"This is Roosevelt's World" - FDR as a Cultural Icon in American Memory

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Introduction

This dissertation studies the construction of Franklin Delano Roosevelt as a cultural icon in American memory, particularly by FDR himself. It combines cultural history and cultural analysis, in inquiring how the Roosevelt icon has developed diachronically and who has had agency over it, and in asking how that icon functions culturally and ideologically in the present. It focuses on the agency FDR himself exerted over his future remembrance. This dissertation does not claim to make new discoveries about Franklin Roosevelt as a historical president. Rather, it studies how he is remembered through cultural artefacts – novels, popular biographies, films, documentaries, museums, and memorials – and how he himself contributed to that remembrance. It analyzes the rhetorical means through which various agents, including himself, his family, party members, supporters, and detractors, have over time negotiated the creation of FDR as a cultural icon.

As such, the question who FDR "really" was, or what representation is most "correct", is not at stake. Instead, I ask why and how a particular Roosevelt image or narrative functions rhetorically in shaping the icon at a particular moment. This says something about the time, place and culture in which an image or narrative operates, and about how the cultural artefact functions rhetorically. In other words, this dissertation is driven by a wish to understand how memory is produced and functions in culture, and not by which memories are historically correct.

How memory is produced and whether it is historically correct are fundamentally different questions. Although I am interested in historical events, people and processes too, I do not try to establish precisely what happened or what the past was really "like", but instead how the traces and representations of historical events, people and processes function in the present. I do not use historical texts and other documents as a source of information about the past, but rather to analyze how they, through their form and rhetoric, help to shape memory in the present. A single historical document often does limited justice to "what really happened" – to combat this, a historian would have to find more documents, and try to contextualize each of them to establish a full picture. For me, a single document in all its peculiarity can be very important, if there is reason to believe it has contributed to the memory of an event or the production of that memory. I am interested in traditional historical texts and archival material, but also in literary or artistic materials – understandably mistrusted or disregarded by historians as a source for understanding the past because of their fictional nature – because they can have great impact on how historical events are remembered and employed in the present. For instance, *Gone With The Wind* – Margaret Mitchell's epic 1936 novel, and to an even larger extent Victor Fleming's 1939 movie adaptation – is an entirely useless source for *historians* of the Civil War or slavery. It is wildly erroneous on every level in its depiction of

the 1860s South, slavery, the Civil War, and Reconstruction. It is, however, useful to cultural historians researching the 1930s, because it illuminates how the Civil War was remembered at that time. And for me there is an additional layer of interest here: for better or for worse, *Gone With The Wind* continues to shape popular imaginations of the slavery South before, during and after the Civil War. Why is it so powerful? Most people know on some level that it is not a historically accurate representation, yet, somehow it continues to entertain and, in the process, almost as a side-effect, to shape cultural memory.

Many historians find it deplorable that fictional literary, visual, and artistic representations of the past, despite their imprecise or incorrect account or depiction of history, are so important to cultural memory. I share that view, but find it important to understand how such artefacts and texts that represent or misrepresent the past nonetheless do have great agency over cultural memory. It is wrong and upsetting if a text like *Gone With The Wind* shapes how people view the US South and US slavery history, but academic historiography can only do so much to put this right. Therefore, instead of turning away from such "false" representations of the past, I want to understand two things: what in the nature of these cultural texts and artefacts is it that makes them so attractive – how does their beauty work, in aesthetic and rhetorical terms? And secondly: why are they so attractive *to us*? What desires, needs and ideologies in the present are served or fulfilled by a particular representation of the past? Answers to these questions will on the one hand shed light on the rhetorical strategies underlying the success of compelling texts like *Gone With The Wind*, and on the other hand on the culture in which they are received. Especially when a representation of the past is evidently wrong, and yet at least partly constitutive of cultural memory, then there is all the more reason to assume that either the representation is highly persuasive in its form, or highly satisfying for some reason to its audience in the present, or both.

A telling example is Tony Badger's essay "The New Deal Without FDR: What Biographies of Roosevelt Cannot Tell Us." The essay puts forward a fierce argument blaming "the presidential synthesis", and the "seemingly insatiable appetite for more and more biographical detail about Roosevelt" for obscuring and leading historians away from far more important analyses of the New Deal in overarching, structural social and economic terms (244). However, at the same time, Badger's essay itself does not engage at all in scrutinizing "the New Deal without FDR." Instead, most of the essay actually engages in the discussion about Roosevelt's personality and daily life that Badger feels is unhelpful to understanding what really matters:

> We now know what Roosevelt had for breakfast, what drinks he mixed for himself at cocktail hour, that he despaired of the food served at the White House. We know that from 1919 Eleanor and he slept in separate bedrooms. But does the biographical detail about Roosevelt that we now have in such abundance help us to understand the New Deal's legacy?

