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Editor: [ktpress@ktpress.co.uk](mailto:ktpress@ktpress.co.uk)  
International Editorial Board: Hilary Robinson, Renee Baert,  
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## War Goddess The Varga Girls, WWII and Feminism

**Maria Elena Buszek**

The pin-up girl has a bad reputation. Spawned ever-so-subtly out of the academic painting tradition, and not-so-innocently out of the pages of the National Police Gazette, the pin-up as we have come to know her in the twentieth century blossomed in the men's magazines of the late 1930s and 1940s, as epitomized in *Esquire's* illustrated pin-ups by Alberto Vargas.

Vargas' fantasy women captured the American imagination during the Second World War; both naughty and nice, the "Varga Girls" were women that men wanted to worship and women wanted to emulate. Vargas' pin-ups popularly idealized an unusually self-aware female sexuality that had previously been viewed in negative representations of the popular pornographic female or the "high art" *femme fatale*. However, with the rise of feminist thought since the postwar era, it is difficult for the late twentieth-century viewer to consider such images without cynicism. From Laura Mulvey's psychoanalytical construction of the "masculine gaze" to Andrea Dworkin and Katharine MacKinnon's continuous appeals to broaden the cultural and legal definition of pornography, the wide range of feminist discourse on the ways in which women are manipulated and victimized through various cultural representations has unquestionably affected the way in which individuals tend to interpret the pin-up today.

My interest in investigating the origins and interpretations of the pin-up stem from the fact that many feminist authors from writer Susie Bright to rockers Seven Year Bitch, performance artist Annie Sprinkle to pop icon Madonna have adopted the iconography of the pin-up genre in their image and art. In such recent feminist art and performance, the American pin-up seems to have provided women with a



Above: Esquire Varga Calendar Girl, October 1941 and its appropriation on the nose of a U.S. B-24 Bomber, the "War Goddess" (All pin-ups and images from Esquire below, Courtesy of Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas. Copyright © Hearst Corporation)

visual and performative source of female power that many feminist interpretations have often denied such imagery. As the Varga Girl has unquestionably cemented the definition of what it means to be a "pin-up" in the realm of female imagery, my investigation led me to question what it was about her specific role, and the boom of popular pin-up imagery that she ushered in during the Second World War, that has helped lead to readings of the pin-up as a model for sexual empowerment and agency for many contemporary feminists. In searching to define the context in which she was created and emulated, I found that the Varga Girl was constructed and received as a modern war goddess, both inspired by and inspirational toward the shifting roles of women in American society during WWII. As such, the Varga Girl can be read as an icon for this powerful if fleeting moment in American history.

The modern pin-up, as Abigail Solomon-Godeau has written, has its origins in the nineteenth century, at the moment when the bourgeois interest in female spectacle and modern reproductive techniques in print and photographic imagery converged. Moving the image of the sexualized female away from both explicit pornographic representation and allegorical academic pretenses, what emerged was what Solomon-Godeau calls: 'an image type....predicated on the relative isolation of its feminine motif through the reduction or outright elimination of narrative, literary, or mythological allusion....[and a] decontextualization, reduction or distillation of the image of femininity to a subject in and of itself.'<sup>1</sup> The genre which emerged was one which focused on the implicit sexuality of the contemporary female, where a representational distinction was made from privately and guardedly consumed pornography through the conscious elimination or strategic covering of the genital area and artful posing according to the tenets of academic painting allowed such imagery to be widely and openly reproduced, distributed and displayed: qualities which would later lead to the genre's WWII christening as the "pin-up".

While the media and promotional uses of the pin-up through popular prints, cartes de visite, and lithographic advertising afforded the genre a fluctuating visibility to different genders and classes in the years before its rise as a popular culture icon in WWII, its subject remained invariable. As a popular image of contemporary female sexuality, these early pin-ups represented that which was accepted within societal limits of such sexual imagery: working-class women, dancers and actresses. These women's transgressive display of self-aware sexuality

was viewed as both part-and-parcel of their class or trade, and distinct from the Victorian construct of the domestic, bourgeois "true woman," whose passionlessness and asexuality were virtues that the pin-up genre was ill suited to idealize.<sup>2</sup> However, with the changes in women's roles in the public sphere that occurred with the events surrounding American involvement in WWII, the pin-up's historical celebration of transgressive female sexuality found parallels in new constructions of virtuous womanhood during wartime, during which the meanings of both the genre and the sexualized female it represented shifted significantly.

