

FINDING MEANING IN THE STARS:
PHOTOPLAY MAGAZINE AND WOMEN IN WORLD WAR II

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ABSTRACT

Laura Lacy: Finding Meaning in the Stars: *Photoplay* Magazine and Women in World War II
(Under the direction of Barbara Friedman)

Photoplay was one of the most popular fan magazines of the 1940s, filled with seemingly authentic glimpses into Hollywood stars' lives. Within that content, *Photoplay* communicated values, norms, concerns, and ideologies to women readers. Adopting the theoretical framework of cultural studies, this thesis studies *Photoplay* from October 1942 through November 1945, adding to the body of research about women, media, and World War II by offering an in-depth textual analysis of the magazine during the war. It examines what messages regarding women's wartime roles and behaviors appeared, how they changed over time, how *Photoplay* reinforced or challenged prevailing mass-mediated notions about women's wartime roles, and what the magazine tells us about women readers of *Photoplay* and historical audiences. This research reveals that a relationship deeper than one between an unknowable celebrity author and a passive reader existed behind the tales about celebrity romance, women on the homefront, and war work.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In December 1942, “Betty L.” was wrestling with a problem. A “country girl” adjusting “to the big city,” 17-year-old Betty had become involved with a 24-year-old man, who, while “very nice,” had led a privileged existence and was used to getting everything he wanted.¹ The man was soon to enlist in the military and had asked Betty to marry him when he returned home from the war. She agreed, since she loved him “with [her] whole heart and soul.”²

One problem persisted in the relationship, however. This man, so used to getting his way, asked Betty to “give him the things that go with marriage” before he shipped out, rather than wait for their wedding upon his return.³ The man told her that premarital sex would be a “generous and noble” gesture on her part, as he did not know what awaited him in the war, and that to deny him was selfish.⁴ “Please, please tell me what to do,” Betty implored.⁵

None other than actress Bette Davis would heed that call, responding to Betty L. in her first of many “What Should I Do?” advice columns in the fan magazine *Photoplay*. Her advice to the 17-year-old? The argument “Don’t be selfish; be patriotic, be generous—I may not live

¹ Bette Davis, “What Should I Do? Your Problems Answered by Bette Davis,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, December 1942, 78.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

long,” was not a novel approach to coaxing sex.⁶ In fact, Davis quipped, men surely had used that argument since the Stone Age. She instructed Betty L. to weigh the potential consequences of acquiescing to her fiancé versus waiting until marriage. Davis wrote that the outcome of giving in could “be extremely serious,” while waiting would not lead to regrets. She suggested other ways that Betty could express affection toward her intended:

The promise of daily letters, cigarettes every week, surprise packages of writing paper, razor blades and sweets, as well as visits to camp may not be as “all-out” for victory as he would like, but in that way you will be telling your soldier how much he means to you without endangering your own future.⁷

This exchange between one of the country’s most popular actresses⁸ and a young fan offers insight into civilian women’s lives during World War II, from the gendered expectations related to sexuality to views about a woman’s patriotic and wartime duties. Moreover, the exchange implies a more complex relationship than one might expect between celebrities and women readers like Betty L., who, rather than absentmindedly paging through *Photoplay*, sought an engagement with its content in fixtures such as the star-penned advice column.

Betty L. wrote her letter to Davis during a time that some scholars have called the “Golden Age” of fan magazines—the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s—before competition from television led to a decline in movie-going and in corresponding fan-magazine readership.⁹ Betty

⁶ Ibid., 79.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See “Would You Believe It!,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, November 1942, for results of a Roper poll indicating Bette Davis was the favorite actress among those polled.

⁹ Anthony Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine: A History of Star Makers, Fabricators, and Gossip Mongers* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2010), 122; Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 1.

L.'s letter also coincided with a period of significant upheaval for women. Changes abounded on the homefront as many women entered previously male-dominated workspaces, replacing men entering military service. As William Chafe notes in *The Paradox of Change*, women's influx into the workforce "[altered] the existing distribution of economic roles" and introduced greater fluency between the private and public spheres. Yet the war brought little change to "the areas of greatest concern to women's rights advocates—professional employment, child-care centers, a uniform wage scale, and occupational segregation" and failed to greatly affect notions about a woman's proper role.¹⁰

Expectations regarding sexuality were likewise tested during the war years. In *Love, Sex, and War*, John Costello posits that "Sex and sexuality in all its guises and complexities played an extensive role in the war experience," as those fighting may have been doing so less out of loyalty to "abstract notions of freedom or patriotism," and more in response to "emotional values represented by sweethearts, wives, and families."¹¹ The uncertainty of war lent an intensity to romantic relationships that became part of the war experience:

The course of love during World War II seldom ran smoothly, even for those couples who accepted transient emotional relationships. The passion of affairs in wartime was heightened by the need to make the most of every hour, and the sadness of frequent partings was intensified by the uncertainty of whether the partners would survive to meet again.¹²

Thus, Betty L.'s confusion about how to proceed in her relationship was not unique. American women more broadly were navigating sometimes competing expectations of their private and

¹⁰ William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 166.

¹¹ John Costello, *Love, Sex, and War: Changing Values, 1939-45* (London: Collins, 1985), 9.

¹² *Ibid.*, 19.

public selves. In their study of women's 30,000 wartime letters, Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith found:

One of the most significant themes expressed in the letters is the new sense of self experienced by wartime women. Whether the writer was a stepmother from rural South Dakota reassuring her recently departed stepson that "you've always been a model son whether you're my blood or not" or a Mexican-American migrant worker from Kansas discussing with her combat-decorated sweetheart whether she should go to Denver in search of a new job, the exigencies of war necessitated that women develop a new sense of who they were and of their capabilities.¹³

As the war raged on the battlefield, cultural norms were being renegotiated on the homefront. This thesis explores what *Photoplay*, one of the most popular US fan magazines, can tell us about the expected roles and behaviors of women during World War II. Further, the thesis considers reader engagement with the magazine's content about movies and movie stars during a time of significant social upheaval.