> What the recent work has carefully clarified is the extent of the effect of polio on Roosevelt. A rehabilitation counsellor, a paraplegic polio victim and Geoffrey Ward have documented just how crippled Roosevelt was and "the splendid deception" involved in the collaboration of the media which ensured that neither photographic nor film evidence allowed the American people to see the true extent of his disability. Few Americans knew that the President was so wheelchair bound or had to be lifted like a baby to so many locations. (250)

Most of the essay is apophatic in this fashion – it denies that "biographical detail" can "help us to understand the New Deal's legacy", yet constantly engages in it, in a manner that is rather prurient. While supposedly assuming the moral high ground, Badger feasts on sensational detail about the Roosevelts: the separate bedrooms, the despair about the food, Roosevelt's need to be "lifted like a baby." All the authors Badger mentions who have investigated "the effect of polio on Roosevelt" are in some measure speculative about the mental and psychic effects the disease had on him, but none of them is so shamelessly voyeuristic and crude as to describe the outlook of FDR's incapacity by likening him to a baby.

Badger probably does this in an attempt to parody, or at least exaggerate, the biographical historiography he is criticizing, but at the same time he cannot resist recounting page after page of trivial but also highly memorable Roosevelt anecdotes. The article is really more a part of biographical debates about FDR, than of a debate about the New Deal without Roosevelt, despite the title, especially since Badger keeps arguing with the views previous Roosevelt biographers have taken. He argues, for instance, that it was not the polio attack that, as common FDR wisdom has it, "toughened his inner core", but rather his marital crisis in 1919, after ER discovered his affair with Lucy Mercer (251). So, Badger seems, in spite of his principles, irresistibly drawn towards joining the biographical debate and speculation about FDR.

This dissertation of course risks falling into the same trap of being enticed by Roosevelt narratives rather than dispassionately analyzing how their temptation works. I do not in the least wish to deny my own positionality and the context I grew up in, in which FDR was indeed an admired icon. My family is traditionally left-wing Democratic, "social democrats" in European terms. My grandparents were alive at the time of the New Deal and applauded it, and similar government programs in Europe. All but one of my grandparents were Jewish, and thus belonged to a particular type of victims of World War II – who were saved by an allied coalition led by Roosevelt. So I come from a context in which Franklin Roosevelt was a celebrated, if not often mentioned figure. However, it remains essential that this thesis retains a critical distance from its object to analyze how the FDR icon attracts and fulfills desires in different places and contexts, because this alluring quality is, I hope to show, precisely the decisive reason for FDR's success as a cultural icon after his death. FDR was also virulently hated, and continues to be so in some parts of US society, but he tried hard and largely succeeded in being a seductive

figure, a potential vehicle for a wide range of narratives, and a stakeholder in his own future remembrance. FDR was and remains a key player in historical and other representations of the 1930s and 1940s, and was committed to staying relevant into the far future.

The academic field of memory studies often focuses on cases of redress and repair: doing narrative justice to people, whom we now feel have been wrongfully marginalized, and who seem to have been forgotten – often because they left few traces in the form of archival records and other documents. Memory studies rehabilitates them, by giving them a voice in one way or another, often through oral history or fiction (Frisch 155). Of course, FDR was and is hardly in need of being rehabilitated in memory. As such, questions about his place in memory sometimes do not seem to fit well within memory studies. Memory studies, moreover, tends to focus on how and why present rememberers do, can, or should engage in remembering a particular event or person, and less on how the object of remembrance positioned himself for future memory. There is a great deal of literature on this topic too – particularly about image-making of kings and politicians, for example Peter Burke's book *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* – and also within celebrity studies, about the production of oneself as a seemingly authentic brand, persona or public image. In a sense, my reading of FDR's production of himself as a cultural icon fits into that debate better than into memory studies, but it has relevance in both. FDR created many sites of memory, some of which, most obviously the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential library, were explicitly interpreted as attempts at memorializing himself from the start, and continue to operate with more or less the same aims, though in a different context. In researching such sites, I have increasingly come to think of Roosevelt as a brilliant example for how to rhetorically position oneself so as to be remembered as an icon. Of course FDR was able to do so in large part because he simply was very powerful and led the United States through the most difficult and decisive years of the twentieth century, but his enormous talent and cunning in what I will come to call *autofabrication* was certainly also a key factor.

