

**CONSUMER CULTURE AND
PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY:
THE STORY OF COCA-COLA
DURING WORLD WAR II**



MARK WEINER

As a foreign traveler can attest, the relation between food and national identity is close and strong, as deeply intertwined, perhaps, as the twin yearnings of hunger and love. Not only do citizens of most nations come to perceive some aspect of their cuisine as distinctive, nations themselves are typically associated with particular foods. Consider the people of Japan, whose collective identity is firmly based on their shared consumption of rice, or those of Scotland, who take pride in their distinguished tradition of distilling fine whiskey. These national symbols, of course, are far from arbitrary; the food that represents a nation is frequently said to reveal the special values of the people who live there. A carafe of wine, for example, often serves as the national symbol of France, in part because the complex fragrance of the beverage is a powerful reminder of French concern for aesthetic subtlety. Similarly, a steaming cup of hot tea recalls the nation of England, partly because the leisurely manner in which it must be consumed brings to mind British ideals of civil discourse. Countries are what they eat, or at the very least, people tend to think of nations in culinary terms.

The United States is hardly unique in possessing a national icon drawn from the world of comestibles. Symbolically unifying its diverse, multiethnic society, Coca-Cola is what Roland Barthes has called a "totem-drink," and more than any other food (except, perhaps, hamburgers, with which it is often served), this beverage has come to symbolize the American nation.¹ Speak with people in India, China, Austria, or Egypt, just about anywhere, and many will tell you that Coke and the United States are closely associated, if not synonymous. But while a Bordeaux recalls the celebrated complexity of the French palate, and tea the special esteem in which the British hold polite conversation, *Coca-Cola is special among patriotic symbols in at*

least one important respect: the national characteristic it represents is a political one, a democratic vision of consumer abundance known as the "American Way of Life." Inexpensive, simple for the palate, and providing a sweet, caffeinated release, Coca-Cola indeed not only embodies the egalitarian, self-directed spirit of consumer society in the United States, but also explicitly served as an international symbol of that society during the Cold War. This cultural status is reflected in documents as diverse as Billy Wilder's comedy film classic *One, Two, Three*, the renowned "World and Friend" cover of Henry Luce's *Time* magazine, and Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*.

Because Coca-Cola has served as an icon of American consumer society, it also possesses another quality unique among foods: the emotional hostility it arouses. Other culinary symbols have certainly caused great anger when they were removed from stores (one thinks of the recent shortage of domestic rice in Japan, or of Gorbachev's ill-fated attempt to curtail vodka consumption in the Soviet Union). But no other foods, except Coca-Cola, have aroused such strong negative feelings when they were merely introduced to the open marketplace, for in serving as a primary symbol of the "American Way of Life," Coke often is viewed not simply as a food but also as a social danger. Coca-Cola may be inexpensive, critics announce, but it also is the same everywhere, and so intimates the approach of cultural uniformity. The drink may be simple for the palate, easily enjoyed by all, but it also is sold from machines, and so exists outside of sanctioned locations of community ritual. Coca-Cola may provide an innocent, sweet release, but that sweetness seems to conceal the fact that Coke is manufactured by a single multinational corporation, a major locus of economic power. Such criticisms animated what Mark Pendergrast has characterized as the series of "threats and rumors [Coke faced] at midcentury around the world," including French protests of the late 1940s and early 1950s, and such criticisms continue to undergird the cynicism many direct toward Coke today.

How was Coca-Cola forged into this hotly contested symbol? That story began in the 1920s, when company president Robert Woodruff initiated a series of reforms important for the growth of his organization, including an increased emphasis on the sale of Coca-Cola in bottles, especially from gasoline stations, as well as a campaign to standardize the beverage, to make certain that "every bottle and fountain drink [would] taste exactly the same across the United States." In the 1930s Coke deftly employed film and radio to market cheap distraction to people enduring difficult times, utilized new methods of electric refrigeration in its sales (Coca-Cola tastes best over ice), and used Madison Avenue to emphasize the critical role the beverage played in the culture of the drugstore soda fountain—which, at the time, lay "at the heart of America's social activity." But while the 1920s saw Coke become portable, accessible and uniform, and the 1930s witnessed how Coke became more widely consumed, and "increasingly...performed a social function," in order to understand how Coca-Cola became deeply linked with American identity, one must look to World War II. For it was only during the war, when savvy business executives placed Coke within the smithy of global conflict, within its peculiar cultural and psychological circumstances, that this already popular beverage was transformed into an icon of national values.

This essay examines that transformation and the tactics The Coca-Cola Company used to create it, in order to explore a widely held political judgment of the consumer society Coke represents. Scholars generally believe that consumer society is hostile to the republican ideal of participatory democracy, which valorizes the active involvement of citizens in public decision-making. Many assert not only that

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the self-focused ethic of consumerism diminishes commitment to the common good, the foundation of a democratic republic, but that the fluid meaning of commodities masks the concentrated, anti-democratic power of capital. Recently, scholars have developed and periodized this judgment by focusing their attention on the 1930s and 1940s, especially on World War II, when a "far-reaching ideological redefinition of polity and society [allegedly] began to take hold." This redefinition, which ushered in the social contract of cold war liberalism, reconceived consumer items as one of the primary rights of citizenship and so refigured citizenship, in the words of Jean-Christophe Agnew, "in the seemingly innocuous language of soft drinks, arms, and household appliances." This transition formed an anti-democratic turning-point in American history because civic self-perceptions were altered in a way that privatized political consciousness, and the fluid language of commodities in which those self-perceptions were articulated served to conceal corporate power.

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Although I agree that historical evidence supports this perspective, I believe that the story of Coca-Cola during World War II can also support a somewhat different conclusion. During the war, certainly, Coca-Cola did come to play a role in how Americans understood their identity as citizens, and The Coca-Cola Company did become tightly intertwined with the American state, setting the stage for its enormous postwar expansion. But the wartime tale of Coke may not be simply one of declining democratic politics, for the history of Coca-Cola also reveals how a consumer item, a product of concentrated economic power that appealed to individual desires, could be used by the people who drank it for ends that were not private but communal. Coca-Cola was unique among most consumer products in being a food, an item whose meaning is rarely fluid but is instead created through social practice; but it is partly for this reason that I believe the story of Coca-Cola suggests a different evaluation of consumer society as a whole from that held by many critics. This evaluation, which I discuss in my conclusion, is sensitive to the ways in which consumer goods can be used in morally profound interactions between individuals and within communities, as suggested by the work of Elizabeth Cohen. It also incorporates the scholarship of those who consider goods as being "good to think," especially Timothy Breen's analysis of non-importation and the American Revolution.⁹

I have divided the following discussion into four primary parts, the first three of which deal with the history of Coca-Cola during World War II. In the first, I discuss the distribution of Coke to American servicemen, describing the extensive intermingling of Coca-Cola and the U.S. government, a relation dramatically embodied in the work of company representatives known as "T.O.'s." In the second, I examine Coca-Cola advertising, placing one particular Coca-Cola campaign within the national propaganda context in which it was produced, and that facilitated its success. And in the third section, I explore how G.I.'s actually felt about Coke, their emotional attachment to the drink, using a letter from Coca-Cola company archives to establish how American servicemen associated the beverage with both private, personal experience, and national civic identity. After discussing these three aspects of Coke's past, I briefly sketch how Coca-Cola could be used to foster participatory politics by gesturing toward the role the beverage played in the African-American Civil Rights Movement. This final section uses anecdotes whose emotional power, I believe, suggests that under certain circumstances, consumer goods, like food in general, could serve in the formation of a beloved community, even despite the largely antidemocratic forces operating within consumer society. In doing so, they also reveal how the nature of food can illuminate the nature of the culture of consumption.¹⁰

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★ DISTRIBUTING COCA-COLA OVERSEAS

During World War II, American business faced a problem. The war had dramatically increased average family income, but it also had created a shortage of consumer goods, and this lack threatened to erode brand loyalty. How could an organization protect its long-term marketing interests during the course of global conflict, emerging from a period of economic belt-tightening into one of increased sales? The solution was for businesses to keep their products in the public eye by symbolically associating them with the Allied cause. As Richard Polenberg notes, with the availability of consumer goods limited by economic rationing, "businessmen were not primarily interested in motivating people to buy more, but by linking their product[s] with the war they hoped to keep alive brandname preferences, build up post-war demand, and maintain good will."¹⁰ Over the course of World War II, then, business engaged in a variety of campaigns that linked their products with hopes of American victory; for instance, they publicly encouraged employees to purchase defense bonds, hosted company salvage drives, and spread patriotic messages over the radio and through magazines. Businesses also promised that while military conflict would temporarily create economic scarcity, it also would lead to the development of futuristic household gadgets after V-Day. In the language of Madison Avenue, one might say that businesses viewed the war as an opportunity for product placement and public relations, as well as for national public service.