Photoplay presents a unique site of study for this examination of gender roles in wartime. In covering Hollywood and its stars, the magazine was inextricably linked to an industry that, during the war, "managed to develop a most potent combination of being able to entertain and propagandize at the same time,"¹⁴ according to Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell in *Propaganda and Persuasion*. While Jowett and O'Donnell explain that overt attempts to use movies as direct propaganda have historically been unsuccessful, films have a knack of subtly influencing attitudes. Movie messages—quite literally larger than life—can be "a potent source of social and cultural information," exhibiting "the greatest potential for emotional appeal to its audience, offering a deeper level of identification with the characters and action on the screen

¹³ Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "US Women on the Home Front in World War II," *Historian* 57, no. 2 (Winter 1995): 352.

¹⁴ Garth Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), 114.

than found elsewhere in popular culture.”¹⁵ By extension, the articles in *Photoplay* would not have simply been words on a page, but instead offered entry to a world populated by glamorous actors and actresses who personified war-era cultural ideals and in whom the readers could become emotionally invested.

Movie magazines, including *Photoplay*, served as “an arbiter of (not always good) taste, a source of knowledge, and a gateway to the fabled land of Hollywood and its people” in American society, writes Anthony Slide in *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*.¹⁶ Martin Levin, in the anthology *Hollywood and the Great Fan Magazines*, muses that the magazines created the sense of a “two-way dialogue between the stars and the fans,” with editors and writers tasked with a “job of message carrying and image making.”¹⁷ Among the dozens of fan magazines published between 1910 and 1970,¹⁸ *Photoplay* stood out as “the most famous of all fan magazines,”¹⁹ the “queen of the fan magazines,”²⁰ and “the *People* meets *Vanity Fair*, the veritable doyenne of Hollywood publicity.”²¹ Along with *Modern Screen* and *Motion Picture*,

¹⁵ Ibid., 107.

¹⁶ Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 3–4.

¹⁷ Martin Levin, *Hollywood and the Great Fan Magazines* (New York: Arbor House, 1970), 8.

¹⁸ Anne Helen Petersen, “Those Glorious Fan Magazines,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 89, no. 1 (2013), <http://www.vqronline.org/criticism/those-glorious-fan-magazines>.

¹⁹ Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 47.

²⁰ Fuller-Seeley, *At the Picture Show*, 150.

²¹ Petersen, “Those Glorious Fan Magazines.”

Photoplay was one of the “big three [fan magazines] in circulation”²² and one of only two fan magazines with a circulation of more than one million in 1946.²³

During World War II, women made up most of *Photoplay*’s vast readership. Each month, the magazine brought their readers profiles of Hollywood stars, celebrity gossip, advice columns on subjects from relationships to beauty tips, and fiction. At a time when “women’s mass circulation magazines raised issues of social adjustment in the ‘40s,” the subjects of fan magazines in particular—celebrities—created an opportunity for changing social dynamics to be explored, using articles ostensibly about the stars to address substantive problems their audience might have faced,²⁴ according to Jane Gaines:

“What Kind of Woman Will Your Man Come Home To?” in *Photoplay*, November 1944, purports to be about Ann Sothorn’s wartime marriage, but actually addresses marital adjustment to pregnancy. “How I Keep My Husband from Getting Jealous,” *Silver Screen*, April 1942, is about the pros and cons of marrying an older man as much as it is gossip about Rita Hayworth’s first marriage, at seventeen, to a thirty-four-year-old man. An article by Veronica Lake in *Photoplay*, January 1943—“Are You a Woman Without a Man?”—deals with the sexual behavior issue popularly known as “wartime morality.”²⁵

Women reading magazine messages about wartime roles and challenges rendered as stories of the stars helped them make meaning of their own lives during this period of upheaval. Fan magazines encouraged in readers “aspirations of a social nature involving both star qualities and

²² Sumiko Higashi, *Stars, Fans, and Consumption in the 1950s: Reading Photoplay* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 4.

²³ Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 142. The other magazine with a circulation of more than 1 million was *Modern Screen*.

²⁴ Jane Gaines, “War, Women, and Lipstick: Fan Mags in the Forties,” *Heresies* 5, no. 18 (1985): 45.

²⁵ Ibid.

the stars themselves,” writes Marsha Orgeron.²⁶ The author notes the many ways that fan magazines promoted the concept of interactivity: by cultivating movie-industry “expertise” that readers could then demonstrate among likeminded fans, by sponsoring contests, and by inviting readers to write to the magazine for advice. Thus, magazines were “repeatedly asking their readers to move out of the somewhat passive role of spectatorship,”²⁷ and to become active consumers of content. Orgeron cites *Photoplay*’s “What Should I Do?” advice column as one example:

The alluring idea that a star like [Claudette Colbert, who succeeded Bette Davis in the role of advice columnist] might intercede in the personal life of anyone with the ability to drop a letter in the mail was mirrored in a variety of magazines that solicited the aid of stars—or at least the aid of their names and images—to give the impression that they were affecting the daily lives of ordinary fans in a personalized fashion.²⁸

This suggests a more personal relationship than that of an unknowable author and passive reader. On the contrary, the escapist fare of *Photoplay* is a vibrant microcosm of the larger issues confronting women during World War II, a screen of sorts on which these changing cultural norms played out. This study examines the role of fan magazines in women’s wartime lives and specifically, what *Photoplay* communicated about women’s “proper” roles.