It was arguably the founding of *Esquire* magazine in 1933 that helped elevate not only the status of the pin-up girl, but the context in which she was constructed and understood. In what one feminist historian has argued as "the first thoroughgoing, conscious attempt to organize a consuming male audience," *Esquire* was inspired by the boom of the men's clothing trade of the 'thirties and was originally intended for distribution primarily through male clothiers, modelling itself after the ladies fashion journals of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> However, popular demand for the innovative "men's magazine" was so great that 95,000 copies of the premier issue were recalled from stores and redistributed to newsstands.<sup>4</sup> In addition to the magazine's interest in documenting fashion trends, *Esquire* also sought to cultivate a reputation as a literary and cultural leader, publishing essays and fiction by such luminaries as F. Scott Fitzgerald, John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway, and providing its readership with erudite articles on contemporary art, music, films and American politics. The magazine's most popular features, however, were its "girlie" cartoons, representing not charming Brooklyn girls or burlesque hall queens (popular pin-up subjects since the nineteenth century in tabloids such as the *National Police Gazette*), but glamorous upper-class women of the American nouveau-riche in various states of undress and humorous situations.

*Esquire's* combination of cultural sophistication and bawdy humor led one critic to define the magazine's style as "a heavy load of excellence with a fine streak of vulgarity."<sup>5</sup> Although illustrators E. Simms Campbell, Alex Raymond, and Howard Baer and photographer George Hurrell helped construct the modern ideal of the *Esquire* woman, the magazine's most famous pin-up artist was George Petty. His wildly popular "Petty Girls" were primped and sporty cuties, whose cartoons were accompanied by gag caption one-liners, generally quoting the ladies' naïve reactions to the viewers ("Oh, you would, would you?"), or pouting responses to sugar-daddies ("I want to keep the ring for sentimental reasons!") presumably at the other end of the ever-present phone receiver held in her well-manicured hand. Rarely addressing the (always presumed male) viewer with her gaze, and always gleefully grinning for the approval of the viewer in the off-chance that she did, in these early *Esquire* cartoons and centerfolds the pin-up "outclassed" other pin-ups but had done so at the cost of the economic and sexual self-sufficiency and



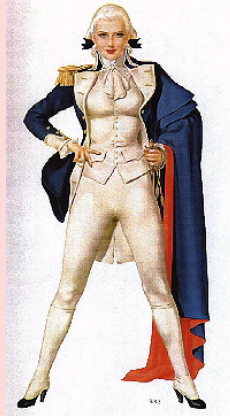
Far left: *Esquire* Petty Girl gatefold  
Centre: *Esquire's* first Varga Girl,  
October 1941.  
Above: December 1939, Petty Girl  
gatefold (detail)

self-awareness which had characterized the pin-ups of the past.

With Petty's increased monetary demands from the publishers, in 1940 *Esquire* sought a replacement for the artist, which they found in Peruvian-born artist Alberto Vargas y Chavez. Schooled in Paris and Zurich, the self-taught artist had been exposed to both the academic work of neo-classicist Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres and popular European illustrators Raphael Kirschner and Alphonse Mucha, whose styles he assimilated and juxtaposed in his own work, of which he hoped to base a career upon moving the New York in 1916. Three years later, Vargas began working for Florenz Ziegfeld, painting portraits of the actresses of the Ziegfeld Follies for theatre displays, and magazine and sheet-music covers, and by the 'thirties, Vargas was accepting commissions from Hollywood studios Paramount, Twentieth-Century Fox and Warner Brothers. Combining Ingres' fantastical idealization of the feminine figure, the art nouveau ideal of the aggressively sexual "modern woman" borrowed from Kirschner, and Mucha's deification of the theatrical femme fatale, Vargas sought to create an image of a twentieth-century goddess that fit the emergence of the decadent and sophisticated Hollywood female "star image," and would be the signature of his entire career.

After having been blackballed by Hollywood studios for taking part in unionized walkouts, Vargas began working for *Esquire* in 1940 as the replacement for Petty that the magazine had sought to groom. Vargas' first pin-up appeared as a gatefold in the October, 1940 issue, in which the pressure for the artist to live up to the precedent set by Petty was apparent.