The Coca-Cola Company was no exception. Like other corporations, for instance, Coke contributed to the national collection of scrap metal, especially tin, conducting salvage drives in its local bottling plants and, occasionally, helping to coordinate scrap collections for the beverage industry as a whole.¹¹ And by 1942, Coke had produced, at its own expense, a number of short, patriotic slide-films to be shown to businesses and civic clubs. One of these films, "The Free American Way"—which promoted the War Savings Program by contrasting "the life of those in Axis-ruled nations" to conditions of material abundance "here in America"—became extremely popular, generating numerous requests for copies from across the nation.¹² The real importance of such work, of course, should not be underestimated, nor should the genuine patriotism of Coca-Cola be subject to doubt. Still, such activities allowed Coke to use the circumstances of military crisis to advance its corporate image at home, to dutifully serve a nation-at-arms while helping to ensure its own postwar sales. Times may have been hard, but like other companies, Coca-Cola knew that patriotism would offer an excellent financial return on its investment.

While Coca-Cola was not unique in its desire to maintain its image through wartime marketing, it was exceptional in promoting itself among one influential group of consumers: American G.I.'s. Certainly, every astute business sought to associate its products with soldiers and sailors; if a consumer item could be symbolically linked to men surrounded by an aura of national honor, its manufacturer stood to increase sales among civilians. But Coca-Cola hoped not only to associate its product with servicemen, but also to become an important part of their lives, and it did so in two specific ways. The first was relatively simple: the company implemented a series of recreational programs to help soldiers enjoy their time off. For example, Coca-Cola coordinated a domestic tour of popular musicians, known as the "Victory Parade of Spotlight Bands," and distributed card and board game sets to military personnel. (As one naval commander wrote, expressing thanks for three-hundred "Coca-Cola Game Kits" on behalf of those "defending the American

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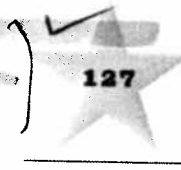
way of life," such an "expression of loyalty [helped] make life a little easier for fighting Americans in far-off corners of the world."¹³ The second way Coke tried to become part of servicemen's lives, though, was far more audacious, and here, in a tale that involves the deep interpenetration of The Coca-Cola Company and the U.S. government, is the crux of the story.

Shortly after December 7, 1941, Robert Woodruff made an astounding promise: that his organization would "see that every man in uniform gets a bottle of Coca-Cola for five cents, wherever he is and whatever it costs our company," so that Coke would be "within arms reach of desire" of every soldier. Woodruff had set a difficult goal. Even without the special obstacles posed by global conflict (shipping space was largely dedicated to war material and sugar rationing was in effect), the distributional problems of such an effort were extremely complex. Still, although Coca-Cola never became as ubiquitous a presence in the field as Woodruff had predicted, "the Boss" was able to place the beverage in the hands of an enormous number of military personnel—in part because of the extensive influence Coca-Cola maintained in the halls of Washington (James Farley, head of The Coca-Cola Export Corporation, had been Postmaster General, and former Coke executive Ed Forio was a member of the federal sugar rationing board).¹⁴ By August 1943, when the amount of Coke produced for the military reached its apex, over 95 percent of Ship's Service Stores and Post Exchanges had served the drink. In that month alone, the company shipped eight million cases of Coke to the armed forces, part of over five billion cases sent to the military over the course of the war. In the world of name-brand food, only Wrigley's gum and Hershey chocolate held such prominent places in the American military diet. Woodruff had fulfilled his pledge, with government help.¹⁵

Relations between Coke and the American state were so close, in fact, that Woodruff typically had no need to wield direct political influence to achieve his goals; instead, the state often freely sought to assist him. In 1942, for example, FDR defended a controversial policy that gave soft drink producers large quantities of scrap metal as payment for participating in salvage drives by asserting that "soft drinks... are part of our way of life" and that companies needed metal to produce bottle caps.¹⁶ More importantly, top military leaders greatly facilitated distribution of Coke by deeming availability of the beverage an important part of the war effort. These military officers, including Gen. Eisenhower, feared that a lack of Coca-Cola among American troops would "cause an increase in the consumption of alcohol," and also viewed Coca-Cola as a tool that would sustain morale.¹⁷ In this regard, military officers were not interested in serving any soda, but in serving Coca-Cola in particular, for just as servicemen frequently requested a specific brand of tobacco when asking for cigarettes, so they often asked expressly for Coke when they wanted a soft drink. In 1944, the War Department officially encouraged such selective consumption, authorizing overseas commands to order beverages by "name or description" for their supplies, further tightening the link between the state and manufacturers of brand-name products through the rules of military requisition.¹⁸

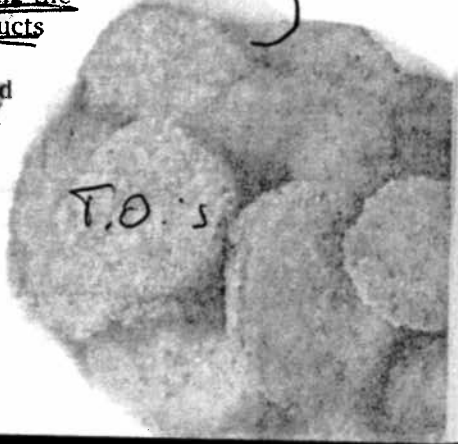
The assistance the United States government rendered Coca-Cola was embodied most clearly, though, in those responsible for physically bringing Coke to American G.I.'s, the 148 Coca-Cola representatives known in company parlance as "T.O.'s." These men were charged with establishing bottling plants and soda dispensers wherever American troops traveled, and their moniker reflected the dual status they held as

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agents of both Coke and Uncle Sam: the military gave them the status of "Technical Observers." Dressed in military uniform, T.O.'s moved with Allied forces across the Middle East, up the boot of Italy, and through the jungles of the South Pacific, satisfying military thirst while simultaneously laying the foundation for Coke's postwar expansion. The conditions in which T.O.'s worked were primitive (like others in the field of combat, they faced supply shortages, poorly trained labor, and the physical dangers of war), but they nevertheless managed to establish a total of sixty-three bottling plants in cities around the globe, including plants in Tripoli, Aden, Dongalla, Florence, Reykjavik, Khorramshahr, Marseilles, Frankfurt, Amsterdam, Okinawa, and Kobe. This was business-government cooperation in its highest incarnation, and at its most efficient.¹⁹

Coca-Cola T.O.'s were the human base of Coke's overseas development and their stories, therefore, are highly instructive. First, T.O. narratives (documented in the company magazine T.O. Digest), reveal how Coke could have assumed largely negative social meanings among those encountering it for the first time, because T.O.'s frequently acted with that problematic innocence often associated with Americans abroad. For example, on one hand, T.O. stories are filled with situations in which men face tremendous obstacles to achieve what they believe is right, sincerely laboring against the odds in order to get a job done. "I had quite an interesting day yesterday," wrote a T.O. from the Philippines in 1945.