In any case, the questions – how does a memory, a text or an artefact negotiating the past, work; and what interest does it serve in the present? – are at the heart of this dissertation. It is, in that sense, not a historical dissertation. It mainly uses methods of literary studies – close-reading, in particular. However, many of the texts that I analyze are not literary texts. The Roosevelt icon is the central "text", but this text has a very wide range of expressions. It starts with Franklin Roosevelt himself, as a historical person, who, increasingly assertively, set out to shape his public image as a politician, in order to be elected to various offices, and in 1932 to the presidency. During his presidency Roosevelt publicly spoke, wrote and signed a plethora of texts, and also held radio speeches, press conferences, appeared in photographs and film footage, wrote letters and otherwise created texts, images and other artefacts that somehow represented him, initially for the then-present, but increasingly to create an icon for the future. During his life, and especially after his death, he was also often represented by others. For instance, there are many films, documentaries, and novels that incorporate a Roosevelt character, or that otherwise represent him.

Of the many artefacts representing Roosevelt during and since his life, constituting and negotiating an accumulative FDR icon, I have picked the most important exemplars. All of the selected objects of study are indeed exemplary, in the sense that each one might have been substituted by others similar to it in the points that I highlight. All are, however, also chosen for their individual importance, both qualitatively, in the sense that they prompt new perspectives on, or insights into how the FDR icon and its memory can work, and quantitatively, because they have been widely disseminated, and therefore, presumably, contributed to his remembrance relatively prominently. The six categories I employ – novels, popular biographies, films, documentaries, memorials and museums – are not entirely rigid, but chosen because they all provide fictional or non-fictional narrative representations of FDR, unlike, say, the many streets, avenues, drives and parks named after him. Moreover, they are all more or less stable and enduring texts, so that, in many cases, I am able to study how they have operated in different periods and contexts. A few, especially some biographies, I have studied both as primary objects contributing to the dynamic Roosevelt icon in various ways, and as sources of historical information about Roosevelt. Where there is any possibility of confusion about this, I indicate why and how I use a particular text at a particular moment.

FDR has since his death consistently ranked as one of the top three US presidents – regardless of whether the jury consisted of historians, experts of another kind, or lay people – usually together with George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Despite this, no analysis has been made of FDR as an icon in American culture. Such studies have been made of other iconic American presidents.[1] There are studies in cultural history that have thematic overlap with the development of Roosevelt's public image in American history, such as Emily Rosenberg's *A Date Which Will Live: Pearl Harbor in American Memory* (2003), but no study focusing on the development of Roosevelt as an icon. This may be because the FDR icon, now that Roosevelt the man's death is seventy years ago, hovers on the edge of lived memory. There are people alive still who remember living through his presidency, but for most he is really a historical figure, recent yes, but no longer directly relevant to politics – rather a cultural figure, embodying the time in which the United States acquired its global position as world hegemon. However, this is precisely why FDR forms a particularly intriguing case study of the production of a cultural icon.

Outline and Pilot Study: The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park

In the following section I will explain and exemplify how this thesis is built up. I clarify briefly what the central point of each chapter is, without going into theoretical detail, arguments, or specific case studies. I do, however, show how the pinnacle of each chapter plays out in one particular site, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library in Hyde Park (NY), which I

1 E.g. Barry Schwartz, *George Washington: The Making of an American Symbol* (1987), and *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth Century America* (2008); Andrew Ferguson, *Land of Lincoln, Adventures in Abe's America* (2007).

consider the most important site of memory remembering FDR, and created by him. Thus the FDR Library will function as a kind of pilot case to introduce each of the chapters.

Before embarking on that, something about this thesis' general structure: it is divided into two parts, the first, spanning chapters 1-4, with an emphasis on the cultural history of FDR's creation of his public image at the time, and iconic status for posterity. This first part treats FDR's image-making for future remembrance theoretically and historically. The first two chapters form the theoretical foundation, outlining my view on image-making (chapter 1) and memory-making (chapter 2). They are followed by a historical account of FDR's specific image-making and the creation of the unique FDR "voice" (chapter 3), and an assessment of FDR's efforts to produce his own future remembrance (chapter 4). The case of FDR, as it is presented in chapters 3 and 4, could be regarded as an early model, sowing seeds for, and providing a keyhole perspective on how the process of what I term *autofabrication* works in the modern, mass-mediated United States.