²⁶ Marsha Orgeron, “‘You Are Invited to Participate’: Interactive Fandom in the Age of the Movie Magazine,” *Journal of Film and Video* 61, no. 3 (October 1, 2009): 4.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 7.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

Women who picked up *Photoplay* during the World War II were living in a time of significant upheaval. Magazines were a site on which cultural norms were mapped, evaluated, idealized, and altered. To gain a deeper understanding of the role of *Photoplay* during the war, background information about women's wartime experiences and about the media environment in which *Photoplay* circulated, is necessary.

Women's Wartime Experience

The United States entered World War II on the heels of the Great Depression, which had “fostered a wave of reaction against any change in woman's traditional role.”¹ That changed during the war, at least for a time, writes William Chafe in *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*.² While a “remote affair” for many women on the American homefront,³ the war pushed them past boundaries in ways that might have been out of the question only years before. Women's wartime letters provide a glimpse of the ways that their lives were changing:

Many letters frankly discussed the fears, frustrations, and often harsh realities of homefront life. Further, the wartime letters of US women provide clear evidence of the myriad ways in which they supported and participated in the war effort. Commentary about rationing, war-bond rallies, salvage campaigns, blood drives, civil defense work, planting and harvesting victory gardens, Red Cross work, hostessing at United Service

¹ Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 1991, 121.

² Ibid.

³ Sheila Rowbotham, *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (London: Viking, 1997), 261.

Organizations (USO), and many other volunteer activities championed by women regularly appear in the letters.⁴

In addition to these responsibilities, both men and women of the time reported a sense that women were the symbolic inspiration for fighting men.⁵ Women, portrayed “as repositories of decent, humane values,” became emblematic in “their role as guardians of a way of life temporarily disrupted by uncertainty, violence, and prolonged separation from loved ones.”⁶ In advertisements and other war-era media, “women were cast in heroic roles as symbols of American strength and American values”—though importantly, most images featured white women, as black women “were perceived by a racist culture as inferior to whites and therefore inappropriate figures of inspiration or national pride.”⁷ In media imagery, the woman who servicemen were fighting for was white, even as women of color also were mobilized for the war effort. This raises an important point—while this thesis considers “women” broadly, it should be stated that white women and women of color experienced the war in different ways.

With men going off to battle carrying images of virtuous and vulnerable “girls” at home in their heads, perhaps it’s no surprise that romance and relationships were drastically altered during the war years. From 1939 to 1942, the marriage rate in the United States increased by 25 percent, partly, perhaps, out of fear that wartime sweethearts might never see each other again.⁸

⁴ Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, “US Women on the Home Front in World War II,” *Historian* 57, no. 2 (Winter 1995): 351.

⁵ Costello, *Love, Sex, and War*, 9.

⁶ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1985), 132.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 119.

⁸ Costello, *Love, Sex, and War*, 19.

Concerns about a man's possible dalliances with women he encountered overseas were aided as much by media as by gossip.⁹ A woman had to walk a fine line between maintaining her virtue and a man's interest while warding off the possibility that someone else might sweep him off his feet.¹⁰ Even while civilian women were expected to be the "principal foot soldiers" in the USO's efforts to boost troop morale with "friendly diversion," i.e., showing up to serve, dance, and chat with the departing troops,¹¹ those who extended the definition of 'diversion' to include sex were derided as "Victory Girls," women "who frequented dance halls and bars and made [themselves] sexually available to servicemen."¹² One US physician offered the portmanteau "patriotute" to "describe women who entertained troops in order to maintain morale."¹³ Relationships suffered as the war "strained, disrupted, and sometimes destroyed marriages" with its resultant loneliness and anxiety.¹⁴ Love, romance, relationships—war touched them all.

Women's lives changed in other ways, as well. As men mobilized for the war effort, the jobs they vacated needed to be filled. Some categories of labor became available to women for the first time. While employers preferred to hire single women without family duties,

⁹ Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 39.

¹⁰ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, 266.

¹¹ Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front during World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 86.

¹² John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 91.

¹³ Marilyn E. Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II* (New York: NYU Press, 2007), 1.

¹⁴ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 87.

increasingly the demand for labor led to an acceptance of the hiring of married women.¹⁵ These women often worked a “double day,”¹⁶ leaving the home for work and returning later to resume domestic duties.¹⁷ Many entered the job market after their husbands left for war in order to supplement the family income.¹⁸ Employers turned to these women in larger numbers to meet the “unprecedented demand for new workers.”¹⁹ The female workforce during this time grew to some 6.5 million, and nationally the percentage of American women working grew from 25 to 36 percent over the course of the conflict.²⁰ African American women, who were more likely to have had a job prior to the war than white women,²¹ saw their employment situation shift in both encouraging and discouraging ways. Salaries rose and schedules became “better,”²² and they were able, at least for a short time, to pursue opportunities they never had been able to before.²³ Yet, persistent social inequalities meant that black women were often confined to the lower rungs of the workplace hierarchy.²⁴ Some employers refused to hire black women at all for fear

¹⁵ Robert L. Daniel, *American Women in the 20th Century: The Festival of Life* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987), 123, 130.

¹⁶ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 96–97.

¹⁷ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, 252.

¹⁸ Claudia D. Goldin, “The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women’s Employment,” *American Economic Review* 81, no. 4 (September 1, 1991): 741.

¹⁹ Litoff and Smith, “US Women on the Home Front in World War II,” 535.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 1991, 127.

²² Daniel, *American Women in the 20th Century*, 126.

²³ Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 54–55.