The telephone scenario and an accompanying gold-digger verse of this first "Varga Girl" were perfectly in keeping with Petty's style, but the voluptuous, lingerie-clad trompe l'oeil figure, striking a dramatically sensual pose, was a complete departure from Petty's cheery naïfs. By Vargas' third *Esquire* pin-up, he had



Far Left: Jan 1941 Varga Girl gatefold  
Left: *Esquire* August 1942 Varga Girl gatefold

completely shrugged off the baggage of the Petty prototype and returned to the glamour-goddess style of his Ziegfeld and Hollywood portraiture.

Moreover, whereas Petty's pin-ups were characterized by their identical figures and facial features, leggy, well-proportioned and athletic, with heart-shaped faces and prominently full, brightly rouged cheeks Vargas' women varied widely, taking on individual "identities" through their different facial types, figures and senses of style. As influenced by women's fashion magazines as by any fine arts precedents, the Varga Girls revealed less flesh and possessed a greater level of contemporary fashion sense and sexual self-awareness than the giddy, girlish Petty pin-ups.

The most dramatic difference between the pin-ups of Vargas and Petty, however, was Vargas' fantastical approach to the female anatomy. While Petty's women were less rich in their coloring and shading, and shaped more along an hourglass-ideal than Vargas', they still tended toward realistic proportions. Vargas' women, on the other hand, uncannily mirrored the Odalisesques of his hero, Ingres.

Like Ingres' career-long disfigurement of the human figure in the name of sensual pleasure (his famous Grande Odalisque prominently featured three extra vertebrae in her seductively-exposed back), Vargas embellished freely upon his renderings of the female body in order to exaggerate their sensuality. The Varga Girls' impossibly long legs ran derriere-lessly into their waists; their ample breasts spread irrationally far across their chests; and even eighteenth-century period drag clung to their bodies like the wet peploi-togas of Hellenistic marble goddesses. Just as Ingres' Odalisesques would be unable to stand upright had they been born flesh-and-blood with such grotesquely erotic figural contortions, so Vargas' anatomical exaggerations of the female figure would have been downright monstrous on a real woman.

Adding to the Varga Girls' unsettling perfection was Vargas' airbrush technique. With the controlled paint-sprays of the tool, Vargas held enormous control over the





Above :Esquire calendar, January 1942. Varga Girl  
Then in order:  
July 1941 Petty Girl gatefold  
Esquire calendar, April 1945.  
Varga Girl.  
Esquire calendar, April 1944.  
Varga Girl.

subtleties that the artist chose to heighten their look. With the same instrument used to paint the flawlessly gleaming finishes of American roadsters and coupes, Vargas conjured up lemon meringue blondes with bodies just as steely and dangerous as anything rolling off the assembly lines in Dearborn and Detroit. In contrast, details such as eyes, lips, feet and hands were meticulously rendered by Vargas with extra-fine sable brushes that lifted the subjects' gazes, gestures, and accessories forcefully off the page. Engaging the viewers with their forward, even predatory gazes and beckoning gestures while distancing them with the shimmering solidity of their impossible figures and spectral surroundings, they seemed to entice, but not to invite. Aggressively contemporary and sexual, yet pointedly inaccessible and grotesquely feminine, the Varga Girls became to Esquire readers an icon which embodied the danger and power of an alluringly untouchable, modern female sexuality.

Within the first year of Esquire's Varga Girls, they had begun to find their own identity. The magazine dropped the Petty-esque gag-line jabs at the gatefold girls and replaced them with the adulatory verse of Phil Stack, constructing the Girls as women to be worshiped, not ridiculed. As early as October 1941, one month before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Vargas' pin-ups and Stack's paeanes served not only to praise the Varga Girls' beauty, but to give them a "voice" as the patriotic ideal of American womanhood. Previously in Esquire, Petty's military women had been represented as charming girls playing harmless "dress-up" in masculine drag. The Varga Girls, on the other hand, posed in (granted, seductively-amended) costumes and accessories of the armed forces, learning drills and semaphore, highly sexualized yet pointedly active women clothed in and usurping male power. As such, from early on Vargas associated the pin-ups with the American war effort.

