnessing the dead bodies of those with whom readers had learned to identify so powerfully.

The dissociation had an important drawback. Even as the appeal worked to remove civilians from their powerful metaphorical connection to noble GIs, it simultaneously separated civilian deeds from a positive association with the brave and worthy deeds of those on the battlefield. Falter's ad offers this implication, but it is Stanley's drawing that makes the point most forcefully. His appeal explicitly and even scornfully *contrasts* the Marine's sacred death with the viewer's deeds: "What did *you* do today?" The text even restates the question in the viewer's voice: "What have *I* done today for freedom?" The obvious implication is that the reader has not done very much at all, especially when compared to the soldier's visibly painful death on behalf of that freedom. Seen in this light, buying war bonds and driving less to save fuel and tires are no longer the valiant, soldierly efforts on behalf of the war effort that they had been previously. Without the metaphoric connection to worthy soldiers, such actions must have seemed to be rather tame efforts.

Still, it is Prohaska's ad that inflicts the deepest wound for home front readers. "You don't mean to," intones the text, but "you are letting down those soldiers." The full meaning of these words is evident in the drawing, which is the only one of the three in which a civilian appears. In the upper-left corner, a businessman is partially visible. His well-dressed appearance offers a sharp contrast to the soldier, whose sprawled position and spent bullet casings indicate that he has exhausted all of his fighting resources. Importantly, in previous appeals the typical civilian character would often have appeared as a vital part of the fight—the scrap metal he gathered would be transforming into a tank turret, or the kitchen fats his wife saved would be turning into explosives. Here the civilian is not only failing to help but he has also *turned his back* on the dying soldier in the warrior's moment of greatest need. The dying man's dismayed expression is therefore meaningful in two ways: not only is he facing the prospect of death but also the anguish of betrayal. Meanwhile, the civilian's face does not appear. He could be any adult male on the home front (and, by extension, virtually any civilian who studied this ad). Countless viewers would thus be able to project their own identity onto the cruel businessman and his most unworthy act.

In this reading, then, the three ads together present a devastating progression, each more accusing than the last. You are not a soldier, says one. You are not even acting comparably to soldiers, says the next. You are in fact betraying soldiers, says the last. On the one hand, the ads appear to make it easier for civilians to look at these depictions of death by distancing the metaphoric connection between home front and battlefront. On the other hand, they simultaneously offer a most unflattering contrast to combatants, using that contrast to construct an accusation of perfidy. Hence, what small comfort civilian readers might have taken in being personally dissociated from such disturbing images could well have been overshadowed by the treacherous guilt that the ads so adroitly constructed.

THE WILLING AND THE REDEEMED

OCD's three ads worked to ameliorate the problematic notions of viewing images of American battlefield death and of identifying with dead and dying soldiers. In a visual culture that steadfastly defined death as profane and that routinely constructed civilians as stalwart soldiers in the war effort, this approach was sensible, if risky. Even riskier, perhaps, was the logical consequence of the new approach. As I have contended, the abrupt rupture between home front and battlefront as constituted in OCD's ads led directly to a chilling accusation, one that surely made many readers feel guilty and worthless, their actions unworthy of their nation's valiant soldiers.

However, OCD's underlying purpose was not to condemn but to motivate. As John Berger points out, graphic images of war-related suffering naturally foster a sense of "personal moral inadequacy," prompting the desire for "a kind of penance" wherein viewers seek a way to make amends for their inability to stop the suffering. Hence, it is no surprise to find that the ads were quick to point the way toward redeeming behavior. In this sense, the appeals were strategically similar to many of the typical advertising pitches of the day. By convincing the consumer that he or she was deficient in some way (e.g., that a young man's dry scalp was damaging his potential for a romantic life), such ads would present their product (e.g., Vaseline Hair Tonic) as a suitable means of addressing that deficiency.[33]