²⁴ Karen Tucker Anderson, “Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II,” *Journal of American History* 69, no. 1 (June 1, 1982): 84, doi:10.2307/1887753.

that white employees would not accept them, leading to strikes or slowdowns—which occasionally happened—but more often, that was an excuse to conceal the employer’s bias.²⁵ And in those instances when they were hired, black women were often segregated in the workplace and were assigned tasks that were “arduous, dirty, hot, or otherwise disagreeable.”²⁶

When one examines wartime employment broadly, women were leaving jobs traditionally considered appropriate for them and “moved to better-paying, higher-status jobs in war industries,”²⁷ making everything from aircraft to dental tools,²⁸ as well as other fields such as academics, engineering, and banking.²⁹ Additionally, women enlisted in the military: the Navy WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) and the Army WAAC (Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps), which later became the WAC (Women’s Army Corps).³⁰ These servicewomen “were used in almost every capacity except combat.”³¹ In other words, both in industry and in the military, women were elevated to a professional status as close to men’s as they had ever been.

In order to attract women to the workforce and meet the demand for labor, government recruiters and employers blended notions of patriotism with femininity. Rhetoric about patriotism and sacrifice was—and remains—a hallmark of the World War II; wartime Americans

²⁵ Ibid., 85–86.

²⁶ Ibid., 88.

²⁷ Daniel, *American Women in the 20th Century*, 123.

²⁸ Ibid., 124.

²⁹ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, 258.

³⁰ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 99–100.

³¹ Ibid.

“gloried in the feeling that they were participating in a noble and successful cause by making ‘sacrifices.’”³² For some women, “patriotic duty was reason enough to join the war effort.”³³ A woman’s femininity and domesticity were translatable to the workplace: “Women were pliant, had unusual manual dexterity, were exceptionally accurate, were well-adapted to the monotonous and repetitive tasks, and were especially sensitive to color and texture,”³⁴ attributes that employers were encouraged to appreciate. This propaganda subverted traditional notions of gender and made it acceptable for women to move between the private and public spheres by “defining female virtue through public activity.”³⁵ In wartime, the notion of “women’s work” evolved.

Of course, as many women entered the workplace for the first time, they spent less time with their children, even though motherhood (or potential motherhood) remained the most important role women could fulfill during the war:

The principal and overwhelmingly preferred wartime role of American women was that of wife and homemaker. Indeed, World War II may well have had a larger impact in promoting natalism and the primacy of family than in expanding employment and the

³² Mark H. Leff, “The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II,” *Journal of American History* 77, no. 4 (March 1, 1991): 1296, doi:10.2307/2078263.

³³ Goldin, “The Role of World War II in the Rise of Women’s Employment,” 741. It should be noted, however, that some scholars caution against overstating the impact of this rhetoric. For example, Chafe argues that improvements in facilities and working conditions along with better pay perhaps lured more women than any “patriotic fervor.” See Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 128. Another study analyzing 35,000 newspaper classified ads for women workers found that the ads highlighted the economic benefits of jobs more so than patriotism. See Andre J. Alves and Evan Roberts, “Rosie the Riveter’s Job Market: Advertising for Women Workers in World War II Los Angeles,” *Labor* 9, no. 3 (September 21, 2012): 53–68, doi:10.1215/15476715-1634105.

³⁴ Daniel, *American Women in the 20th Century*, 150.

³⁵ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, 251.

public roles of women....Most housewives thought their best contribution to the war effort was in the home.³⁶

In other words, while the expansion of women in the workforce aided by government propaganda and popular media is a hallmark of World War II, the traditional emphasis on the importance of homemaking never relented. Few childcare facilities or services existed, which led to a higher rate of absenteeism among working mothers.³⁷ Questions circulated about whether and how the government should provide childcare, and if so, for how long.³⁸ Sociologists warned against increasing numbers of unsupervised young people and theorized that a generation of juvenile delinquents would result in distracted working mothers³⁹ who would presumably jeopardize their critical war work. Thus, motherhood was conflated with the war effort in numerous ways, with women as caregivers bearing the brunt of criticism.

The influx of women into the workforce was intended “for the duration,” a temporary measure to keep the country running smoothly until the men returned. As Sheila Rowbotham writes, “When the men came marching home, most Americans assumed that women were going to return to being housewives.”⁴⁰ But some women workers, reveling in newfound freedom and a degree of financial independence, were resistant to leaving their jobs;⁴¹ some even protested after

³⁶ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 101–102.

³⁷ Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 1991, 143.

³⁸ Ibid., 149–51.

³⁹ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, 253.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 268.

⁴¹ Ibid.

the men returned.⁴² Although the employment of women did continue at nearly the same level in the postwar years, they moved “to lower-paid work in factories or to light-manufacturing or were absorbed by the growth in service and clerical employment.”⁴³

Thus, as men were mobilized for war, women were mobilized, too. Much of that effort involved the media: government propaganda encouraged women to enter the workplace, where their “natural” skills would be channeled for wartime tasks; news outlets provided information about the war abroad and resulting changes on the homefront. Popular media—magazines in particular—were an important site for communicating wartime ideals to women.

Magazines: Selling the War to Women

When the United States entered World War II in 1941, its citizens were already avid magazine readers. With the country at war, audiences were eager for information. Twenty-seven American magazines at that time boasted a circulation of more than 1 million,⁴⁴ and circulations rose during the war despite a paper shortage that forced publishers to minimize the number of pages and limit the advertising in each issue.⁴⁵ In fact, by 1947, a national survey found more than 32 million “magazine reading families—those in which members could identify specific items from recent issues.”⁴⁶ Women’s magazines, a niche that flourished in the late nineteenth

⁴² Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 1991, 160; Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, 269.

⁴³ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, 270.

⁴⁴ Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 58.

⁴⁵ Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women’s Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998), 197; Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 24, 55.