Part Two, chapters 5-8, concern the politics of representing FDR in popular culture and public history since 1945. These chapters show how artefacts and acts of remembrance have negotiated cultural memory since FDR's death, and how his impact on his own remembrance remains palpable even if it has found new cultural frames and appropriations. Recent cultural artefacts representing FDR form case studies, grouped around four key themes in FDR memory: the New Deal, World War Two, FDR's disability, and Eleanor Roosevelt. Each of these themes elucidates a central development within the politics of American culture between 1945 and 2014, so that together, these themes draw up FDR as a relevant embodiment of key aspects of post-war America.

Chapter 1 teases out the dynamic between being created as a self, and creating one's public image, in other words, between FDR's *self-fashioning* and his *autofabrication*. I use self-fashioning in Stephen Greenblatt's sense, meaning the shaping of personality (self) through society's demands and ideologies, to fit the precise "vacancy" that needs to be filled. Autofabrication indicates the making of a leader's *public image*, by himself, and often by others in his entourage. Like any political leader, Roosevelt's identity was fashioned by the mold of the society he inhabited, and like any democratic society, that society gave political mandates to leaders it regarded as fitting its cultural and ideological requirements. FDR could fulfill many of those requirements in the US of the early 1930s, but did not quite fit most of the usual presidential templates; he was, for example, neither a frontier figure, nor a war veteran as most candidates before him had been. I argue that his failure to fit easily into these sets of expectations might have hampered him, but in fact provided him with space to fill the presidency in his own way, and with unusual leeway to fabricate his own public image. In his autofabrication FDR was careful to associate himself with all that was modern and with the future. This strategy propelled his autofabrication forward into later remembrance

of his presidency. Moreover, FDR's public behavior and expressions suggest authenticity – a rhetorical act required particularly from modern media celebrities, which works only when it seems not to be a construct. I argue FDR could come across as authentic, because his self-fashioning is especially hard to separate from his autofabricated public image.

The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library provides an excellent example of a site that is crucial both to FDR's self-fashioning and autofabrication. The FDR Library at Hyde Park is situated on the Roosevelt family estate, yards away from Springwood, the home in which FDR grew up, and where his overbearing mother – he was her only child – lived until her death in 1941. Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt are buried in the Rose Garden between the two buildings. The FDR Library is the first presidential library in the United States, and the very idea of a presidential library – an archive and a museum dedicated specifically to one president – was Franklin Roosevelt's. US Presidents had not previously been obliged to publicize their presidential records, and in many cases they did not. If they did, the archives would usually go to the Library of Congress. The FDR Library, designed and built by FDR on his home estate, and deeded to the federal government, houses his records and a museum, which initially displayed his personal collections and "oddities" sent to him by admirers, was revolutionary and established a practice followed by all presidents since and laid down in federal law in 1955 (Clark 50-53).

The FDR Library was dedicated in 1941. Eleanor Roosevelt bequeathed Springwood, the home, to the National Park Service upon FDR's death in 1945, as he had wished, and a year after his death it was opened to the public.[2] Thus, the estate came to house two major tourist attractions in the Hudson Valley, steps away from each other. One might read Springwood as the home of FDR's self-fashioning, the privileged social and cultural environment where he was formed and educated, and the library as a key site of this autofabrication. The library is the most explicit place in which he offered his own representation of himself – immediately also read as self-memorializing[3] – not through a statue or other visual tribute, but through publicizing his documents and collections, though with a clear connection to his private life, created by the adjacency to his lifelong home. The site however also shows that self-fashioning – the environment that created FDR as a person – and autofabrication – the representation of his presidency and person that he himself constructed – are entangled in complex ways. The very fact that FDR built the library beside the home, and that he deeded both to the federal government show that that entanglement itself was part of his autofabrication, a strategy to link his political and his private life so as to give the impression of continuity and transparency between the two. That continuity was emphasized by the fact that the museum initially showcased many of Roosevelt's private collections of stamps, ship models, and stuffed birds.[4]

2 http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/facts/
3 I discuss this at length in "Roosevelt in Zijn Eigen Museum" ["Roosevelt in His Own Museum"] *Tweede Levens*. (2010): 125-137.
4 http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/library/onedefinitelocality.html