One of the combat divisions sent a dispatcher down for me to accompany him to their operations to set up five jungle units for their division. . . . The forward line was just about three hundred yards from us and a little action was going on. The dispenser was out but the ice machine was operating. I got the dispenser operating just as the line company was relieved in the hills where they had been for quite some time. It was the first time that I have sincerely felt that I had accomplished something. Those boys lined up and passed through the line twice and I acted as the dispenser. I managed to fix the five units for the division and got back about ten p.m. It was quite a picture watching the fire power of our units by the flashes. This is the real thing and we even pack a gun into mess when up there with the boys.²⁰

On the other hand, as moving as such accounts may be, T.O. narratives are also animated by a callous ethnic prejudice based upon the same earnest view of the world. "To begin with," wrote one T.O. from Cairo in 1945,

we have about 40 natives employed and they are a constant source of both laughs and headaches. In the beginning they were very shy of the machinery and now they are very intrigued by it and their childlike love for turning switches off and on without warning is going to make the Arab death rate go way up, if it doesn't stop damned soon.²¹

T.O.'s thus exhibit in their emotions the connection between naiveté and intolerance many associate with Americans' relations with foreign peoples, a connection that some consider to be present in the nature of Coca-Cola itself, which is nonalcoholic, pleasingly sweet and full of empty calories, but is also a troubling harbinger of cultural colonization.

But T.O. stories reveal more than the nature of America's relations abroad during wartime; they reveal the nature of wartime America itself. For when the state not only allowed military officers to request Coca-Cola for their personnel, but also directly assisted the distribution of the beverage by dressing Coca-Cola representa-

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lives in military uniform and charging them with quasi-military duties, it implicitly transformed Coke into a symbol of the very cause for which Americans were fighting. After all, the state, including a significant portion of its military apparatus, was guaranteeing the availability of Coke among its most essential citizens, thereby implying that what it meant to be an American was intricately bound with the ability to enjoy a pause that refreshes, and that it was the duty of government to ensure that this ability would not be infringed. In their dual role as Coca-Cola Men and Government Men, T.O.'s therefore suggest that during the war, the state underwent a qualitative change, becoming less an organ for the exercise of republican virtue than a provider of mass-market consumer products; it literally became an institutional source of "soft drinks, arms and household appliances." In the lives of Coca-Cola T.O.'s, we seem to witness one manifestation of the "ideological redefinition" Agnew has described: the quiet steady refiguration of American identity in the language of commodities. As one group of Navy seamen tersely stated, "If anyone asked us what we are fighting for, we think half of us would answer, 'the right to buy Coca-Cola again—as much as we want.'"²²

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★ COCA-COLA AND WARTIME ADVERTISING

In order to ensure that servicemen perceived Coca-Cola in this manner, Woodruff's organization did more than distribute its product overseas, thereby implicitly refiguring American identity in the language of Coke. It also undertook a series of sophisticated advertising campaigns which surrounded Coke with the language of American identity. The company used advertising to associate its product with the symbolism suggested by the institutional status of Coca-Cola T.O.'s. Discussing the social significance of advertising, of course, is an endeavor rife with problems. When examining the works of Madison Avenue, for instance, it is easy to fall into the error of what Alan Trachtenberg has called "culturism," in which culture is characterized "as a giant mechanism, a machine not only for total explanation in light of a single dominating pattern, but a machine of total determination."²³ As Roland Marchand has documented, advertisements ultimately tell scholars more about the minds of the people who created them than of those at whom they were directed.²⁴ Nevertheless, because The Coca-Cola Company has long dedicated a significant portion of its general budget to advertising, and because initial popularity of the beverage was created largely by ingenious marketing, in the following section of this analysis, I examine a particular advertising campaign for Coca-Cola that appeared in a variety of publications throughout World War II. In discussing this campaign, which was based on the semiotic use of the = symbol, I hope to offer a rough architectural sketch of Coke's cultural meaning, especially its status as a consumer good with associations at once private and public.

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Before we begin, we first need to consider a special feature of American wartime propaganda: the unprecedented extent to which it used the strategies of advertising in films, broadcasts, and publications. In particular, propaganda created by the Office of War Information, as well as by independent corporate institutions, portrayed the need for people to do their part in the war effort not through discussions of international legal rights or deep political questions, but by appealing to personal self-interest. For example, as Allan Winkler notes, one OWI booklet distributed to merchants involved in campaigns to raise and share food "pointed out the need to 'remind people of the pleasure and deliciousness... of having all the dewy-

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fresh vegetables they want," and discouraged discussing the abstract and impersonal concept of national duty. This "positive approach," claimed the pamphlet, "which quickly answers the instinctive human question 'What is in it for me?' seems to be the *surest* way to get people to take action." Another booklet similarly advised those involved in conservation campaigns not to stress "the general, national patriotic 'why'" but the "private 'why.'" The drive behind these admonitions was to "sell the war by showing that participation in it would improve consumers' personal lives; citizens implicitly were to "purchase" the Allies (or so derisive critics of the OWI claimed) in the same manner as they might buy a bottle of soda. Thus, when a number of OWI members balked at the increasing influence Madison Avenue held over their organization, some satirized the nature of OWI policy by producing a poster that depicted the Statue of Liberty holding four bottles of Coke; the poster's caption read, "The War That Refreshes: The Four Delicious Freedoms."⁵

Despite the prominence of such personal, consumerist appeals, the messages of American propaganda were not solely those of privatization. The OWI and other information organs also used the techniques of Madison Avenue to link the private components of Americans' lives to issues of national significance. Most important, wartime propaganda frequently used visual juxtapositions to argue that objects of peaceful domestic use were intricately tied with objects employed on the field of battle, so the consumption of those objects in the United States tied individuals to remote people and events. This theme of what one might call the *moral equivalence of consumer products* was especially evident in propaganda concerning food. In one film cited by William Chafe, for instance, a wounded G.I. on Bataan exhorted his family not to be wasteful in the kitchen. "We haven't had anything but a little horse-meat and rice for days," pleaded the G.I. "And kitchen fats mom. Don't waste any. Kitchen fats make glycerin and glycerin makes explosives. Two pounds of fat can fire five anti-tank shells."²⁶ Other food-related propaganda presented similar messages. "Can HE save more grease THAN YOU?" asked one poster that depicted a scowling Nazi diligently scraping fat from a pan. "There's *Ammunition In This Kitchen*." "Save waste fats for explosives," advised another, which depicted a pan pouring grease over a panoply of falling bombs. "Take them to your meat dealer."²⁷ By creating such visual connections, these images associated the mundane objects of personal life with the matériel of national combat, thereby symbolically transforming what was private into what was public—an ontological movement of tremendous significance.

Perhaps the most affecting examples of U.S. wartime propaganda as a whole initiated such symbolic transformations by linking objects of personal importance not simply with *objects on the field of battle, but with people*. Again, propaganda about food was especially notable in this regard. Over the course of the war, OWI and corporate publications frequently depicted food as a stand-in for those physically separated from the consumer; in the case of soldiers, food was depicted as being morally equivalent to distant civilian friends, and for civilians, food was linked with servicemen. For example, a promotional from the National Dairy Products Corporation depicted a prisoner of war opening a small package and exclaiming, "Honest-to-gosh American food!" "Put yourself behind German barbed wire," invites the text, linking in its short narrative the POW, domestic foodstuffs, and readers themselves.