⁴⁶ Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 40–41.

century, saw their star rise during the 1940s, and they “dominated magazine sales” by the war’s onset.⁴⁷ The Roosevelt administration recognized magazines as a “prime place” to communicate messages to women about how they could effectively help the war effort and worked with the magazine industry, as well as other media forms, to coordinate content.⁴⁸

Prescriptive content about women’s wartime roles was plentiful in magazines. Publishers “sought ways to help their readers cope with the national emergency.” Editorial content explained rationing, for example, encouraged morale building, promoted women’s war work as an important temporary endeavor, and glorified women’s role “as guardians and managers of the home.”⁴⁹ Importantly, magazines were a singular medium that acknowledged with practical and escapist fare the myriad and complex ways that wartime affected women’s lives. The messages in editorial content were typically reinforced by magazine advertisements.⁵⁰

Although women’s magazines were not official publications, the government had a hand in developing magazine content during the war. The Office of War Information (OWI) was established by Executive Order in 1942 “to undertake campaigns to enhance public understanding of the war at home and abroad; to coordinate government information activities; and to handle liaison with the press, radio, and motion pictures.”⁵¹ The OWI used existing media forms for its information campaigns. The Magazine Bureau in the OWI, for example,

⁴⁷ James Gilbert Ryan and Leonard C. Schlup, *Historical Dictionary of the 1940s* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 419.

⁴⁸ Yellin, *Our Mothers’ War*, 25.

⁴⁹ Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women’s Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995*, 193.

⁵⁰ Daniel, *American Women in the 20th Century*, 154.

⁵¹ Clayton Koppes and Gregory D. Black, *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits, and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 59.

was the clearinghouse for government information aimed at magazine readers. It coordinated government publicity needs with information disseminated by magazines and proposed themes for articles, fiction, and editorials, which were designed to create favorable attitudes toward government programs.⁵²

To do this, the Bureau circulated the *Magazine War Guide* to more than 2,000 editors and writers indicating the topics they wanted the publications to emphasize in editorial content. By 1944, the OWI estimated that the *Guide* had been the impetus for 7,500 magazine articles.⁵³ Among them were articles that mobilized women for war work.⁵⁴ Ad content was also used to extend the government's message to women. The OWI sought and was given assistance from the Advertising Council and other ad organizations.⁵⁵ Once it was apparent that women would be needed for a range of jobs, including positions in defense industries, government officials "forged ahead with their policy of selling the war to women."⁵⁶ The OWI, and more specifically, its Magazine Bureau, capitalized on the proliferation and popularity of women's magazines to support the war effort.

While not strictly categorized as "women's magazine," fan magazines had traveled a path that by the 1940s converged with women's magazines in many ways. The earliest fan magazines

⁵² Maureen Honey, "Recruiting Women for War Work: OWI and the Magazine Industry During World War II," *Journal of American Culture* 3, no. 1 (March 1, 1980): 49, doi:10.1111/j.1542-734X.1980.0301_47.x.

⁵³ Patti Clayton Becker, *Books and Libraries in American Society During World War II: Weapons in the War of Ideas* (New York: Psychology Press, 2005), 118.

⁵⁴ Honey, "Recruiting Women for War Work: OWI and the Magazine Industry During World War II," 49.

⁵⁵ Nancy Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers' World: American Women's Magazines* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 79. Also see "The Story of the Ad Council," *AdCouncil*, December 6, 2016, <http://www.adcouncil.org/About-Us/The-Story-of-the-Ad-Council>.

⁵⁶ Leila Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 138.

were more technical in nature, but a shift to more feminized content reflected a desire to appeal to a larger audience.⁵⁷ The editors of *Photoplay*, in particular, crafted an identity “away from special-interest, fan-interactive publishing and toward the fast-growing, lucrative category of women's magazines,” a strategy to entice more advertisers, according to Kathryn Fuller-Seeley. By the late 1920s, fan magazines were catering to an audience of young women who enjoyed movies,⁵⁸ despite the fact that men bought one-third of movie tickets during this time.⁵⁹

Additionally, these readers were generally younger women, their age another attraction for marketers. Girls 13 to 19 were “a sought-after market,” considered “consummate consumers” by the 1940s.⁶⁰ Young people under 25 were also considered the audience’s “opinion leaders,” according to Paul Lazarsfeld, who noted in the 1940s that these opinion leaders were especially concerned with movies and read more movie magazines than did other groups.⁶¹ Women were prominently featured in the fan magazine content to connect with a female audience and to cultivate and sustain their readership; male stars traditionally failed to stir up much enthusiasm at the newsstand.⁶²

⁵⁷ Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 148.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, xiii.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁶⁰ Shayla Thiel-Stern, Rebecca C. Hains, and Sharon R. Mazzarella, “Growing Up White and Female During the American Great Depression: Popular Communication, Media, and Memory,” *Women’s Studies in Communication* 34, no. 2 (2011): 164, <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/docview/1115554494>.

⁶¹ Paul F. Lazarsfeld, “Audience Research in the Movie Field,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 254 (November 1, 1947): 167, doi:10.2307/1026155.

⁶² Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 4.

Photoplay's history shows a magazine strategically positioning itself to communicate messages about acceptable and unacceptable behavior to readers. By World War II, Hollywood had been plagued by multiple off-screen scandals that fan magazines reframed in an effort to fend off boycotts and government censorship of the industry. Launched in 1911, *Photoplay* rose to prominence once James R. Quirk took over the publication in 1919.⁶³ Quirk was "a champion of early Hollywood and close collaborator with various industry powers-that-be," including Will Hays, a politician-turned-president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America.⁶⁴ Under Quirk, the magazine became a platform for the publisher to remark on everything from the behavior of those in Hollywood to overreaching censorship in film.⁶⁵ Importantly, he strove to change the perception of fan magazine readers from "frivolous" to "knowledgeable, middle-class film consumers."⁶⁶ Anne Helen Petersen writes that Quirk was "establishing a quality brand, with . . . a dedication to upstanding morals" and would even "reprimand stars on behalf of the studios."⁶⁷ Thus, as *Photoplay*'s editorial leadership expanded the magazine's readership, it also worked to shape reader attitudes via a complicated process of meaning-making. The focus of this thesis is how *Photoplay* forged a connection between Hollywood and its war-era readers and, in particular, how the magazine communicated notions of romance and of women's proper roles in wartime.