Such was the case with OCD's three ads. Each of them constructed home front civilians as deficient, but they also offered a means by which those

civilians could address their new deficiency. While the viewer could imagine the fictional businessman in Prohaska's image simply turning around and offering a hand to the dying soldier, those at home would have to do their bit by becoming much more actively involved in the war effort than they had been before. Joining OCD's Citizens Service Corps was one possible action. Another was to write for a copy of *You and the War*, a 31-page booklet, and its detailed description of ways that the average home front civilian could become more immersed in the war effort. The booklet, as it turned out, relied on the same strategy as the ads. While it reprinted Stanley's accusatory Marine on its frontispiece, it also prominently held out the promise of redemption, suggesting that "all over America there's a new tempo, a new purpose, *a new spirit*."[34]

There is a religious connotation to the booklet's use of *spirit*, of course, but also an important undertone of the need for willingness on the part of those who would be redeemed. The elite Citizens Defense Corps, for instance, was in need of "volunteer groups" that would "accept these grave responsibilities," that would "stay at their posts faithfully," and that would remain "willing and free to be called at a moment's notice any day or night."[35] Just as the dead or dying soldiers in the ads had graciously accepted their sacrifice, so too must civilians choose to embrace their more active supporting role, difficult though it might be. In their willingness to undertake OCD's challenge, then, citizens would be rededicating themselves to the war and to supporting the nation's GIs in every way possible.

Tellingly, OCD's campaign did not try to restore the ruptured connection between civilians and soldiers. The slogan in the ads was pointedly "Every Civilian a *Fighter*," not "Every Civilian a *Soldier*." *You and the War* added that every civilian could "become *a small fighting unit* on the biggest front of all—the home front." Several American soldiers were prominent in the booklet's pages, but none appeared with a civilian, much less as part of the direct visual analogies that were so common in other public appeals. In OCD's view, at least, the metaphoric relationship between home front and battlefront seemed to have been altered for good.[36]

Perhaps this adjustment was just as well. Using three different scenes by three different artists, the campaign had published images of dead and dying U.S. soldiers in so many magazine issues that nearly every American on the home front would have had a chance to ruminate on them. The images, following Sontag, were effectively a dramatic "invitation to pay

attention, to reflect, [and] to learn," ultimately prompting viewers to ask themselves a sobering question: "Is there some state of affairs which we have accepted up to now that ought to be challenged?"[37] Fittingly, OCD had used that moment of self-reflection to introduce a powerfully dissonant element into the CIVILIANS ARE SOLDIERS trope. Being a *fighter* instead of a *soldier*, then, might have been a way of accounting for the altered visual culture that the campaign had arguably helped initiate as the tempo of the war began to accelerate in that spring of 1943. The challenging cognitive adjustment was, in a sense, the cost of redemption. At the same time, however, getting to that cognitive adjustment might have coincided with another cost: the opening of a Pandora's box that was filled not with images of heartfelt and stalwart GIs but with the gruesome scenes of American-themed thanatography.

SPECTRAL SOLDIERS THEN AND NOW: DEATH AND THE EVOLUTION OF VISUAL CULTURES

OCD's massive advertising campaign had made a grand appearance in early 1943, but by June it began to trail off. At that point, the government was becoming more and more worried about wartime inflation and was seeking a way to tell the public what to do about it. At the same time, OCD found itself in increasingly uncertain territory, under attack by a hostile Congress and unsure of its continued viability. Wisely, the magazine publishers shifted directions by volunteering to support a new anti-inflation campaign. The "Every Civilian a Fighter" effort thus gradually diminished to a few leftover ads in isolated publications.[38]

To be sure, the campaign had been a memorable one. Some 276 million individual magazine issues had featured one of its ads that spring, and countless requests for reprints—some from Allied nations—had reached OCD's headquarters. Indeed, the public's reaction to its appeals appeared to have been one of acceptance, despite the graphic content. The *Depictor*, a house organ for Edward Stern and Company, wrote that the "magazine campaign epitomizes the spirit and energy that Advertising has thrown into the battle on the home front." Not surprisingly, WAC was delighted when its researchers found that the ads had achieved notably high readership rates among members of the public.[39]

Some of those readers carried the campaign's message into other contexts. "It is not pleasant to die," noted Harold T. Pease in a March 13, 1943,

memorandum. The executive for the Washington, D.C.–based National Electrical Machine Shops was trying to inspire employees to greater productivity by adopting, without attribution, most of the prose from Falter's messianic soldier ad. In April, Abbott Instrument, Inc. adapted Stanley's dead Marine drawing for a trade magazine advertisement, reminding readers of the "terrible stillness of death" even as it pitched a line of radio crystals. Then, in May, *This Week* (the weekly insert of the *New York Herald Tribune*) printed a poetic homage to the campaign, which was reprinted in other publications throughout the summer. One stanza must have had a familiar feeling to those who read it:[40]

> What did you do for Freedom today?
> "All that you could." Think well—
> One-millionth as much as that Leatherneck did?
> —They buried the boy where he fell.