You're hungry and homesick. Into your hands comes an 11-pound package of food. It's all yours. Raisins, sugar, coffee, oleo, corned beef, biscuits, ham, salmon, orange

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concentrate, milk chocolate, cheese, powdered milk, soap and cigarettes. Familiar cans and packages. Labels that look like old friends. Can you imagine the gratitude?²⁸

Such a representation of food is significant, because it suggests how American propaganda facilitated Woodruff's drive to transform Coke into a symbol of national life. For if OWI and other patriotic appeals encouraged citizens to associate private consumer goods not only with the public matériel of war but also with individuals outside the boundaries of the self, then citizens were well accustomed to perceiving mass-market products as bridging the gap between personal and civic. And this division, naturally, was already blurred for a company deeply implicated in the institutional workings of the collective effort.

Arguably the most powerful use of the theme of moral equivalency in wartime advertising appeared in a series of promotionals for The Coca-Cola Company beginning in 1943. Based on the semiotic use of the = symbol, the promotionals seem odd today for the manner in which they so clearly reveal the intent of the advertiser: to associate Coke with interactions that are not private but have communal significance. In one typical ad, a soldier on leave relaxes at a drugstore lunch counter, telling stories of battle to an admiring boy, who is flanked by the smiling figures of his mother and sister. All are sipping Coke, and they seem to be joined in their talk by a prominent red Coke dispenser and a series of unfilled Coca-Cola drinking glasses. As the man stares intently into the boy's eyes, his hands form two parallel lines that suggest the movement of a plane or vehicle in combat, lines that also appear to place a subliminal = sign between the soda dispenser and the boy and his family. The headline above this warm, patriotic image states plainly, "Have a Coca-Cola = Howdy, Neighbor," while the subhead explains, "... or greeting friends at home and abroad."²⁹ Another advertisement from the campaign depicts two sailors greeting a civilian family containing a mother, father, and two admiring blonde daughters. While one of the sailors looks on and smiles, the other reaches his hand left, across the center of the image, to shake that of the father, who bows slightly. Almost directly below the point where the civilian and military hands meet is a table bedecked with sweets and Coca-Cola. The headline of the image states, "Have a 'Coke' = You're invited to our house"; the subhead notes "... or how to make sailors feel at home."

The number and variety of Coke advertisements that employed the juxtapositional force of the = is overwhelming, and a search through any popular middle-class magazine of the time will uncover scores of them. Even here, through mere written description, one can easily imagine their emotional force. G.I. letters in Coca-Cola archives, in fact, testify to that intensity, expressing in indignant tones the frustration that followed when The Coca-Cola Company seemed to promise the public more than it could deliver. "As staunch but frustrated Coca-Cola fans," wrote one group of bitter seamen from North Africa, for instance,

we are a little puzzled by your new advertising policy. In your ad of the July 24 issue of the POST, is that Marine in the desert seeing a mirage? Must be, for we have the palm trees, the sand, but no cokes. ... Here's to the fulfillment of your mirage. Don't just "tell it to the marines."³⁰

Viewed together as a steady stream of images, Coca-Cola promotionals reveal the power and clarity with which Coke associated its very private product with communal life—how within the larger context of U.S. propaganda, the company provided its beverage with meanings that were not restricted to the "private 'why'" but

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instead were more broadly national. For when Coke used the techniques of advertising to associate its product with a variety of intimate rituals constituting American social life (as well as with the notion of American cultural ambassadorship), it also asserted by implication that American social life depended upon Coca-Cola for its very existence. And the implication of *that* assertion was clear enough: that the United States, as it was known and loved, was almost inconceivable without Coke. During World War II, the masters of persuasion were fast attempting to become the masters of American identity.

★ COCA-COLA AND THE MEMORY OF HOME

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But did soldiers actually come to perceive Coke as a symbol of the United States or of their own identity? The evidence in the third part of my discussion suggests that they did. The headquarters of The Coca-Cola Company in Atlanta, Georgia, contain extensive archival holdings concerning the history of company products, materials intended largely for in-house marketing use. Among these astonishingly rich documents are scores of letters from American soldiers pleading with company executives to send packages of Coke to specific regiments in the field, correspondence that testifies to the special place the beverage held in the minds of servicemen abroad. These letters were created within a peculiar psychological context, and it is important briefly to consider that context before discussing them in any detail. In particular, we should remember that, like all wars, World War II was a lonely endeavor. Not only were men forced to encounter the horror of mechanized death on an unprecedented scale, they were taken from their families and sent across an ocean to foreign lands. Afraid, deprived of sex, and most of all, terribly homesick, the impoverishment faced by soldiers and sailors was material, but more important, it was emotional. As any reading of wartime memoirs will reveal, the popular language of World War II was based not on masculine fantasies of adventure or visions of national glory, but on solitude; its words signified loss.

The fact that servicemen were lonely becomes significant when we recall that food often serves as a cathexis for emotions, and that familiar foods can ease a troubled heart. As the work of Paul Fussell indicates, when soldiers used their diaries to comment on foods they enjoyed, which they did extensively, they were expressing more than simple physiological pleasure with what they had been served at mess. Instead, they implicitly were using the opportunity of a meal to recollect the distant comforts of civilian life. "Sometimes [servicemen's diaries] almost make you weep," writes Fussell.

The American sailor James J. Fahey notes in his diary in July, 1944: "We had Jello for chow at noon, this was the first time we had it in about a year." And eleven months later, another red-letter day: "This morning we had something for breakfast we never had before. When they gave us fried eggs we almost passed out. This was the first time we ever had fried eggs while in the navy," he writes, and he's been in it for years.³¹

Or consider Ernie Pyle's description of the best-cooked powdered eggs he encountered during his wartime travels: "Rogers cooked with imagination," writes Pyle.

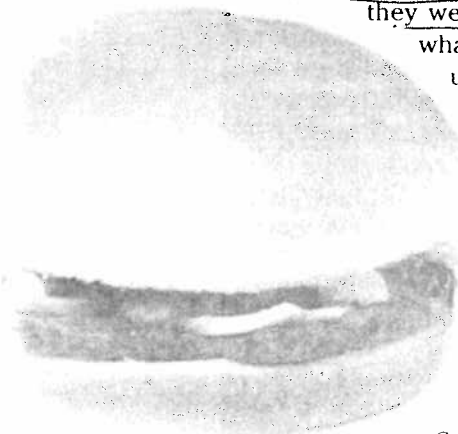
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Here's how he made powdered eggs for approximately a hundred men: He took two one-gallon cans of egg powder, poured in sixteen cans of condensed milk and four quarts of water, mixed it up into a batter, then dipped it out with a ladle and fried it in boiling lard. The result looked like a small yellow pancake. It was frizzled and done around the edges like well-fried egg, and although it tasted only vaguely like an egg still it tasted good. And that's all that counted.³²

Despite its self-consciously comic focus on quantity and technique, Pyle's description suggests his poignant attempt to console himself with thoughts of home; in the Biblical cadence of his concluding sentence, one hears Pyle's appreciation for innovative cooking, but also something more. In Pyle's work, fried eggs implicitly become a touchstone of civilian life.

While other comestible items seem to have played a similar role in servicemen's lives, especially milk and ice cream, apparently none were so powerful as Coca-Cola.³³ Reading G.I. correspondence about the beverage, in fact, can be a deeply moving experience, for it paints a highly charged portrait of Coke as the only stable object in a world of total chaos, as the one familiar point-of-reference in acutely disorienting situations. "No ice cream, no milk, no eggs, no white bread, no butter, punk coffee, tea, tea, tea, no chicken, no steaks, no vegetables, no fruit, warm beer," wrote one soldier from England, where shortages were especially severe. "[But even here] I can buy ICE COLD COCA-COLA!!! Ain't it a wonderful world?"³⁴ "I always thought it was a wonderful drink," wrote another soldier from the South Pacific, "but on an island where few white men set foot, it is a God-send... I can truthfully say that I haven't seen smiles spread over a bunch of boys' faces as it did when they saw the Coca-Cola in this God-forsaken place."³⁵ For men in the field, Coca-Cola was a firm rock in a sea of cultural confusion, a morale-boosting token of a place that seemed exceedingly remote.