⁶³ Ibid., 53.

⁶⁴ Petersen, "Those Glorious Fan Magazines."

⁶⁵ Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 53–54.

⁶⁶ Fuller-Seeley, *At the Picture Show*, 148, 150.

⁶⁷ Anne Helen Petersen, "The Gossip Industry: Producing and Distributing Star Images, Celebrity Gossip and Entertainment News 1910-2010" (PhD diss., University of Texas, 2011), 47, <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/11454>.

In *Photoplay*'s earlier years, much of the content consisted of film narratives adapted for the page.⁶⁸ As it evolved, *Photoplay* became a source of biographical material, movie-star portraits, and tales that presumably divulged the private lives of film's public figures.⁶⁹ Petersen refers to the evolution of movie-star profiles in *Photoplay* as providing, first, "picture personality," or material related directly to the way the star appeared onscreen; and later, material about a star's "extra-textual life," or what the actor purportedly did off-screen. Inevitably, off-screen behavior amplified the image of the actor onscreen. "If an actor always played a dashing hero, then stories would confirm he was, in fact, a dashing hero in real life," Petersen writes. "That coherency is at once pleasurable and reassuring."⁷⁰

Photoplay "positioned itself as an insider in the movie business, with privileged access to the stars, but still a fan at heart."⁷¹ The content "set up a star as a particularly American product,"⁷² with the magazine collaborating "with studio publicity departments to burnish the image of matinee idols and . . . [accentuating] the positive."⁷³

⁶⁸ Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 48.

⁶⁹ Pamela Hutchinson, "Photoplay Magazine: The Birth of Celebrity Culture," *The Guardian*, January 26, 2016, <http://www.theguardian.com/film/filmblog/2016/jan/26/photoplay-magazine-hollywood-film-studios-stars-celebrity-culture>; Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 60; Petersen, "Those Glorious Fan Magazines."

⁷⁰ Anne Helen Petersen, "The Rules of the Game: A Century of Hollywood Publicity," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 1, no. 89 (Winter 2013): 49.

⁷¹ Hutchinson, "Photoplay Magazine."

⁷² Petersen, "Those Glorious Fan Magazines."

⁷³ Sumiko Higashi, *Stars, Fans, and Consumption in the 1950s: Reading Photoplay* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 5.

In 1921, *Photoplay* introduced the Medal of Honor prize, inviting another kind of participation by readers. The prize was awarded to film producers “whose vision, faith and organization made the Best Photoplay a possibility.” Readers were asked to choose, upon “comparison and reflection” a work of “singular excellence” for an award the magazine likened to the Nobel Prize for literature.⁷⁴

The million readers of *Photoplay* magazine are to choose the winner—they and no critics, editors or other professional observers. These million readers are the flower of fandom—the screen’s most intelligent public—yourselves.⁷⁵

A mail-in form was provided along with evaluative criteria: “theme, direction, action, continuity, setting, and photography.”⁷⁶ In addition, the magazine listed 50 films for consideration.

Photoplay “presented to readers a fascinating combination of populism and slight, subtle paternalism by ostensibly entrusting them with the power to choose the best of the best while nudging them to make the ‘right’ choices.”⁷⁷

Not long after the Medal of Honor was launched, silent-film star Roscoe “Fatty” Arbuckle was accused of raping and causing the death of an aspiring actress, Virginia Rappe, at a bootleg-liquor-soaked party. As one result of the scandal, the studios founded the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) in 1922. The role of the MPPDA was to promote the business interests of its members and prevent scandals like the Arbuckle case that might result in the loss of investors and audiences. In response to concerns that Hollywood’s

⁷⁴ “The Photoplay Magazine Medal of Honor,” *Photoplay*, June 1921, 33.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Aisha Harris and Rebecca Onion, “The Oscars Before the Oscars,” *Slate*, February 26, 2016, http://www.slate.com/articles/arts/the_oscars/2016/02/a_history_of_the_photoplay_magazine_medal_of_honor_the_populist_movie_award.html.

“apparent immorality” might “seep readily on to the screen,”⁷⁸ the MPPDA issued a code of conduct to control actors’ off-screen behavior.

The studios viewed fan magazines as “collective mouthpieces”⁷⁹ and exercised control over their content by requiring that their writers be credentialed by the MPPDA in the 1930s.⁸⁰ The success of the magazines depended in large part on the cooperation of the studios. “In exchange for publicizing their stars—and publicizing them in a very precise way, almost wholly dictated by the studio’s publicity department—the studios agreed to massive ad buys,” Petersen explains.⁸¹ The studios held influence over what magazines published until the studio system dissolved in the 1950s.⁸² The stars were the studios’ product, the “currency of the industry” and so they had to be promoted with care.⁸³ MGM kept a list of celebrity information that could not be published for fear of compromising stars’ bankability—for instance, writers were prohibited from mentioning the fact that Norma Shearer and Robert Montgomery were parents, “a revelation that might hurt their romantic image” and writers in general were instructed to avoid mentions of celebrities’ marriages.⁸⁴ There were whispers that the writers would “earn a

⁷⁸ Petersen, “The Gossip Industry,” 43.

⁷⁹ Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 7.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸¹ Petersen, “Those Glorious Fan Magazines.”

⁸² Petersen, “The Gossip Industry,” 52–53.

⁸³ Heather Addison, “Capitalizing Their Charms: Cinema Stars and Physical Culture in the 1920s,” *Velvet Light Trap: A Critical Journal of Film & Television*, no. 50 (Fall 2002): 17.