The museum and the library as a whole, however, have undergone dramatic changes in the process of remembering FDR beyond his death. This is the central concern of the second chapter, about the production of memory**.** I distinguish between two concepts, one similar to the memory-version of self-fashioning, cultural memory, and the other a memory equivalent to autofabrication, remembrance. The dynamic in which intangible social and cultural identity fashioning interlocks with autonomous image fabrication is thus extended into the afterlife of the subject. This chapter investigates that relationship with regard to FDR as an icon from his death on April 12, 1945 onwards. Cultural memory and remembrance are expressions that have been used in many contexts; I enlist remembrance to refer to cultural acts of remembering and artefacts that suggest and inspire a particular practice of remembering past events or people. Remembrance by definition, then, involves agency and one or more people or institutions who consciously assume power over who and what is remembered. Remembrance is always ideologically charged, even if it denies this claim. Cultural memory is the context and complement of remembrance: it is the sense of the past that lives in society, shaped on the one hand by society's needs and ideologies in the present, and on the other by previous experiences of remembrance, and memory of experiences. As Adrian Parr says "… [T]he movement of memory cannot be clearly situated within space and time. (…), although it can be said to produce space-times." (1) This captures nicely the omnipresent yet elusive quality of cultural memory. Chapter 2 shows how consciously managed and politically charged Roosevelt remembrance shapes and negotiates the vaguer, more elusive position of FDR in cultural memory.

In the FDR Library, the museum that visitors see now, is a clear product of a remembrance practice created by the museum curators, who are employed by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The private non-profit Roosevelt Institution has built the wing housing special exhibitions. Both the NARA, and the Roosevelt Institution and the National Park Service (NPS) that administers the home are institutions with a direct or indirect link to FDR. NARA is a federal body established during FDR's presidency, the home was deeded to the NPS as one of its early historic sites. The idea that the NPS should manage national historic sites alongside US natural heritage also dates from the 1930s and FDR was a warm supporter (Meringolo 110-111). The Roosevelt Institution is a partisan body, a private non-profit organization dedicated to furthering the legacy of the Roosevelts.[5] Roosevelt intended the library mainly to open his archives to the public, but, under the influence of presidential foundations, presidential libraries have increasingly become shrines to the presidents they remember (Clark 17-60). The FDR Library is actually, among presidential libraries, the least celebratory and the most even-handed in addressing also the problematic and painful sides of Roosevelt's presidency. Like the involvement of the non-partisan federal bodies in Hyde Park, this even-handedness is in line with Roosevelt's own wish to be remembered not just as a hero, but as an example for future generations to learn from and improve on (Roosevelt, Library Dedication Speech).[6]

5 http://www.rooseveltinstitute.org/about
6 http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=16138&st=Roosevelt+Library&st1=

In other aspects too, the Library on the one hand propels FDR as a heroic American icon in extrapolation of his autofabrication, and thus, presumably, in ways he would have applauded, but also in ways he might have liked less, or in any case, could not have foreseen. For instance, his wheelchair, an element FDR carefully kept out of the public view, is now emphasized in the home as well as the library museum. It is framed consistently as a mark of Roosevelt's resilience in the face of adversity, but as such, it is more a product of cultural memory – i.e. of what agents in the present consider a relevant aspect of the past – than of a culture of remembrance that Roosevelt himself tried to instigate through autofabrication.

Chapter 3 is a more historical treatment of FDR's production of himself as a public icon during his presidency. It discusses in detail how he and his staff and other advisers and supporters created and managed his public image and voice, focusing on his presidential campaign and presidency (1932-1945). It expands autofabrication to include public image management as performed by agents such as Eleanor Roosevelt, FDR's friends, advisers, staff, and his administrations in a broad sense. It traces how FDR's speeches were co-created with spin doctors and ghostwriters, to reveal an image-making machine multiple the size of any previous US president's. It goes on to treat FDR's negotiations of the media – radio, newsreels, photography – as well as his relations with the press and opinion pollsters, in order to show the basic movements he performed to create a consistent public image. This chapter argues that the intertwining of Roosevelt's literal voice and his narrative and metonymical voices created both a sense of casual authenticity and a degree of plasticity, which allowed various – often contradictory – national, political and cultural narratives to adopt him as a vehicle for their messages.