Needless to say, WWII soldiers took just as strong a liking to the Varga Girls as the Girls had to Allied mobilization. After the American involvement in the war, the military demand for Vargas pin-ups was such that from 1942 to 1946 Esquire printed nine million copies of the magazine "without advertisements and free of charge" and sent them to American troops stationed



Nose Art Paintings after Varga Girl pin-ups, from WWII aircraft

overseas and in domestic military bases, often with extra, specially-designed Varga Girls prepared specifically for these "Military Editions." Swept up in the context of the "good fight," the Varga Girls were no longer the monthly centerfold that spiced up reading in the pre-war study or breakfast table, but a liaison to the homefront and a metaphor for the American girl. Bob Hope summed up the Varga Girls' overwhelmingly strong connection with American GIs when he proclaimed: "Our American troops are ready to fight at the drop of an Esquire"<sup>6</sup>

Nowhere was the Varga Girls' role in this capacity more prevalent than in their various appropriations by the American military troops. They hung alongside photos of friends, mom, and F.D.R. in both the barracks and the officers' quarters and graced the inside walls of tanks and planes. Significantly, the most common and most recognized appropriation of the Varga Girls was the nose art of WWII bombers. Paralleled to the ship-prow female figures of South Pacific and Viking sailing vessels, these pin-up images on American planes can be viewed similarly as images of cultural identification, and symbolic of cultural views of female sexuality thus represented as powerful and dangerous.<sup>7</sup> In the use of contemporary pin-ups in such a context to serve as a sort of troop "protectress" the genre effectively reversed the traditional roles of male/protector, female/protected. As Elaine Tyler-May notes of the association of the pin-up's aggressive sexuality with these generally male-identified implements of destruction (and liberation), such nose-art imagery also parallels these representations of pointedly contemporary female sexuality with danger and strength, further underscoring the power with which the genre and modern women so represented became invested during wartime.<sup>8</sup>

So associated, it comes as no surprise that the Varga Girls were far and away the most frequently appropriated pin-ups used on bomber noses, considering that their hyper-sexualized proportions and cultural affiliation with the United States made her as easily reviled as alluring. In a specially-designed Varga Girl created for a U.S. bomber squadron, she was a furious, scarlet-clothed war sprite that coaxed allied missiles seeming to spring forth from beneath her skirt toward their targets. Who better to shield those that wielded her image and destroyed her enemies than these icy American Athenas?

On the homefront, where women were strategizing their own day-to-day battles, the Varga Girls were making a significant impression as well. Contrary to the popular belief that pin-ups have historically been reserved for privileged consumption by men, studies such as feminist historian Joanne Meyerowitz's recent research on the genre demonstrate that since their inception pin-ups have frequently emerged in contexts which encouraged their visibility to female viewers; and in the case of the Second World War served as an increasingly acceptable ideal for women's sexual self-representation.<sup>9</sup> In the same issue as the first Varga Girl appeared an Esquire reader-poll article which indicated that nearly three-quarters of the "gentlemen's magazine" subscriptions were read by women, for whom the magazines illustrations were the number one attraction.<sup>10</sup> Although the male appropriation of pin-ups for nose art led to their being viewed then as now as nearly a pre-requisite for bombers, the genre was further removed from the realm of privileged male viewing, because of the proliferation of magazine pictorials and G.I. photos that were distributed on the homefront, and the pin-up impressed into the consciousness and culture of American women. In fact, one quarter of Vargas' fan mail at Esquire was from women asking not just for advice on how they could emulate the Varga Girls' style, but how they could get into a career as pin-up illustrators.<sup>11</sup>

As Meyerowitz notes, the wartime signification of the pin-up as a dangerous feminine force was not lost on the women who analyzed the genre. In fact, Meyerowitz cites the *Esquire v. Frank C. Walker, Postmaster General* case as exemplary of this fact. In 1943, Esquire's second-class mailing privileges were revoked due to what the Postmaster General decreed was the Varga Girls' legally pornographic ("obscene, lewd, and lascivious character") status.<sup>12</sup> Contesting the Postmaster's decision, both Esquire and the U.S. government called a series of female witnesses to testify as to their perspectives on the pin-ups' "decency." While the women were varied on their perspectives on the propriety and ubiquity of such brazen displays of female sexuality in popular culture, Meyerowitz notes that in the testimonies of all women both in favour of and against the Varga Girl features the genre's subjects were viewed as "active subjects luring men, not as victims of the male gaze."<sup>13</sup> It is with this in mind that I would like to note that, as Vargas' mail-bag suggests, for young women on the homefront, the pin-up eventually became the model for many of these women's self-representations; not coincidentally, during an era in which women were arguably, for the first time in American history encouraged by both political and cultural forces to develop an awareness of their roles as economic, productive and sexual agents.

