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

Polak, S. A. (2015, December 8). *"This is Roosevelt's World" - FDR as a Cultural Icon in American Memory*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/36996>

Version: Corrected Publisher's Version

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

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Title: "This Is Roosevelt's World" : FDR as a cultural icon in American memory

Issue Date: 2015-12-08

Stellingen bij het proefschrift
“This is Roosevelt’s World”: FDR as a Cultural Icon in American Memory

Sara Polak, 2015

1. The many political, cultural and architectural traces of the New Deal function as indexes to Franklin Roosevelt, ensuring his continued presence “on the ground” in the American landscape.
2. Stephen Greenblatt’s term self-fashioning is wide-ranging yet it has come to be used too widely to refer to too many diffuse processes of the making of identities, selves and public images by various agents. Autofabrication is the concept I propose to think about political leaders’ autonomous production of their own public image.
3. To support his disabled body, Franklin Roosevelt depended on a range of prosthetics – particularly a wheelchair which only emerged into cultural memory decades later – and he was highly attuned to the possibilities and advantages of engendering prosthetic memories. The wordplay here is not merely fortunate but meaningful in understanding how his self-fashioning enabled his autofabrication and vice versa.
4. Eleanor Roosevelt has been instrumental in broadening the arena of politics, which was politically advantageous for Franklin Roosevelt, and contributed to her power as well as her invisibility in the traditional political domain.
5. Franklin Roosevelt remains relevant to the present and future because he positioned himself as a, not limitless but malleable, space into which needs, desires, ideologies, even aversions, can be projected.
6. Through his rhetoric Franklin Roosevelt could appear more inclusive than his politics really were. Accusations that his behavior was regal were in a sense justified, not because he occupied the heart of god-given power as medieval kings did, but because his jovial non-committal presence filled the space at the heart of power which should have been a site for political agonism central to democracy (Mouffe, Lefort). Roosevelt’s remembrance has continued and strengthened this occupation.
7. People have memories of events they did not live through. They are aware of the artificial nature of their memories, yet the memories can still culturally, ideologically and politically function as lived memories, particularly when the person remembering *could* have been present at the remembered event.
8. Good historians are aware that they produce narratives that serve ideologies of the present. Reading both historical sources and historical analyses using the methods of literary studies can help to understand and make explicit this dynamic.
9. Representation is always also about what is not there.
10. A statesman is a dead politician.