Capturing the Moment: A Rhetorical Analysis of World War II Celebration

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LITERATURE REVIEW

The iconic image V-J Day in Times Square is nationally remembered for the celebration of the end of World War II. Focusing on the archival collection Victory and Peace from the National Archives, this research demonstrates a disconnection in American perceptions and the reality of culture through iconic images. Specifically I investigate the extent to which images from the 1940s romanticized, celebrated and replicated in reflection of remembrance of the World War II era. These replications do not properly reflect the true events in 1945, but rather the idea that many would like to take away from this era. The images I refer to throughout this research regarding a sudden kiss contributes to this generation’s nostalgia that comes from World War II phenomena. The relevance that this paper has to this contemporary moment contributes to the ideas of sexism, dominant American culture and the freedom of expression.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

World War II was one of the deadliest wars that our nation has been involved in. At the time, the U.S. economy was failing; unemployment was at an all-time high; and countries all over the world were in the midst of war. “In the WWII period the War II took the lives of over 35 million people throughout the world. World War II created a divide in nations with Germany and Japan representing the Axis powers and America and Britain composing the Allied powers (National WWII Museum).” One of the most popular images to come from the 1940s was the image of the sailor and the nurse embraced in a passionate kiss. Alfred Eisenstaedt was a German-American photojournalist. His work granted him a staff position for World War II. World War II created a divide in nations with Germany and Japan representing the Axis powers and America and Britain composing the Allied powers (“National WWII Museum”).

The analysis for the images of Victory and Peace will derive from the comparison of 1940s images with replications produced in the 21st century. I am choosing to compare V-J Day in Times Square with the images from the National Archives and the replication through various, internet findings and poster sales and production of the image V-J Day in Times Square in popular culture, and how these contributions to the overall nostalgia of the World War II era. I conduct a close read of both V-J Day in Times Square and New York City Celebrating the Surrender of Japan. The close read of each photo will involve taking what is seen within the image and translate that into a visual rhetoric perspective rather than using these photos in history, but an History (Finnegan, 199). The progression of feminine and masculine ideals and the rise of LGBTQ+ culture through iconic images. Specifically I investigate the extent to which images from the 1940s romanticized, celebrated and replicated in reflection of remembrance of the World War II era. These replications do not properly reflect the true events in 1945, but rather the idea that many would like to take away from this era. The images I refer to throughout this research regarding a sudden kiss contributes to this generation’s nostalgia that comes from World War II phenomena. The relevance that this paper has to this contemporary moment contributes to the ideas of sexism, dominant American culture and the freedom of expression.

METHODS

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