Although the poem made no mention of OCD or of the campaign itself, there was no question that it was a tribute to one of the most indelible images of the effort, as well as to the campaign's underlying message of urgent transformation.

The "Every Civilian a Fighter" effort was thus a vibrant part of the rhetorical backdrop that summer as the Roosevelt administration began its secret deliberations about the wisdom of releasing photographs of combat death. At the same time, while the tremendous OCD effort was doubtless hard to overlook as those internal debates commenced, there were additional indications that the visual culture was slowly becoming more willing to endure images that had previously been unacceptable. The previous October, for example, *Collier's* had published "Conceal the Dead," a biting poem by the popular novelist Robert Nathan, who excoriated the government's policy of preventing those at home from "hearing the dead crying." Lewis Daniel's sketch accompanying the verse featured a garish scene of burning planes, struggling infantry troops, imploring hands, and even a prostrate GI. A few months later, OWI printed its 23rd official poster of the war, John Atherton's haunting drawing of a lonely battlefield cross. By August 1943, *Life* dared to publish a photograph of the blanket-draped body of a GI who had fallen in the invasion of Sicily.[41] While none of these images went so far as to show an actual

American corpse, they, too, were part of the visual context as the government considered its options.

Late that August, Elmer Davis finally forced the issue. The OWI director informed the White House that he was prepared to resign if the president did not reconsider the effective ban on publishing such imagery. Within a month, Roosevelt had made his decision, and selected photographs were then released for the media to use as they pleased. As *Life* and other publications began to print those images, there were some vocal complaints, as expected. However, there seemed to be an even louder groundswell of support for the graphic imagery of U.S. war dead. In fact, as soon as *Life*'s issue featuring the Buna Beach photograph became available, the *Washington Post* immediately lauded the development, tellingly bringing up the *sacred* theme as it did so. "In proper proportion," it editorialized, these sorts of graphic releases "can help us to understand something of what has been sacrificed for the victories we have won."[42] The shift from light to heavy duty, to return to Fussell's phrase, had taken a major step.

How might OCD's earlier campaign have contributed to that shift? One way to conceptualize its contribution is to suggest that its depictions were strategically placed as *medium duty* imagery. The campaign's appeals were certainly more powerful than the carefree and innocuous images dating from the early portion of the war. Here, after all, were realistic depictions of dead or dying Americans—a sight that the home front had not previously been allowed to see. But the drawings were clearly not as visceral as the later Buna Beach photograph and its successors. Despite the shock value of OCD's images, they were still works of art, creative products signed by the artists themselves. Just as important, perhaps, they had appeared in the standard format of a full-page advertisement, meaning that their eye-catching illustrations came with a slogan and explanatory text that together allowed the creators to explain and expand and direct.

At one level, then, one could argue that OCD's advertisements were essentially strategic texts that were responding to a specific exigency. As the organization had stated at the start of the campaign, its primary goals had been to help shape public morale and to convince Americans to become more actively involved on the home front. More subtly, it had hoped to shock readers without turning them away. In meeting these goals, the ads adopted a novel tactical approach. Not unlike the sacred imagery of Christian allegory, they clothed themselves in the visual idiom of the sacred,

authorizing their graphic nature and inviting contemplation. Unlike those religious images, however, they did not so much reinforce the death taboo as they suggested a change in the way Americans should react to battlefield death. "Next time you see a list of dead and wounded," intoned the Stanley ad, "ask yourself . . . what can I do tomorrow . . . [to] help them win the war?" It was an invitation, in other words, to link the vicarious experience of American battlefield deaths not with rejection and denial but with acceptance and resolve.