The FDR Library museum on the one hand tells some of the stories of FDR's autofabrication as a collective effort, and on the other showcases it, telling its own story. For instance, the museum has recreated 1930s and '40s living rooms and kitchens in which visitors can listen to parts of FDR's famous radio "Fireside Chats", as if they were doing so at the time they were held and in the situation in which they were heard by his contemporaries. At the same time, the FDR Library makes concrete the division between, on the one hand, the full body of all documents, letters and other papers which FDR signed, wrote, and spoke – those are stored in the archive on the second floor of the building, which the overwhelming majority of visitors do not see – and, on the other, the recordings, letters, pictures and film footage that carefully and selectively construct the public image and voice for the benefit of the museum visitors, located on the ground floor. The museum exhibition especially foregrounds an FDR voice and image that is a selection which uses the elision between the physical and metonymic voice and image. For instance, visitors can see the actual shoes and leg braces that shaped and are shaped by FDR's legs, and they are invited to put themselves into FDR's shoes figuratively. This intertwines public and private aspects of FDR, creating a sense of authenticity through a strategy FDR himself used as well during his presidency.

Central in chapter 4 are Franklin Roosevelt's efforts to build his cultural legacy – his autofabrication in the interest of his future remembrance. This chapter focuses on what Roosevelt, his entourage, and his administrations did to position him for a particular place in cultural memory, and specifically, how they created a number of indexical and iconic sites of remembrance. The first part of the chapter discusses the indexical nature of the New Deal. Although few buildings, infrastructures, artworks or other products created as part of the New Deal actually portray FDR, they reference him indexically. Given the continuing overwhelming presence of the New Deal in the American landscape, Roosevelt remains in a sense almost physically present. This chapter does not argue that FDR hired artists to blow his trumpet in a direct celebratory fashion of himself as an icon, but that the presence of New Deal cultural products and infrastructure nonetheless functions as a form of FDR remembrance that continues to be subtly active in American cultural memory. Secondly the chapter focuses on more pointed acts of future memory-making FDR initiated: the publication of his *Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt* and his design, building and dedication of the first presidential library.

The FDR Library museum as it operates in the present is both evidently a product of FDR's autofabrication for the future, and it revives his voice in a modern context. The museum on the one hand depoliticizes him, through the personal and non-partisan treatment of his person and presidency. On the other hand, it shows how the many positive outcomes of his presidency – particularly the victory over the Great Depression, the US's global success in winning World War Two, and the Four Freedoms and the UN – are clearly results of FDR's foresight and courage, which have turned out, and, supposedly, were always intended, to be positive for the United States and the world as a whole. This politicizes FDR's achievements, while retaining the suggestion they are a result of global consensus, unequivocally benefitting the entire world.

Chapter 5 is the first chapter of the second half, which thematically treats the development of the FDR icon since his death in 1945. It analyzes the strategies through which the New Deal is depoliticized in remembrance. Despite its highly partisan and controversial nature, the New Deal has become depoliticized in a process that is in fact highly political, and was initiated by FDR himself. I distinguish two depoliticization strategies which are mobilized to depoliticize the FDR icon with regard to the New Deal, that FDR used also: personalization and mediatization. The central case studies of this chapter are the FDR characters in various stage and film adaptations of *Annie*, and the First Hundred Days – the New Deal's honeymoon period at the start of Roosevelt's first presidency. By now, this has evolved into a media ritual, in which presidents and other elected government executives are measured against FDR after their first three months in office. This ritual is now practically entirely divorced from the remembrance of the New Deal, certainly from its controversial nature, although it remains connected to FDR.

While Harold Gray, the author of *Little Orphan Annie* (1924-1964) strongly disliked FDR, the 1977 Broadway musical *Annie* connects the girl hero with a great deal of Rooseveltian Hoover-

bashing, New Deal characters and a very celebratory view of FDR and his activist politics. Gray's brainchild Annie is adopted into hagiographic FDR remembrance and FDR is, despite the various *Annies*' celebration of the New Deal, imported into a fundamentally Republican narrative of what it means to be American. To make this possible, each new adaptation, especially the hugely successful 1982 musical film, has included FDR and the New Deal in ever more depoliticized versions.