Indeed, servicemen's writings indicate that Coke was such a powerful talisman of the United States that it reminded them of actual moments of their experience as civilians. Coca-Cola triggered memories of the specific events in their prewar lives. Most importantly, G.I. letters attest that Coke was a potent, even Proustian conjurer of the social life of the drugstore soda fountain, in which the beverage had played an increasingly important role since the 1930s. Again and again, soldiers noted the connection between Coca-Cola and their local gathering place. "The ole 'Coke' sign," wrote one serviceman from Sicily, "brings every soldier back to his moments in his favorite drug store, where he sat and conversed with his friends."³⁶ "The Officers' Club, we call it 'Tony's Tavern,' was merely a tent pitched on the sand," wrote another, "but in there, with a blue ribbon tied around it, the 'Coke' would always draw such comments as, 'Boy I'd give a month's pay for an ice-cold Coke.' The shape of the bottle, the memory of the refreshing taste, brought to mind many happy memories."³⁷ Even General Eisenhower, a noted Coca-Cola aficionado, told reporters, "Being a general is a lonely life. I wish I could be home and go down to the cafe this morning and have a coke with the gang."³⁸ Countless newspaper articles about G.I. life tell a similar story. "The first thing Colonel Moore did after leaving the station," observed a reporter for *Life*, "was go uptown in Villisca to his old drugstore and buy a Coke and a hamburger, the first in 16 months."³⁹ In other words, soldiers seem to have perceived Coke as a part of the peaceful rituals of domestic fellowship, and it recalled for them the friends they had cultivated within those folk conventions.

Unsurprisingly, then, servicemen also associated the beverage with American women—with what Col. Robert Scott called The American Girl—because drinking Coke had been a part not only of friendly camaraderie, but also of wholesome

romantic courtship.¹⁰ As one Coca-Cola employee noted, "You want to know what makes Coke so romantic to so many people? ... Well, maybe that starry-eyed kid who lives next door to you was sitting in a drugstore booth with his girl one night, and maybe they were drinking Coke, and maybe while they were drinking that Coke was the first time that girl let that boy put his hand on her leg."¹¹ Thus, in numerous letters, G.I.'s refer to bottles of Coke in the same manner they might discuss the opposite sex, though using hyperbolic language appropriate to situations of psychological stress. Consider the words of one soldier to his mother, which reveal an obsession well understood through a Freudian interpretive framework:

While obtaining the life jackets in the warehouse a sailor came in who was carrying a Coke around in his hip pocket. After eyeing it till I could stand it no longer I asked him if I might buy it from him. I explained to him that I had not had one since I left the States. Whereupon he was so benevolent as to give it to me. It was hot and he apparently did not want it himself in that condition. I carried it around with me all over town and nursed it like so much gold, all the while getting longing glances at it from the soldiers and sailors whom we passed on the streets. I started out of the galley with it to take it to the wardroom to consume but seeing that I was going to be mobbed passing through the crew's mess I went back and wrapped it in a towel. I then crept out [reclined] on the transom in the wardroom and tasted for the first time since I left the States "Nectar of the Gods." It was celestial bliss and I feel now that I have been restored to my former self.¹²

Or consider the following humorous message sent to The Coca-Cola Company by twelve weathermen in 1943:

We are twelve men, tired yet true, here in the deserts of North Africa and for the past many months our tongues have been parched for something better than the hard and saline water that we have to drink. It may be paradoxical to say this, but being weathermen our thirst mounts faster than normal in the summer heat. As we are swinging a psychrometer or watching a balloon mount into the hot and dusty sky, we are watching with feverish eyes the rising temperatures, and praying that it will stop before the thermometer bursts. This situation besides contributing to a mental case due to sunstroke and worry also does much to increase our thirst and desire for a "Pause that Refreshes," but what do we have—I ask you, what do we have? Even a mirage cannot slack our thirst, and we must fall back on those dreams of yesteryear, when we moved up to the soda fountain and sighed contentedly—cherry coke, large glass, plenty of ice! The bubble bursts as sweat dims our eyes, and again our dream castle fades and we realize we are back in Africa de Nord.

Now Sir, surely by now you can, you must, realize what we are about to ask you? Is it possible that one of your fairer members, willing to do her part for men and country, could pack and send a container of coca cola concentrate and don't worry about our mixing the materials, necessity is always the mother of invention—need we say more!

We assure you and her that we shall thank you from the bottom of our hearts and will be glad, delighted and ready to pay the price and postage and whatever else is necessary.

Trustingly yours . . .

P.S. If you cannot make it in cokes, we will accept a bottle of scotch.¹³

Such correspondence often reached The Coca-Cola Company not through G.I.'s themselves, but through their wives, who begged the organization to help fulfill their husband's earnest requests.¹⁴ "Dearest Liz," wrote one G.I. in a letter ultimately forwarded to Atlanta,

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You know you've been sending me packages now for quite some time, and you've covered just about everything I could use, regardless of whether or not I've asked for it. But, of all the things you have sent me so far, *there is one item that I've wanted you to send* which probably you'd never have thought of, and would not think of sending unless I'd told you what it was. You might think me nuts or maybe a bit silly, but when you haven't seen one like this for almost a year now and then suddenly see one in front of you, that you know is all yours, it kind of makes you think of all the times you could've gotten it, but didn't, because you had just about all you wanted then, when you were in the States... Well, I guess you want to know now what it is that *I want so much, outside of you. Well Darling, it is a bottle of Coca-Cola.* Yes, exactly as you read it. One bottle of Coca-Cola.¹⁵

Food and identity, hunger and love, all blend together in servicemen's writings, a testament to the talismanic personal importance Coca-Cola had for soldiers overseas.

Moreover, while G.I. letters reveal that Coke was important to servicemen on a personal level, that it reminded them of their own private stories, they also exhibit that soldiers perceived the beverage as an equally evocative symbol of the American polis, of the United States as an abstract political entity. Letters housed in Coca-Cola archives, in fact, suggest that soldiers understood Coke as a symbol of civic significance precisely because it was so closely connected with their individual experience. In servicemen's writings, for example, we find numerous seemingly paradoxical statements that link conceptions of communal, national sacrifice with the noncommunal, antipolitical desire to drink a sweet, fizzy beverage. "Since I've come across," wrote one enthusiastic soldier to his parents, "I've met and talked with some of the greatest men in the world, *real men who have gone through Hell and come out again, but would go back for a cold Coca-Cola.*"¹⁶ "An American airman may be able to carry 'plenty of thunder to the Japs,'" one officer told a local reporter, "provided he can have... a Coca-Cola to drink occasionally, to help him keep in touch with the American way of life."¹⁷ These sentiments indicate precisely what Agnew's historical portrait would predict: that Coca-Cola did play a role in American civic consciousness, that soldiers did come to describe their own identity as citizens using "the language of soft drinks." Soldiers' letters seem to tell us, in other words, that under the special psychological conditions of war—at a moment when men craved the comfort of the familiar—Woodruff's patriotic promise refigured not only Americans' conceptions of government, but also their inner lives.

★ COCA-COLA AND PARTICIPATORY POLITICS?