That novel approach prompts consideration of the "Every Civilian a Fighter" campaign from a longer-term perspective, one that dovetailed with parallel images from the same time period to help produce a lasting legacy. Clearly, by the time the Buna Beach image appeared, Americans had already seen and endured widespread depictions of dead or dying American soldiers. Such medium duty imagery had arguably carved out a new rhetorical space. The death card, to use Reuter's phrase again, had actually been played in the spring of 1943, not later that fall (albeit with incremental imagery that emerged within the context of the sacred). The next step—actual photographs of dead American servicemen—was thereafter much more feasible. Little wonder, then, that secret surveys taken after the Buna Beach release revealed that more and more Americans were supportive of the publication of such graphic imagery. Although they generally did not like having to view such material, they had gradually come to recognize the importance of overcoming complacency and the need to motivate every last person on the home front to ever greater measures.[43]

Thus, the home front's version of Pandora's box opened slowly, not suddenly. The medium duty images of dead and dying GIs in early 1943 were perfectly positioned to edge the Roosevelt administration's reluctance regarding graphic war imagery into a cautious willingness to release selected photographs of war dead to the public. Those photographs from the fall of 1943 were themselves cautiously accepted, opening the way, in turn, for even more gruesome imagery. By the end of the war, the home front was familiar indeed with dead and mangled GIs, an environment that surely made the grinding ordeal of war that much harder to bear. Worst of all, the trend continued even after the final victory. As Roeder points out, "the less restrictive practices [relating to graphic imagery] in place by the end of World War II became the starting point for the Korean conflict" just a few years later. These Korean-era "images of destruction and American death"

must have been disturbingly familiar to most viewers because the previous conflict had made them so prevalent.[44]

The widespread tolerance for images of dead and dying Americans in the latter half of World War II—not to mention the continuation of the trend in the next war—confirms that U.S. visual culture had changed, and dramatically so, at some point along the way. As I have suggested, however, rather than pointing to the Buna Beach image as the sole turning point for this transformation, it makes more sense to take a wider perspective by also considering the predecessor images that gradually accompanied the visual culture's evolution. This conclusion suggests that the means by which visual cultures can transform are not always obvious at the moment. Rather, they might seem to be relatively minor adjustments—drawings, for instance, not photographs, and death as grounded in the sacred, not the profane—that together justify and open the door for greater changes in that visual culture.

There are, no doubt, many more means through which visual culture can change. Yet here, at least, is an instance in which that change was likely due not so much to a revolution but to an evolution. Even if the visual culture of American death in World War II changed dramatically from beginning to end, in other words, it appears that its transformation was much less purposeful than previous accounts have concluded. Rather, it seems to have been the product of incremental and situational responses to specific rhetorical needs—a dynamic with which research on visual culture might well need to contend.

As for the imagery of dead U.S. soldiers, that trope has also evolved in its own way. After the televised slaughter of the Vietnam conflict, American leaders once again began to seize control of such wartime depictions, going so far as to forbid photographs of the caskets in which dead GIs returned to the United States.[45] Many media organizations appeared to agree with the policy. By 2003, however, *Time*'s Joe Klein was aptly portraying the invasion of Iraq as "the PG-Rated War." In powerful words, he argued:

> There is real danger when journalists edit the truth, especially when we sanitize the cataclysmic impact of high-powered munitions upon human flesh. There are those who say such images might induce America to become a nation of pacifists, but the exact opposite might be the case.[46]

Klein seems to have been aware, looking back into the distant past, that he was touching on a rhetorical conflict with a rich and disturbing history. Those

civilians on the 1945 home front, for their part, might have been willing to tell him just how haunting the images of spectral soldiers could become.