At the FDR Library museum, the First Hundred Days are regularly revived, most recently in a special exhibition in 2008, when Barack Obama entered office. The more general exhibition tends to depoliticize the New Deal through personalization: the focus is on the many letters to Roosevelt that are on display, written in response to the first Fireside Chats. In their individuality and in their treatment of FDR as an older brother or family friend, they personalize both the American experience of the Great Depression and the New Deal. In a short documentary film about Roosevelt's legacy, written and narrated by Bill Clinton, he says, over photographic and film footage of the Great Depression and the New Deal:

> Even though Franklin Roosevelt was the architect of grand designs, he touched tens of thousands of Americans in a very personal way. To ordinary Americans, Roosevelt was always more than a great President, he was part of the family. My own grandfather felt the same way. He believed that this president was a friend, a man who cared about his family's future. My grandfather was right about that.

Of course, the fact that this is Clinton's voice and text politicizes Roosevelt's legacy, but on the other hand, by letting individual people, "ordinary Americans", such as, presumably, Clinton's grandfather, represent the beneficiaries of the New Deal, viewers are persuaded that Clinton's grandfather was right indeed, and that "this president … cared about his family's future." By pulling the representation and remembrance of the New Deal into the personal and the familial, it is drawn away from political debates about government spending.

Chapter 6 explores how Franklin Roosevelt is allegorized to represent the US's role in World War Two, and in the global order**.** FDR has become one of the most centrally iconic US presidents first and foremost as a result of his role in World War Two. Be it as the *primus inter pares* of the Greatest Generation, or as the eager interventionist who was proven right by the attack on Pearl Harbor, FDR is remembered as embodying the United States at war. This chapter investigates how FDR remains adaptable to a broad range of American war allegories. It proposes that allegories can work to bridge the distance between past and present, making the past relevant to the present. The Roosevelt character in many recent war movies and novels is an allegorical figure of this kind: he can function both synecdochically as if he were a randomly selected American man whose war experiences are representative of the American experience of World War Two in general, and metaphorically, as if he single-handedly embodies the nation at war. Either way,

FDR characters in cultural artefacts representing World War Two provide a way for us to relate to the American experience of World War Two, both in its vastness, and in its particularity. The healing of the break between past and present through FDR figures is never entirely successful, yet successful enough to drive continued attempts at doing so.

A key text to explore how FDR is allegorized is Michael Bay's 2001 movie *Pearl Harbor*. *Pearl Harbor* essentially substitutes FDR's disabled body for the trauma of Pearl Harbor. In the movie's plot, FDR is the only one able to respond to the attack because of his previous conquest of polio. This also works visually: whenever the footage of Pearl Harbor becomes too confronting, the scene cuts to FDR in his wheelchair. Thus, FDR is cast as the particular body through which the vast trauma of Pearl Harbor can be comprehended and addressed. Clinton, in this documentary about FDR's legacy at the FDR Library, performs this same movement in his opening sentences. Listing what Americans studying the 1930s and '40s will perceive through understanding FDR, Clinton says:

> …the victory of democracy over fascism, of free enterprise over command economies, of tolerance over bigotry. And they will see that the embodiment of that triumph, the driving force behind it, was President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Though he was surrounded by turmoil, he envisioned a world of lasting peace. The triumph of freedom in the face of depression and totalitarianism was not foretold or inevitable.

This posits Roosevelt as the embodiment of, and driving force behind the victory of American ideology over fascism, communism, and anti-Semitism. It casts FDR as the personification of that triumph, so as to make it graspable to a twenty-first century audience. "Freedom" in "the triumph of freedom" might be read as "Roosevelt", and stressing that his triumph was "not foretold or inevitable", pushes home the sense that while history may seem to follow a clear storyline it does not. This text cleverly nuances the relationship between past and present by underlining that contingency, while at the same time offering FDR as a narrative bridge.

Chapter 7 argues that FDR's disability drives the continued relevance of FDR as an allegory for a troubled America, casting FDR, and by extension the US, as a figure made more perfect through struggle. It develops the notion that FDR's disabled body supports – and can paradoxically therefore be made to stand in, and stand up, for – American national narratives of remembered and currently experienced hardship. Particularly, this chapter engages with Alison Landsberg's term prosthetic memory, interpreting it in the context of FDR's disability, arguing that individuals and groups can project artificial memories onto FDR's beleaguered body. I suggest that FDR's use of prosthetic devices and other fake extensions made him peculiarly cognizant of the mechanics of prosthesis and therefore enabled him to engender as well as embody prosthetic memories. To argue this case I first show how FDR's disability can hardly exist as a real memory, since it was invisible during his presidency, which is evidence for the fact that memories of the disability

are artificial, later inventions with a relevance for the present. Then I show how various recent movies – particularly *Hyde Park on Hudson* and *FDR American Badass!* (both 2012) – use the FDR icon, and effectively turn him into a prosthetic memory.