The transformation of Coke into a national icon, we have seen, contained a number of separate but related components: first, the cooperation between the American state and Coca-Cola, embodied in the story of T.O.'s; second, as revealed in advertising, the attempt of Coca-Cola to associate its product with the mundane but meaningful aspects of daily life, a project facilitated by its rhetorical use of the sign; and third, the emotional response of American servicemen to Coke, a beverage that for many was strongly linked to peaceful, civilian life. If Coca-Cola became a national icon under these circumstances, did that icon advance a democratic, participatory vision of society or did it serve to hinder the republican political ideal many of us find so compelling? If we live in the "World of Coca-Cola," if we are, as The Coca-Cola Company implicitly claims, a "community" brought together around a mass-market good, then how might we characterize that community in regards to

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the civic responsibilities felt by its members? These issues concern the more general debate over consumer society raised at the start of this discussion and invite the question: When American soldiers claimed to be fighting for the right to purchase Coke, were they in fact fighting for an impoverished notion of political life?

I would like to suggest that they were and that they were not. That the politics implicit in Coca-Cola is an impoverished vision of politics, inimical to the type of participatory political vision on which the United States was founded strikes me as a reasonable position to take. A strong body of scholarly literature certainly exists that reveals how a privatized, consumerist understanding of national life can have a disastrously corrosive effect upon civic fellowship. This literature, which bears much in common with the literature of philosophical antiliberalism, asserts that the "commodification of politics," embodied in the story of Coca-Cola, offers little hope of a future communitarian social order. Instead, consumer society conceals the anti-democratic relations of economic power on which it is based, and encourages an ethic of individual self-focus incompatible with republican ideals of virtue and community. In regard to Coke, such criticisms seem not only immanently valid but also functionally linked. For if Woodruff's promise induced servicemen to consider one of the most important functions of the state to be to supply brand-name consumer products to its citizens, then that allegedly "patriotic" commitment to fulfill individual desires seems simultaneously to have concealed the institutional machinations it presupposed. As Agnew has noted, of those servicemen who asserted that they were fighting to preserve their ability to drink Coca-Cola, how many also saw themselves as fighting for The Coca-Cola Company? During the war, the business of America remained business.¹⁸

But there are other ways of understanding the role of consumer goods in society and the story of Coca-Cola as well. For instance, Timothy Breen, in his challenging analysis of eighteenth-century commercial culture, suggests that everyday consumer items provided Americans with a shared "language of consumption" that ultimately served as a "language for revolution," that consumer goods became "good to think" in political ways.¹⁹ More specifically, Breen focuses his attention, as we have here, on a particular beverage—tea—explaining how it served as a medium through which nationalist consciousness grew and ultimately exploded into revolutionary action. The reason why Americans displayed such marked political solidarity beginning in 1773, writes Breen, a solidarity not evident during the Townshend protest, was that the Tea Act "affected an item of popular consumption found in almost every colonial household," an item very much like Coca-Cola which "appear[ed] on the tables of the wealthiest merchants and the poorest labourers." In creating a material commonality among Americans, tea became an ideal medium through which "to transmit perceptions of liberty and rights," and a way in which "ideological abstractions acquired concrete meaning."²⁰ Breen's analysis suggests that commodities generally can provide "a shared framework of consumer experience" that allows individuals to "reach out to distant strangers, to perceive, however dimly, the existence of an "imagined community" and then to take political action when the liberties and rights of that community are infringed.

Similarly, Lizabeth Cohen's powerful analysis of Chicago working-class culture from 1919 to 1939 richly illustrates how commodities have not always served as forces of privatization, but, at times, have reinforced group identities. In particular, Cohen's discussion of how Americans of varied ethnic backgrounds "encountered" mass culture "at the grassroots"—a discussion that centers, in part, on a study of

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grocery stores suggests that mass-market goods are not consumed by isolated individuals, but by groups of people in acts of shared experience. In doing so, Cohen suggests that goods can create situations in which morally profound loyalties are formed and sustained. "A commodity," she writes, "could just as easily help a person reinforce ethnic or working-class culture as lose it. What mattered were the experiences... that the consumer brought to the object."⁵¹ Speaking of shopping at local groceries, for instance, Cohen notes that in acts of consumption, buyers brought "their own values to every exchange" and thus, while "ethnic workers [during the 1920s] came to share more in the new consumer goods" they did so "in their own stores, in their own neighborhoods, and in their own ways."⁵² Cohen's analysis implies, in other words, that consumer goods can have potentially democratic political significance because their meanings are not based solely on the associations ascribed to them by Madison Avenue, but instead are rooted in a history of sentimental interaction between the people who buy them. Consumers form real communities around what they purchase, communities that hold affective and even political meanings for their members.

We ignore these meanings at our intellectual peril, and we ultimately harm our chances of achieving a more progressive national life when we turn a blind eye to how civic language modeled on the language of consumption can lead to democratic political change. Here we might usefully consider the role that Coca-Cola played in the African-American struggle for civil rights.⁵³ Of the many ways black Americans advanced their political power and mobilized others to act on their behalf, one of the more symbolically enduring was their use of images of non-consumption in venues associated with the sale of food, and especially with the sale of Coke: lunch counters. Just as the rebels of the American Revolution fostered national consciousness through the commodity of tea, so the students who demonstrated at Woolworth stores across the South used the image of denied hamburgers and Cokes to urge citizens on to great sacrifice. Sit-ins advanced liberal politics not only by politicizing consumer goods, but by employing a language of consumerism as a language of justice. If Coke was an essential part of the American Way of Life, so their logic implicitly stated, then its refusal to those who held U.S. citizenship was tantamount to a denial of both formal and substantive liberty—and a very persuasive symbol of injustice for those who felt that the war had been fought so that Americans could return to the drugstore and drink Coke again. The Civil Rights Movement seems to indicate, in other words, that a struggle for freedom grew in part on a foundation we typically would consider antidemocratic, the development of consumer goods into items of quasi-political entitlement.⁵⁴

Not surprisingly, the story of racial struggle in postwar America has often been remembered in consumerist language, and frequently using stories that represent Coke as a medium through which "ideological abstractions acquired concrete meaning."⁵⁵ For instance, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., recently described to a National Public Radio audience one of the ways he experienced discrimination as a child in the South. "It was frustrating," explained Gates, "because of segregation when we couldn't sit down with the other kids at the local hang-out, the cut-rate, the drug-store where you'd go after basketball games, and one of the doctors would set the whole team up with Coca-Colas, and all the white kids would sit down and drink out of glasses and all the black kids would stand up drinking out of paper cups."⁵⁶ More significantly, consider the words of James Forman of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, describing in The Making of Black Revolutionaries how he

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first came to social awareness. He was a young boy, at midcentury, visiting relatives in Mississippi from his home in Chicago, and he wanted a Coke. "I went to the drug-store," Forman writes, "and hopped on one of the leather-covered stools":

There were about six or seven of them and they were all empty. I spun around on the stool several times, waiting for the fountain clerk. I took out my nickel, twirled it around and around on the black marble counter. There was a crack in it and I began moving my nickel along the crack. Finally the fountain clerk appeared. She was an elderly woman, rather fat, without a smile. "What do you want?" "I want a Coke and a glass, please."

We can imagine what happened next: the manager came and told the young Forman that he could not drink his Coke at the fountain, that he must drink it in the back of the store. The boy was left crying, wondering "who this man was, what right he had to tell me where I had to drink my Coke."¹ As Forman well knew, the power of his narrative rests, in part, on the nature of the beverage involved. It certainly would not have altered the formal quality of the injustice in Forman's account had he asked for and been refused, a glass of orange juice; but it would have significantly altered its emotional content. Drawing on a tradition of cultural commonality, Forman's depiction of a small incident of racial injustice can make readers angry even today because it uses as its foundation a symbol Americans recognize, especially since 1945, as an icon of national citizenship.