NOTES

1. Kenneth Burke, "Lecture 15," TS, 6, in Kenneth Burke Papers, 1906–1960, Accession 1974-0202R, box 4, folder 38, Rare Books and Manuscripts, Special Collections Library, University Libraries, Pennsylvania State University, University Park, Pennsylvania.
2. Cover of "Are We Getting a Little Tired of the War?" booklet, [1945], in 13/2/207 Historical File, box 136 [oversize], folder 206, Advertising Council Archives, Champaign–Urbana, IL [hereinafter, ACA]. This booklet "was the subject of editorials, radio and press comment throughout the country." See "Words That Work for Victory: The Third Year of the War Advertising Council," TS, 1945, 6, in 13/2/202, Communications, Advertising, Advertising Council Annual Reports, 1943–, box 1, folder 3, ACA. The army poster is reprinted in George H. Roeder Jr., *The Censored War: American Visual Experience during World War Two* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 33. Fussell's discussion is in his *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 8. For another example, see Robert Capa, "An Episode: Americans Still Died," *Life*, May 14, 1945, 40b–40c, a photo essay that showed a series of photographs of a GI shot and killed in action.
3. "He Wants His Fasteners *Right*," advertisement, *Life*, February 2, 1942, 74; "How Much Rope Does It Take to Make a Sailor?" advertisement, *Business Week*, February 14, 1942, 79; and "Some of the Things That Are Making America's Mighty War Program Tick!" advertisement, *Life*, March 16, 1942, 2–3.
4. Fussell, *Wartime*, 7; Roeder, *Censored War*, 33; and Susan D. Moeller, *Shooting War: Photography and the American Experience of Combat* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 227.
5. The "chamber" phrase is from Roeder, *Censored War*, 10; see also Moeller, *Shooting War*, 205–6. Peter Maslowski, *Armed with Cameras: The American Military Photographers of World War II* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 256; Kenneth Paul O'Brien, "Censorship and Images of Modern War: America in World War II," review of Roeder's *The Censored War*, *Reviews in American History* 22 (1994): 497; and Ben Cosgrove, "The Photo That Won World War II: 'Dead Americans at Buna Beach,' 1943," *Life.com*, October 31, 2014, *http://time.com/3524493/the-photo-that-won-world-war-ii-dead-americans-at-buna-beach-1943/*.

6. Roeder, *Censored War*, 27; Fussell, *Wartime*, 7; and Toby Clark, *Art and Propaganda in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1997), 103, emphasis added.
7. The collaboration behind the campaign is highlighted in Chester J. La Roche et al., "Should the Government Advertise?" *Public Opinion Quarterly* 6 (1942): 517.
8. Dickran Tashjian, "Art, World War II, and the Home Front," *American Literary History* 8 (1996): 722.
9. Nicholas Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 1999), 7; Roland Barthes, "The Photographic Message," in *Image—Music—Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 18, 28; and Cara A. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2003), xviii.
10. Drew Gilpin Faust, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), 6; and Philippe Ariès, *Western Attitudes toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, trans. Patricia M. Ranum (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974), 93.
11. Sigmund Freud, *Reflections on War and Death*, trans. A. A. Brill and Alfred B. Kuttner (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1918), 41; Ariès, *Western Attitudes*, 84, 87; Callois is quoted in Ariès, "The Reversal of Death: Changes in Attitudes toward Death in Western Societies," *American Quarterly* 26 (1974): 555; and Geoffrey Gorer, "The Pornography of Death," *Encounter* 5 (1955): 51, 49.
12. Barbara P. Norfleet, *Looking at Death* (Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 1993), 11–13, 95; and Ariès, *The Hour of Our Death*, trans. Helen Weaver (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1981), 611. Even *Life* magazine's 24-page sensational feature on America's war dead ("Killed in Action," July 5, 1943, cover, 15–39), published only two photographs; both were of a single flag-draped coffin. The rest of the article consisted of an exhaustive listing of names. Note that while my discussion of attitudes toward thanatography is necessarily U.S.-centric in this essay, I do not mean to imply that images of death are absent elsewhere. As Christopher Pinney points out, for example, memorial images of the dead (both photographs and paintings) are a commonplace tradition in some regions of India. See his *Camera Indica: The Social Life of Indian Photographs* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 201–7.
13. Georges Bataille, *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, trans. Mary Dalwood (San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books, 1986), 65. As Norfleet points out, in *Looking at Death*, "taboo subjects tend to encourage voyeurism" (30). Barbie Zelizer discusses photos of dead criminals in her *About to Die: How News Images Move the Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 34–39. On the circulation of lynching images, David Campbell, "Horrific Blindness: Images of Death in Contemporary Media," *Journal for Cultural Research* 8 (2004): 57. Recent research on the visual aspects of lynching is reviewed in

Cara A. Finnegan, Susan A. Owen, and Peter Ehrenhaus, "Looking at Lynching: Spectacle, Resistance and Contemporary Transformations," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97 (2011): 100–113.