⁸⁴ Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 8.

handsome income” by ignoring some stories in favor of others.⁸⁵ Additionally, some fan magazine writers were employed as “paid publicists for the films or players about which they were writing,” suggesting a conflict of interest.⁸⁶

War-themed movies made up approximately a quarter of Hollywood’s output from 1942 to 1946.⁸⁷ The Roosevelt administration understood the important role of film as a medium through which official messages could be conveyed to the public. Movies were “one of the most effective mediums in informing and entertaining our citizens,” according to the president.⁸⁸ As they did with other mediums, the government expected the film industry’s cooperation. The OWI reviewed films and made recommendations about what messages films communicated to the viewing public,⁸⁹ for example, civilians on the home front were to be shown as “sacrificing cheerfully”—this meant women, in particular, many of whom were expected to take on new or additional work outside the home.

Women should be shown in pictures as stepping forward, becoming war workers, donning armed forces uniforms, and assuming jobs formerly handled by men. They should also be depicted as coping without their husbands or sweethearts, even leaving their children at day-care centers.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Ibid., 85.

⁸⁶ Anthony Slide, *They Also Wrote for the Fan Magazines: Film Articles by Literary Giants from E.E. Cummings to Eleanor Roosevelt, 1920-1939* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 1992), 6.

⁸⁷ LeRoy Ashby, *With Amusement for All: A History of American Popular Culture since 1830* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2006), 265.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 264.

⁸⁹ Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 48–184.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 69.

Actresses not only performed these roles on screen, but in other public spaces. Hollywood stars served to reify notions of appropriate behaviors and ideals during wartime, and their actions often made it to the pages of *Photoplay*.

Many in the entertainment industry understood their potential influence on the masses—“Few politicians have aroused the public as much as some of Hollywood’s stars,”⁹¹ wrote one scholar—and heeded the suggestion that they should participate in the war effort. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Katharine Hepburn, Bette Davis, and Clark Gable personally reached out to President Roosevelt to offer support for the war effort.⁹² Celebrities numbering in the thousands sold war bonds and interacted with deploying troops; actress Dorothy Lamour reportedly sold \$350 million in bonds by the end of the war.⁹³ Numerous Hollywood actors enlisted in the military. Many actors who did not ship out and a substantial number of actresses rallied to participate in USO tours, the more successful stars often performing for free.⁹⁴ Actress Betty Grable’s image became one of many popular pin-ups, reminding troops of the ideal they were fighting for.⁹⁵

Just as white women experienced the war in ways that might have been different from women of color, entertainers’ participation in the war effort likewise differed by race. On USO tours, black entertainers such as actress Hattie McDaniel “traveled to many out-of-the-way black

⁹¹ Roy Hoopes, *When the Stars Went to War: Hollywood and World War II* (New York: Random House, 1994), xix.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 80–81.

⁹³ Ashby, *With Amusement for All*, 266.

⁹⁴ Hoopes, *When the Stars Went to War*, 194.

⁹⁵ Ashby, *With Amusement for All*, 278.

Army camps no one ever heard of,” a practice that “constantly reminded them that blacks were second-class citizens—especially when the base was south of the Mason-Dixon Line and they could not stay in the same hotel or eat at the same restaurant as their white colleagues.”⁹⁶ Lena Horne was outspoken against the segregation of black servicemen and believed that her status as the most popular pin-up model of color was indicative of a greater injustice, saying images of her were more of an “afterthought,” as if someone suddenly realized black servicemen would need a pin-up model, as well.⁹⁷

While efforts such as USO tours might take the stars to destinations across the nation and the world, others actors supported the war effort closer to Hollywood. In October 1942, the Hollywood Canteen opened in Los Angeles for troops preparing to ship out.⁹⁸ There, troops were treated to an audience with celebrities, music and dancing, and refreshments.⁹⁹ During the Canteen’s lifespan, “just about everyone in Hollywood put in an appearance.”¹⁰⁰ Thousands of troops waiting to go to the Pacific would visit the Canteen Monday through Saturday where they would eat, drink, and dance with celebrities.

Bette Davis cutting cake, archrival Joan Crawford washing coffee cups, Betty Grable setting the record for jitterbugging, amassing three hundred cut-ins in a single hour. Bing Crosby brought his two young sons along to sing Christmas carols on Christmas Eve;

⁹⁶ Hoopes, *When the Stars Went to War*, 216.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 216, 95.

⁹⁸ Jennifer Frost, “Dissent and Consent in the ‘Good War’: Hedda Hopper, Hollywood Gossip, and World War II Isolationism,” *Film History: An International Journal* 22, no. 2 (June 2010): 175, doi:10.2979/FIL.2010.22.2.170.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Hoopes, *When the Stars Went to War*, 171.

Dorothy Lamour dressed up as Santa Claus. Years later, Johnny Carson would recall his night at the Canteen as a naval air cadet, dancing with Marlene Dietrich.¹⁰¹

Celebrities' activities became a public demonstration of how Americans were to treat the servicemen and how citizens should rise to the occasion in wartime.¹⁰²

At the nexus of women's magazines and Hollywood, *Photoplay* was in a unique position to conflate its coverage with appropriate wartime behavior. Movies provided an important form of escapism in wartime, and fan magazines such as *Photoplay* connected their audience to the entertainers and industry behind them. This thesis explores what happened when this magazine and the stars it covered went to war and what that reveals about expectations for women during World War II. First, however, a review of scholarship related to women as readers, messaging to women during World War II, and fan magazines such as *Photoplay* demonstrates how this project is situated among the previous research.

¹⁰¹ Anne Helen Petersen, "The Hollywood Canteen," *Lapham's Quarterly*, November 27, 2012, <http://www.laphamsquarterly.org/roundtable/roundtable/the-hollywood-canteen.php>.

¹⁰² Not all celebrities, however, offered enthusiastic support for the war. Famed gossip columnist Hedda Hopper used her platform and voice to push for US isolationism leading up to the war and to criticize policies during the war, even though she did become more supportive of the war effort. Nor did Hopper overly subscribe to any sense of wartime unity, holding on to stereotypes that were being reexamined in the face of the war. Her voice provided her audience with a divergent viewpoint than many other celebrities. See Frost, "Dissent and Consent in the 'Good War.'"