Here we find the most enduring legacy of Woodruff's promise, and the most powerful testament to its effect: that Coke has become such a basic part of American life that it now plays a role in our *memory* of major national events. I have spent much of this analysis describing the lives of American soldiers, and so it seems fitting, on this note, to close with the words of one of those men. His name was Clarence Dickinson, and he was shot down over Hawaii during the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor. Approximately one year after the attack, Dickinson narrated his harrowing experience to *The Saturday Evening Post*.² As a remembrance of things past, one in which food plays a notable function, the story illustrates how Coke could symbolically divide those who fell within and outside the protections of American citizenship. After he was shot down, Dickinson stopped a passing car and asked to be driven to Pearl Harbor. The couple driving agreed and offered the flyer a drink of their whiskey. "I didn't take any," writes Dickinson, "because I figured I would have to fly again that day." Along the road, Dickinson spotted a general store, and he asked the couple to stop. "As far as I was concerned," he writes, "the war was going to have to wait until I had a coke." The store Dickinson had spotted was no ordinary Anglo market, however, it was operated by Japanese residents of the island for "Jap and Filipino laborers of the cane and pineapple plantations." The flyer entered the establishment (the front was "draped with dried fish") and asked for his Coke. At which point, supposedly, an extraordinary exchange took place. "The kid in charge of the store," writes Dickinson, "who was about nineteen, was looking up at the Jap planes and laughing."

He turned a smirking grin on me. I asked for a coke twice before he moved. He fiddled around and half opened the lids of two chests, pretending he didn't have what I wanted. I looked in the first box. There, in plain sight, were several bottles. Scowling, I seized one, wrenched off the cap and started out. He was just behind me at the front when I whirled on him and shook the bottle in his face. "This one," I said, "is on the house."

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1. Roland Barth
2. Billy Wilder, *Dr. Strangelove: Coca-Cola Culture in which Bellow, Seize of Konsum, and Popular Contemporary* (New York: R.
3. Mark Pender *and the 'Com*, Richard Kaise Press, 1993).
4. Mark Pender, can be obtain *Marketing at Harper Busm*
5. *Ibid.*, 178. *Ec Great America Soft Drink Ina Beverages*, 11
6. Pendergrast.
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10. Richard Polei (1972): 135
11. See, for exam *Industry Salv Unless other housed in Th Production B*
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Through such instances of recollection, in the minds of those who endured the special circumstances of global conflict, Coca-Cola became the totem drink of the American nation. It became the hallmark of a people who would be asked to bear many of the burdens of the war's political aftermath.

NOTES

This essay is adapted from "Democracy, Consumer Culture, and Political Community: The Story of Coca-Cola during World War II," which was presented at "Eating for Victory: American Foodways and World War II," held at the University of Colorado-Boulder, 8-9 October 1993. I wish to thank Philip Mooney and Brookie Keener of The Coca-Cola Company, who offered invaluable access to historical materials and provided a model of corporate openness to scholarly inquiry; my anonymous reviewers for their criticism and advice; Amy Bentley, Meg Jeffrey, and Mark Pendergrast for their assistance; and, though he was not party to writing this essay, Jean-Christophe Agnew for his indispensable teaching.

1. Roland Barthes, "Wine and Milk," *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 58.
2. Billy Wilder, *One, Two, Three* (1961); "World and Friend," *Time* (15 May 1950), front cover; Stanley Kubrick, *Dr. Strangelove, or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964). See also Dusan Makavejev, *The Coca-Cola Kid* (1985), Jamie Uys, *The Gods Must Be Crazy* (1982), and the variety of works of American literature in which Coca-Cola plays an iconic role, for example, Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman* (1949), and Saul Bellow, *Seize the Day* (1956). On Coca-Cola as icon and as folklore, see Christia Murken-Altrogge, *Coca-Cola Art: Konsum, Kult, Kunst* (Munich: Klinhardt und Biermann, 1991), and Paul Smith, "Contemporary Legends and Popular Culture: 'It's the Real Thing,'" *Contemporary Legend: The Journal of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research* 1 (1991): 123-52. See also E. J. Kahn, Jr., *The Big Drink: The Story of Coca-Cola* (New York: Random House, 1960), 3-12.
3. Mark Pendergrast, *For God, Country and Coca-Cola: The Unauthorized History of the Great American Soft Drink and the Company That Makes It* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1993), 244. On French protest, see Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1993). See also Kahn, *The Big Drink*, 20-44.
4. Mark Pendergrast, *For God, Country, and Coca-Cola*, 169. General information about the history of Coca-Cola can be obtained from Pendergrast's extensive work. See also Frederick Allen, *Secret Formula: How Brilliant Marketing and Relentless Salesmanship Made Coca-Cola the Best Known Product in the World* (New York: Harper Business, 1994).
5. *Ibid.*, 178. For evocative though non-scholarly comments on soda fountain culture, see Paul Dickson, *The Great American Ice Cream Book* (New York: Atheneum, 1972). See also John J. Riley, *A History of the American Soft Drink Industry: Bottled Carbonated Beverages 1807-1957* (Washington: American Bottlers of Carbonated Beverages, 1958).
6. Pendergrast, *For God, Country, and Coca-Cola*, 178.
7. For an early examination of the place of Coca-Cola in World War II, see John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture during World War II* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 38, 107-8. See also Kahn, *The Big Drink*, 12-19. My analysis differs from the work of Blum, Pendergrast, Allen, and Kahn in being driven primarily by the theoretical concerns raised in Jean-Christophe Agnew, "Coming Up for Air: Consumer Culture in Historical Perspective," *Intellectual History Newsletter* 12 (1990): 3-21; Robert Westbrook, "I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James: American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War Two," *American Quarterly* 42 (December 1990); and Robert Westbrook, "Fighting for the American Family: Private Interests and Political Obligations of World War II," in *The Power of Culture: Critical Essays in American History*, ed. Richard Wrightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1993), 195-221.
8. Agnew, "Coming Up for Air," 14.
9. Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Timothy Breen, "Baubles of Britain: The American and Consumer Revolutions of the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 119 (May 1988): 73-104. On goods as "good to think," see Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, *The World of Goods* (New York: Basic Books, 1979).
10. Richard Polenberg, *War and Society: The United States 1941-1945* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1972), 135.
11. See, for example, E. J. Farina, Chairman, Contra Costa Salvage Committee to James G. Hamilton, Secretary, Industry Salvage Central Committee (11 August 1942), Archives Department, The Coca-Cola Company. Unless otherwise indicated, all following citations refer to manuscripts placed in uncatalogued binders housed in The Coca-Cola Company archives. See also C. H. Luebbert, Executive Secretary for Virginia, War Production Board, to Harrison Jones, President, The Coca-Cola Bottling Company (25 January 1943).
12. "Film Is Shown at Kiwanis Meeting," *Bushville Telegram* [Bushville, Indiana] (2 September 1942). "Have had inquiry from Detroit General Motors Public Relations," telegraphed one agent of The Coca-Cola Company soon after the film was released. "Asking possibility their purchasing one hundred prints and records 'Free American Way' which they wish put in hands every G M Plant in country. . . . Hope these requests not becoming nuisance to you but we can't seem to shut them off" (Elaine Nagle, Jam Handy Organization, to Frank W. Harrold [19 August 1942]).