14. For examples of Christian-themed picture books from this period, see Albert Edward Bailey, *Christ in Recent Art* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), *The Gospel in Art* (1916; rpt. Boston, MA: Pilgrim Press, 1936), and *Jesus and His Teachings: The Approach through Art* (Philadelphia, PA: Christian Education Press, 1942); as well as Cynthia Pearl Maus, *Christ and the Fine Arts: An Anthology of Pictures, Poetry, Music, and Stories Centering in the Life of Christ* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1938). See Benton's image and related discussion in Steven Zucker, "Confrontations with Radical Evil: The Ambiguity of Myth and the Inadequacy of Representation," *Art History* 24 (2001): 383. Depictions of Christ's tortured body were, of course, also commonplace in the form of crucifixes, both for personal use, such as a rosary, and in public church displays, such as the Stations of the Cross.
15. Milt Rosner, "Dead Jap," letter to editor, *Life*, February 22, 1943, 8; the original photograph appeared in "Guadalcanal: Grassy Knoll Battle," *Life*, February 1, 1943, 27.
16. On WWI censorship of dead GI imagery, see Phillip Knightley, *The Eye of War: Words and Photographs from the Front Line* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Books, 2003), 75; and Bernd Hüppauf, "Emptying the Gaze: Framing Violence through the Viewfinder," *New German Critique* 72 (1997): 20. The textile ad comments are in Richard P. Powell to Ken R. Dyke, November 4, 1942, in Records of the Office of War Information, Records of the Office of the Director of War Programs, August 1942–January 1943, RG 208, entry E-39, box 140, folder 10, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD [hereinafter, NARA]. The same folder contains a copy of the ad proof, called "Your Soldier Got Too Little . . . Too Late." The shocking nature of dead U.S. soldier imagery occasionally made it a useful, if minor, trope in the various peace and antiwar movements in the late 1930s. The National Circulating Library of Students' Peace Posters, for example, created a traveling antiwar exhibit whose images included a few isolated drawings with dead or dying American doughboys. It is unclear to what extent these images circulated, because the organization's records indicate that it faced significant financial straits. See "Dear Friend," fundraising letter, in National Circulating Library of Students' Peace Posters Collected Records, 1935–1951, box 1, folder "General, ca. 1935–1940," Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. For a related image that did circulate widely, see the World Peaceways antiwar advertisement "Who Goes There?" *New Yorker*, January 26, 1935, 42. The soldiers in this appeal, however, were styled as WWI ghosts (both American and German) floating ominously above their tombstones as a warning against further wars.

17. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Doings of the Sunbeam," *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1863, 12; and Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 15.
18. Even the various peace movements active during the war, such as the Fellowship of Reconciliation, seem to have eschewed dead soldier imagery. In fact, the *Conscientious Objector*, probably the most prominent antiwar publication at the time, did not reach even 4,000 subscribers nationwide, so any objectionable images it might have published during the war would have reached a limited audience. See Jill Wallis, *Valiant for Peace: A History of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1914–1989* (London: Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1991), 111–51; and T. Scott H. Bennett, "'Pacifism Not Passivism': The War Resisters League and Radical Pacifism, Nonviolent Direct Action, and the Americanization of Ghandi, 1915–1963" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1998).
19. Roeder, *Censored War*, 59; Cynthia Lee Henthorn, *From Submarines to Suburbs: Selling a Better America, 1939–1959* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), 58; and George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1980). On the CIVILIANS ARE SOLDIERS metaphor, see James J. Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front: War Bonds and Domestic Propaganda* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2006), 47–48.
20. "Operating Policies to Be observed by Domestic Branch, Office of War Information," TS, May 1943, 3, in Records of the Office of Government Reports, U.S. Information Service, Bureau of Special Services, Office of War Information, Research Division, RG 44, entry 149-NC35, box 1713, NARA; "Current Information Objectives and Proposed Programs," TS, [1942], 5, in 13/2/201, box 1, folder 3, Advertising Council Minutes, 1942–89, ACA; and Chester J. La Roche, "The Advertising Agency in Total War," address text, [1943?], 1, in 13/2/207, box 107, folder 7015, Historical File, ACA.
21. Derek Nelson, *The Posters That Won the War: The Production, Recruitment and War Bond Posters of WWII* (Osceola, WI: Motorbooks International, 1991), 8; U.S. Treasury, "Let's Hit the Bull's Eye!" poster (Washington, DC: GPO, 1942); Robert Wm. Kirk, "Getting in the Scrap: The Mobilization of American Children in World War II," *Journal of Popular Culture* 29 (1995): 228; "Journal About Town," *Ladies Home Journal*, May 1943, 15; and Kimble, *Mobilizing the Home Front*, 31.
22. Paul Achter, "Unruly Bodies: The Rhetorical Domestication of Twenty-First-Century Veterans of War," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 96 (2010): 49.
23. The administration's concerns about antiwar sentiment were not unfounded. As late as 1944, significant numbers of Americans suggested in public opinion polls that they would support peace talks with Hitler's Nazi regime. See Richard W. Steele, "News of