With the pool of male workers drained from the labour force, government and labour efforts forcefully promoted the notion that it was not only fashionable, but downright necessary for women to enter the work force in the wartime era. During the war, women on the homefront had learned to perform many roles that years, even months, earlier had been deemed beyond their physical and mental capabilities. Similarly, with their wartime introduction to an integrated public sphere, women



Three images from Annie Sprinkle's *Post Modern Pin-ups: Pleasure Activist Playing Cards* series (1995)

were faced with a rude awakening as to the power and problems that their sexuality posed in relations with their male counterparts in the previously male-dominated industrial and military forces.<sup>14</sup> The new found confidence instilled in many young women by their socially-sanctioned entrance into the work force, paired with the necessary sexual awareness of women that developed during WWII, allowed women to construct a new female image that reconciled traditional elements of beauty and glamour with new attributes of strength, independence, and bravery.<sup>15</sup>

In the WWII constructions of the pin-up ideal, as epitomized by Esquire's Varga Girl, women were almost invariably depicted with and celebrated for their sexually aggressive and self-aware poses, engaging the viewer with a direct gaze that underscored the subject's confident sexuality. And, as the Varga Girl had long associated herself with not only the war movement but trends in contemporary female issues and identity, the era also saw the Varga Girl shaped by the same new factors which affected the lives of their "real" counterparts in the public sphere: by 1946, through pin-ups, calendars, and propagandistic Allied posters, Varga Girls had joined the WAVES, the WAACs and the War Bond effort. As such, the pin-up genre provided a model through which women could construct themselves as the new image of the contemporary homefront woman: at once both conventionally feminine and transgressively aware of her own power and potential for agency on levels both personal and political. Furthermore, it can be argued that the Varga Girls' icy, controlled presence seemed the perfect stance to emulate for a nation of young women looking to assert this new-found sense of awareness and control over their own sexuality. By literally turning themselves into Varga Girls through self-portraiture, homefront women also found a method for supplanting their images and modern identity overseas in place of these fantasy pin-ups appropriated by



Right: Ann Magnuson *The Revenge of the Vargas Pinup Girl* in *Paper Magazine* Oct. 1992

American soldiers. In fact, so popular was the genre as a mode for homefront women's self-portraiture, eventually, as Robert Westbrook notes in his essay on the role of women's images in the Second World War, homemade pin-ups circulated overseas as widely as published imagery.<sup>16</sup>

The context of these hometown female appropriations of the Varga Girl seems to provide both a parallel and an inspiration for the recent feminist appropriation of the self-portrait pin-up. Considering the effects of the dramatic change in the homefront climate after the return of soldiers from overseas, and the backlash against the sexually-aggressive and economically self-sufficient women which the war had created, it is no surprise that the Varga Girl, and these same qualities she represented, faded in the postwar era.<sup>17</sup> In her heyday, however, the Varga Girl was established as an untouchable idol of female power and danger for men seeking a protective banner under which to shield themselves from the horrors of war. For women, she embodied the ideal of independence and sexual self-awareness that American women were themselves discovering in their shifting roles and identity on the homefront.

However, in this role as a war goddess, the Varga Girl's impact on American culture happily appears to have outlasted the women's war effort and its subsequent backlash. Appropriating not only the style but a popular distributive medium of Esquire's Varga Girl series, Annie Sprinkle and Katharine Gates' *Post-Modern Pin-Ups* playing card deck borrows both the sexually-aggressive poses and comfortable conflation of femininity and power of the WWII-era pin-ups they emulate. Moreover, in Sprinkle' and Gates' appropriation of the pin-up, their choice of subjects whose careers (ranging from professors to Elvis Im-puss-in-ators) and activism blatantly underscore the feminist potential of the genre as defined by Vargas' work.