11. O. M. McKinley, Commander, USNR, District Staff Headquarters, Twelfth Naval District, San Francisco, California, to R. C. Fowler, Vice President, The Coca-Cola Bottling Company (13 August 1943).
12. Pendergrast, *For God, Country, and Coca-Cola*, 199–217. See also Allen, *Secret Formula*, 245–78. On problems faced by the soft drink industry during the war, see also John J. Riley, *Organization in the Soft Drink Industry: A History of the American Bottlers of Carbonated Beverages* (Washington: American Bottlers of Carbonated Beverages, 1946), 202–72.
13. Jim Kahn, "Coca-Cola in World War II" (unpublished company manuscript, ca. 1946), 2, 5–6. Kahn's manuscript was commissioned for print by The Coca-Cola Company; however the corporation ultimately chose to leave it unpublished, in part from concern that the public would look with disfavor on Coke's close cooperation with the United States government during the war. See Harrison Jones, *The Coca-Cola Company*, to Steve Hannagan, Publicity (22 January 1946). On Wrigley and World War II, see Blum, *V Was for Victory*, 108–10.
14. "President's Scrap Plea Stresses Mill Needs," *The Washington Post* (16 September 1942). See also "White House Yield Is 5 Tons of Scrap," *The New York Times* (16 September 1942).
15. See, for example, Ralph McT. Pennell, Major General, Office of the Representative of the Military Governor of the Territory of Hawaii to War Production Board, San Francisco, California (28 May 1942).
16. Gen. George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, "War Department Circular No. 51" (25 February 1944), 1. According to typescript copy scheduled to appear in The Coca-Cola Company magazine *The Red Barrel*, a survey by *The American Legion Magazine* of 5,000 World War II veterans indicated that "63.67 per cent insisted that Coca-Cola was their preference [among soft drinks] and no mistake about it. In fact, the preference was so pronounced that the nearest competitor received but a 7.78 per cent vote" ("Veteran's Preference," *Red Barrel* typescript [ca. 1945]). On brand-name preference for cigarettes, see, for example, Ernie Pyle, *Brave Men* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1944), 26.
17. Jim Kahn, "Coca-Cola in World War II," 16.
18. *T.O. Digest* 1, 4: 6. The Coca-Cola Company has requested the names of T.O.'s remain unpublished in scholarly works. I have complied with this request here and throughout my analysis.
19. *T.O. Digest* 1, 1: 4.
20. [Seven servicemen of the USS 1st Flotilla, North African Waters] to The Coca-Cola Company (8 September 1942). The Coca-Cola Company has requested the names of servicemen who wrote the organization remain unpublished in scholarly works. It should be noted that occasionally, the nature of Coca-Cola archives makes it unclear whether their holdings represent the letters actually written by servicemen or are instead retyped transcripts. Unless otherwise indicated, I have assumed that letters housed by The Coca-Cola Company represent original G.I. correspondence, and that any transcriptions represent faithful copies.
21. Alan Trachtenberg, "Myth and Symbol," *Massachusetts Review* 25 (Winter 1984): 672.
22. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).
23. Allan M. Winkler, *The Politics of Propaganda: The Office of War Information 1942–1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 62, 64.
24. William H. Chafe, *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 5.
25. *With Weapons and Wits: Propaganda and Psychological Warfare in World War II: Heroic Leaders and Heroic Unknown Warriors in Their Finest Hour* (Lexington: Museum of Our National Heritage, 1992), 53.
26. "Honest-to-gosh American Food!" *Time* (20 December 1943), 3. First emphasis added.
27. "Have a Coca-Cola = Howdy, Neighbor," *Life* (5 June 1944), back cover.
28. [Seven seamen stationed in North African waters] to The Coca-Cola Company (8 September 1943).
29. Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 199.
30. Ernie Pyle, *Brave Men*, 114.
31. On milk, ice cream, and Coca-Cola, see for instance Hedda Hopper, "The Lusty Laughton," *The Washington Post* (21 October 1943); "Little Hard Liquor Available in Africa," *Herald-Courier* [Bristol, Virginia] (28 November 1943); and "U.S. Flyers Crave Ice Cream, Soft Drinks," *The Baltimore Sun* (17 November 1943). On the significance of ice cream in American cultural history, see Dickson, *The Great American Ice Cream Book*, and Patricia M. Tice, *Ice Cream for All* (Rochester: Strong Museum, 1990).
32. Whitey [soldier stationed in England] to Ronnie (1 August 1943).
33. Corp. Richard E. Storekman, "Coca-Cola in South Pacific: Letter Tells of Joy it Brings to Soldier There," *Republican-Register* [Mt. Carmel, Illinois] (16 July 1943).
34. Louis [soldier stationed in Sicily] to The Coca-Cola Company (10 September 1943).
35. John [Captain, Army Air Force] to Advertising Manager, The Coca-Cola Company (3 August 1943).
36. "Mother of 'Ike' Tells Hope," *New York Journal American* (10 November 1942). Eisenhower's comments were widely printed in publications of the time.
37. "Col. Moore's Homecoming," *Life* (16 August 1943).
38. Robert L. Scott, Jr., *God Is My Co-Pilot* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), 166. "First of all," writes Scott, "I don't know exactly what a democracy is, or the real, common-sense meaning of a republic. But as we used to talk things over in China, we all used to agree that we were fighting for The American Girl. She to us was America, Democracy, Coca Colas, Hamburgers, Clean Places to Sleep, or The American Way of Life." On servicemen, Coca-Cola, and American women, see also Thomas R. St. George, *C/O Postmaster* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1943), including the image on p. 65; for a humorous cartoon on women and Coca-Cola see John R. O'Donoghue, "What! No Coca-Cola?" *The Stars and Stripes: Africa* (2 October 1943).
39. Kahn, *The Big Drink*, 11.
40. W.P. [Lieutenant] to his mother, transcribed excerpt (undated).

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11. [Twelve soldiers stationed in North Africa] to The Coca-Cola Company (5 August 1943).
12. "I have a problem that confronts me," wrote the wife of one serviceman, "and it happens that the Coca-Cola Co. may be able to help solve it. My husband is stationed in Africa, with the army, and in several letters stated his desire for a 'coke.' I thought this would be easy to send and this morning I bought a dozen bottles of Coca-Cola, and I find it is not easy to pack to meet postal requirements. Then, too, he may not receive them and I would not like to disappoint him." [Wife of serviceman in Chicago, Illinois] to The Coca-Cola Bottling Company (5 September 1943).
13. Harry to Mildred (3 October 1943).
14. Tommy [somewhere in Australia] to Mom and Dad (7 February 1943), transcribed copy.
15. "Lieut. Thomas R. Waddell Jr. Smuggles Pup as Jungle 'Pal': Former Local Youth Describes Activities of Air Combat Units," *The Florida Times-Union* (16 July 1943).
16. Agnew, "Coming Up for Air," 16. For a discussion of some of these issues in the context of corporate historical presentations, see also Mark Weiner, "We Are What We Eat: or, Democracy, Community, and the Politics of Corporate Food Displays," *American Quarterly* (June 1994), 227-50.
17. Green, "Baubles of Britain," 76.
18. *Ibid.*, 98, 104. Emphasis added.
19. Cohen, *Making a New Deal*, 106.
20. *Ibid.*, 116.
21. For a different perspective on the role of The Coca-Cola Company in the Civil Rights Movement, see Allen, *Secret Formula*, 279-317.
22. Indeed, the Civil Rights Movement also seems to suggest that, in the case of Coke, the concentration of wealth democrats abhor was in fact a necessary precondition for the drink becoming a symbol that encouraged civil participation.
23. This seems to be the case of wartime remembrances as well. In narrating their experience in a Jim Crow army, black former servicemen have described the indignity they felt at not being allowed in Post Exchange stores; being barred from outlets of purchasing was a powerful symbol for them of the failure of the United States to live up to its democratic ideals. See Mary Penick Motley, ed., *The Invisible Soldier: The Experience of the Black Soldier, World War II* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 70, 162, and Philip McGuire, *Taps for a Jim Crow Army: Letters from Black Soldiers in World War II* (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1983), 19-20.
24. Robert Siegel, "A Visit with Henry Louis Gates, Jr.," National Public Radio (18 May 1994). Emphasis added.
25. James Forman, "Childhood and Coca-Cola," *The Making of Black Revolutionaries: A Personal Account* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), 18-19.
26. Lt. Clarence Dickinson, U.S.N., with Boyden Sparkes, "I Fly for Vengeance," *The Saturday Evening Post* (10 October 1942).