the 'Good War': World War II News Management," *Journalism Quarterly* 62 (1985): 712.

24. On the fears of attack, see Geoffrey Perrett, *Days of Sadness, Years of Triumph: The American People, 1939–1945* (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1973), 222; and Donald A. Ritchie, *James M. Landis: Dean of the Regulators* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 110. The only full-length history of OCD is Robert Earnest Miller's "The War That Never Came: Civilian Defense, Mobilization, and Morale during World War II" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1991). The 6 million figure is from Miller, "The War That Never Came," 161.
25. Miller, "The War That Never Came," 165. See also Ritchie, *James M. Landis*, 111.
26. Ritchie, *James M. Landis*, 114. Ritchie is quoting a letter from Landis to Samuel I. Rosenman.
27. WAC was initially known as the Advertising Council during the war but added *war* to its name midway through the campaign under discussion in this article. Similarly, some primary sources refer to the Magazine Publishers Association as the National Publishers Association, although I have found no records of such an official change. For consistency, this essay refers to the organizations as *WAC* and *MPA*, respectively. Inger L. Stole discusses WAC's ulterior motives in *Advertising at War: Business, Consumers, and Government in the 1940s* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012), chap. 2. The ending quotation is from "Magazines Go to War," *Tide*, January 1, 1943, 42.
28. MPA's initial efforts are described in "Magazines Go to War," 42. The ending quotation is from Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Advertising Council, Inc., TS, December 11, 1942, 3, in 13/2/201, WAC Minutes, 1942, box 1, folder 8, ACA.
29. The beginning quotation is from the editor's untitled reply to Ray Vir Den's letter, *Tide*, February 1, 1943, 58, while the number of magazines is from "They Served the Nation Well—Didn't Cost America a Penny," [1943], 2, in Records of the Office of War Information, Records of Deputy Chief, Bureau of Campaigns, RG 208, entry 40, box 144, folder "Reports of Advertising Cooperation," NARA. "Dispel lethargy," "hard-hitting," and "starkly realistic" are all from "Magazines Go to War," 40, while "meaning of total war" is from "Council Doings," *Printers' Ink*, January 29, 1943, 32.
30. Magazine Publishers of America, *By His Deeds . . . Measure Yours*, advertisement, *Life*, March 15, 1943, 97. Although these ads appeared in hundreds of magazines that spring, I am providing citations to *Life* because that publication remains fairly accessible to modern readers. The Falter image was the first of the three soldier appeals to appear on the home front. Even though it was actually intended to be the campaign's

second ad, *Coronet* magazine published Falter's depiction as a foldout in its January 1943 edition, just before the MPA campaign commenced.