In an even more direct reference to the pin-ups, Ann Magnuson's *Revenge of the Vargas Pin-Up Girl* finds the artist transformed into a Varga Girl, but turns the airbrush gun the medium through which Vargas created his fantastical women back onto the world. Magnuson's implication that the tools of the pin-up's male author, in the hands of his dangerous creation, are so easily turned against any "objectifying" motives is a virtual metaphor for many feminist readings and appropriations of pin-up imagery.

Constructing the transgressive, yet controlled, image of the pin-up as everywoman, capable of extraordinary confidence, patriotism and sexual power, the Varga Girl transformed the genre away from its former representation of the morally

corrupt and socially marginal female. As such, the Varga Girl, as well as the modern understanding of the pin-up which she has helped define, can be interpreted as an image of womanhood which embodies both the normally denied plurality and contradictions of female sexuality, and an era in American history in which such an unstable identity was accepted and celebrated. As such, the simultaneous glorification of conventional femininity and the unruly potential of subversively self-aware female sexuality that the Varga Girl established within the pin-up genre can be read as a substantial inspiration to feminists utilizing the genre to explore the shades of female identity between the boundaries of tradition and transgression.

## Notes

This paper was given at a SUNY 'Arts Now' conference panel in New York, 'Looking for Trouble: Reconsidering Dangerous Women' in 1988.

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1. Abigail Solomon-Godeau 'The Other Side of Venus' in Victoria de Grazia, *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) p.131
2. For more thorough analyses of the construction and idealization of 'True Womanhood' in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Barbara Welter 'The Cult of True Womanhood' *American Quarterly* 18 no.2 (Autumn 1975) pp.151-174; and Lois Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983)
3. Kenon Breazeale 'In Spite of Women: Esquire Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer' *Signs* 20 (no.1, Autumn 1994) p. 1
4. See Mark Gabor *The Pin-Up: A Modest History* (London: Pan Press, 1982) pp. 76-7.
5. Hugh Merrill *Esky: The Early Years at Esquire* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1995) p. 2
6. Merrill p. 2
7. See Gervis Frere-Cook (ed.) *Decorative Arts of the Mariner* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966); Nicholas Thomas *Oceanic Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1995); and Allen Wardwell *Island Ancestors* (University of Washington Press, 1994).
8. Elaine Tyler-May *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic

Books, 1988) pp. 69-70

9. See Joanne Meyerowitz 'Women, Cheesecake, and Borderline Material: Responses to Girlie Pictures in the Mid-Twentieth Century U.S.' *Journal of Women's History* 8 no. 3 (Fall 1996) pp. 9-35
10. See 'Don't look now...but there's a woman reading over your shoulder' *Esquire* (October 1940)p. 171
11. See Merrill, pp.89-90; and the Letters of Alberto Vargas, the National Archives of American Art
12. District Court of the United States for the District of Columbia, Esquire v. Frank C. Walker, Postmaster General, Transcript of Proceedings Before Post Office Department, Civil No. 22722, National Archives, Post Office Department Records, Record Group 28, 46, cited and interpreted in Meyerowitz 'Women, Cheesecake and Borderline Material' pp.15-18; and Merrill, Esqy pp. 103-123
13. Meyerowitz p.17
14. For excellent studies of changes in women's roles as production and sexual agents, see Tyler-May (op.cit.); Susan M. Hartmann *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982); Doris Weatherford *American Women and World War II* (New York: Facts on File, 1990); and Leisa D. Meyer *Creating G.I. Jane: Sexuality and Power in the Women's Army Corps During World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996)
15. Jana Frederick-Collins 'He kept pressing me for details!': A critical cultural analysis of domestic narratives in post-WWII pin-up advertising calendars' Paper presented to the Commission on the Status of Women at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, 1994.
16. Robert B. Westbrook 'I want a girl just like the girl that married Harry James: American women and the problem of political obligation in World War II' *American Quarterly* 42, no.3 (September 1990) p. 606
17. While the issues surrounding the American backlash against the self-sufficient homefront female ideal are far too complex to be discussed here, in-depth analyses of these issues can be found in Tyler-May *Homeward Bound*; Meyerowitz 'Women, Cheesecake, and Borderline Material'; Meyer *Creating G.I. Jane*; Susan Faludi, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1992); and Pamela Robertson *Guilty Pleasures: Feminist Camp from Mae West to Madonna* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996).

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