FDR's disability is a central vehicle at Hyde park, operating in the FDR Library museum, which displays many of the prosthetic devices he employed, at the home with exhibits one of his wheelchairs, and generally on the grounds. The tour most visitors take is led by an NPS guide and leads from the Wallace Visitors Center to Springwood, past the Roosevelts' graves, and then to the museum, which is self-guided. On the way from one building to the next, one passes the long path on which FDR tried to learn to walk again – something that is not visible, but pointed out by the guides. Also, between the visitors center, the library and the home, there is a wind vane with a wheelchair as its basis, reminding visitors of its centrality to FDR's life. The parts of the site regular visitors enter are all on the ground floor, easily accessible to anyone, and the ramps at most doors are explicitly original, made for FDR. Thus, every part of the site directly or indirectly shows that FDR was wheelchair-bound, and FDR's disability functions to connect the home, the library and the visitors center. As such, it is now assertively present as a conduit between all the other, more static, sites – thus acquiring a function in FDR memory that is itself prosthetic.

The final chapter shows both Eleanor Roosevelt's role in FDR's autofabrication and remembrance as an icon, and her own place in cultural memory as a heroic figure with considerable political power. The central argument of this chapter is that FDR and ER together expanded the arena of politics from the white, male-dominated official bodies to other spheres, mainly the domestic. As First Lady ER could operate politically on the margin of the official administration, and FDR could relegate to ER issues that were politically burdensome for him to address. The Roosevelts together performed an expansion of the political arena similar to the one later proposed by feminist theorist Cynthia Enloe in *Bananas, Beaches, Bases, Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (1987). Although they did not have Enloe's radical agenda, the fact that they performed a similar movement, made them both "future-proof." The Roosevelts' shared expansion of the political arena empowered marginalized groups, but this empowerment was often so small or informal that it may actually have hampered more serious demands for recognition, emancipation and civil rights. Through ER issues were often depoliticized. ER's involvement for instance with African Americans seemingly included them, but simultaneously shored up more radical requests for civil rights.

ER's absence-yet-presence in the political sphere persists in cultural memory particularly through her portrayal as absent-yet-present in FDR's private life. She is routinely portrayed as powerful – often as narrator or focalizer, as in the 1976 *Eleanor and Franklin* television biopic. Or she is a bridging character, between Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt in Ken Burns' *The Roosevelts* (2014) and between Louis Kahn's Four Freedoms memorial on Roosevelt Island and

the United Nations building on Manhattan. Through this meaningful invisibility or silence, ER continues to contribute to FDR's presence and visibility as a cultural icon. She fascinates, yet at the same time leaves space for highly feminized characters like FDR's mistress Lucy Mercer to contribute to the construction of his masculinity in cultural memory.

At Hyde Park too, ER is highly absent-yet-present. Parts of the basic exposition at the museum are of course dedicated to her, foregrounding her writing and her role as FDR's agent. One wing at the end of the chronology, both in the museum's presentation of history and in its suggested order of perusal, is dedicated especially to ER. It is an extra wing added onto the original structure in 1970, specifically to house ER's archival materials.[7] On the ground floor it presents her as "First Lady of the World", suggesting both the expansion through ER of the President's power in terms of geographical space, and extending it beyond FDR's death in terms of time. Thus, ER's figurative expansion of FDR's sway is reflected at the FDR Library in that she gave him an extra wing. A similar reflection can be found in Eleanor Roosevelt's cottage Val-Kil, which the general public can visit. It is on the margins of the estate, the tour going there focuses on her private life and relationships, and thus it is both a trek to the outskirts that the main stream of visitors do not make, and yet also an expansion into new, less visible, territory, that nonetheless adds to the narrative as a whole.

All in all, Hyde Park as the site of the Roosevelt Historic Home and the FDR Presidential Library, reflects all the key autofabrication, remembrance, representation and negotiation strategies that this thesis highlights, and which FDR and later agents representing him employed. These, in summary, are the expansion of the notions of voice and image to become metonymical of FDR; depoliticization, the politics of consensus, mediatization, and personalization; casting FDR as an allegorical figure and his disability as a prosthetic device justifying his continued relevance as an icon; and finally, expanding the arena of the political through his wife.

7 http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/library/onedefinitelocality.html