31. Joseph Raguckas Jr. to John Falter, December 27, 1942, in John Phillip Falter Papers, 1910–1982, RG 4121, box 14, folder 6, Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, Nebraska.
32. Magazine Publishers of America, *What Did* You *Do Today . . . for Freedom?* advertisement, *Life*, February 1, 1943, 103; and Magazine Publishers of America, *Would You Turn Your Back on a Wounded Soldier?* advertisement, *Life*, May 3, 1943, 101.
33. John Berger, *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 40. For a more in-depth discussion of the sorts of ads that I have described in this passage, see Otis Pease, *The Responsibilities of American Advertising: Private Control and Public Influence, 1920–1940* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1958), 187–92.
34. Office of Civilian Defense, *You and the War* (Washington, DC: GPO, [1943]), 4.
35. Office of Civilian Defense, *You and the War*, 26.
36. Office of Civilian Defense, *You and the War*, 4, emphasis added.
37. Sontag, *Regarding*, 117.
38. The shift to the inflation effort is discussed in James G. Rogers Jr., memorandum, May 15, 1943, in Records of the Office of War Information, Records of the Domestic Operations Branch, Office of the Director, RG 208, entry 28, box 46, folder "OCD," NARA.
39. The 276 million figure and the anecdote about reprints are from "Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Advertising Council," TS, April 23, 1943, 2–3, in 13/2/201, Communications, Advertising, Advertising Council Minutes, 1942–89, box 1, folder 10, ACA. Edward Stern and Company, *The Depictor: Advertising Goes to War*, [1943], 8, in 13/2/207, box 15, folder 136, Historical File, ACA. The readership rate information is from "Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Advertising Council, Inc.," TS, April 2, 1943, 2, in 13/2/201, Advertising Council Minutes, 1942–89, box 1, folder 10, ACA.
40. Harold T. Pease to employees of National Electrical Machine Shops, March 13, 1943, TS, in Philip Hamburger Papers, box 48, folder "Re: Tale of a City—Correspondence 1943," Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, New York City; and "It's the LITTLE THINGS That Save Men's Lives," advertisement, *QST*, April 1943, 88. The poem was called "Question for Americans," as published in *This Week*, May 2, 1943, 2. Several of the poem's appearances later that summer indicated that the poet was a Tennessee munitions worker named R. L. Nicholson.

41. Robert Nathan, "Conceal the Dead," *Collier's*, October 31, 1942, 12; John Atherton, "A Careless Word . . . Another Cross," OWI poster no. 23, 1943; and "First Pictures of Sicily Invasion," *Life*, August 2, 1943, 23.
42. Davis's ultimatum is described in Roeder, *Censored War*, 11, while the quotation is from "War Information," *Washington Post*, September 11, 1943, 8. It is worthwhile to note that a few civilians were indeed shocked, at least according to some of *Life*'s letters to the editor. One correspondent, for example, wrote that the image of "mutilated corpses make[s] a mockery of sacrifice" and is just "morbid sensationalism." Others, however, were more supportive, writing that they were "glad that there is one American magazine which had the courage to print it" and that the photo was "the most inspiring thing I have read about the war." One Marine wrote that the picture "was a splendid way to bring home what is happening daily on the war fronts." See letters from Lois Halsworth, Richard Foss, Pvt. Harry Nelson, and Lt. Clinton Kanaga (among others) in "Three Americans," *Life*, October 11, 1943, 4, 6.
43. For an example of internal research on public acceptance of graphic images, see Surveys Division, Bureau of Special Services, OWI, "Public Appraisal of the War News," Memo. No. 67, October 29, 1943, 12–17, in Records of the Office of Government Reports, U.S. Information Service, Bureau of Special Services, Office of War Information, Special Memoranda of the Division, May 1942–June 1944, Nos. 1–16, RG 44, entry 164-NC35, box 1799, NARA.
44. Roeder, *Censored War*, 130.
45. William O. Saas and Rachel Hall, "Restive Peace: Body Bags, Casket Flags, and The Pathologization of Dissent," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 19 (2016): 177–179.
46. For discussion on the continuing debate over images of dead U.S. soldiers, see Michael Sledge, *Soldier Dead: How We Recover, Identify, Bury, and Honor Our Military Fallen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 177–79; Achter, "Unruly Bodies," 50; and Zelizer, *About to Die*, 20. Joe Klein, "The PG-Rated War," *Time*, April 7, 2003, 94.