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

What messages are communicated in women's magazines, and what do those messages tell us about women throughout history who have consumed them? To answer those questions, scholars have examined magazines in historical, cultural, and social context.

In her study of women's magazines from 1940-1960, for example, Nancy Walker argues that magazines of that era "assumed more importance than they do today in helping to both shape and reflect the values, habits, and aspirations of American women and their families,"¹ a characterization that suggests the period this project focuses on may be rich with data.

"Magazines are important sites of identity formation," notes Carolyn Kitch. "While they are a commercial enterprise, they also convey normative cultural ideals whose construction repeatedly implicates the reader."² At the crux of this argument is the idea that consumer and content are parts of a reciprocal process. Amy Aronson argues that even digital magazines manifest these traits. In her essay, "Everything Old is New Again," she decries the myth of the passive historical audience, and demonstrates that the much-heralded participatory nature of digital media is a continuation of the tradition of women's magazines past. "Women's magazines . . .

¹ Nancy Walker, *Women's Magazines, 1940-1960: Gender Roles and the Popular Press* (Boston: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 1.

² Carolyn Kitch, "'Useful Memory' in Time Inc. Magazines," *Journalism Studies* 7, no. 1 (February 2006): 96, doi:10.1080/14616700500450384.

were more forum, or nexus, than soapbox,” she writes.³ Whereas some scholars have cited the difficulty of knowing with certainty what historical audiences made of the print culture they consumed, S. Elizabeth Bird argues that all audiences have a relationship to the texts they consume. Scholars must consider not only what the media did or what people did with it, but “how are media incorporated into everyday communicative and cultural practices.”⁴

With these considerations in mind, this chapter reviews previous research about the ways that entertainment and lifestyle media communicate cultural ideals and provide women a space in which to define and negotiate their roles and behaviors. The chapter also reviews scholarship that has examined messaging during World War II, and the roles of fan magazines.

Women as Readers

Women readers across time, as well as the materials they consumed, have been the focus of many scholars, whose research has illuminated a complicated relationship between the reader and the text. In her seminal “The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860,” Barbara Welter finds that nineteenth-century magazines conveyed a consistent homebound role for women even as men’s roles changed significantly during the Industrial Revolution. The “attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors, and society, could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity,” Welter notes. Other printed media of the period, such as gift annuals and religious texts, reinforced

³ Amy Aronson, “Everything Old Is New Again: How the ‘New’ User-Generated Women’s Magazine Takes Us Back to the Future,” *American Journalism* 31, no. 3 (July 3, 2014): 316, doi:10.1080/08821127.2014.936734.

⁴ S. Elizabeth Bird, “Seeking the Historical Audience: Interdisciplinary Lessons in the Recovery of Media Practices,” in *Explorations in Communication and History*, ed. Barbie Zelizer (New York: Routledge, 2008), 90.

woman's domestic role. Yet, according to Welter, this message did not go uncontested. Women exercised agency in accepting, negotiating, or denying the message presented on the page. This was particularly true as social reform movements, industrialization, and war, for example, beckoned nineteenth-century women to think and act beyond home and hearth. "The very perfection of True Womanhood . . . carried within itself the seeds of its own destruction," Welter writes.⁵

Real women often felt they did not live up to the ideal of True Womanhood: Some of them blamed themselves, some challenged the standard, some tried to keep the virtues and enlarge the scope of womanhood. Somehow through this mixture of challenge and acceptance, of change and continuity, the True Woman evolved into the New Woman—a transformation as startling in its way as the abolition of slavery or the coming of the machine age.⁶

Aronson describes early women's magazines as participatory forum and democratizing force for their bricolage of amateur and professional content. Editors of some magazines, such as *Godey's Lady's Book*, invited women to submit stories and respond to those of others, a kind of reader interactivity that has gone largely overlooked.

By design, [magazines] enabled women—if only those with sufficient literacy, social status, and financial means—the first viable opportunities to subvert and redress the problem of women's silence and invisibility in the public realm. In fact, through their formal dynamics, discursive practices, and active reader communities, women's magazines first constituted women as a distinct public in American life.⁷

Thus, women's magazines provide an early example of the ways in which American women engaged in mass-mediated conversation about the issues salient to them.

⁵ Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (July 1, 1966): 151–74, doi:10.2307/2711179.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Aronson, "Everything Old Is New Again," 313.

Scholars of women's history have shown the ways that twentieth-century readers used print culture to negotiate identity and values—even material others might dismiss as banal or inconsequential. For example, Janice Radway found that women readers of romance novels engaged with the texts in a way that seemed “to be a complex form of behavior that allows incremental change in social beliefs at the same time that it restores the claim of traditional institutions to satisfy a woman's most basic needs.” Radway argues that this interactive practice “[permitted] American women to adopt some of the changing attitudes about gender roles by affirming that those attitudes are compatible with the social institution of marriage.”⁸ Radway admonishes other interpretations of women's reading choices because they

do not take account of the actual, day-to-day context within which romance reading occurs, and because they ignore romance readers' own book choice and theories about why they read, they fail to detect the ways in which the activity may serve positive functions even as the novels celebrate patriarchal institutions. Consequently, they also fail to understand that some contemporary romances actually attempt to reconcile changing attitudes about gender behavior with more traditional sexual arrangements.⁹

Thus, reading is an active process that occurs in contexts; the meaning that Radway's subjects made of these novels does not signify uncritical acceptance of the material. This aligns with Bird's work on audiences, wherein she notes the value in “[moving] away from studies of direct engagement with texts towards a consideration of the multiple articulations with media in everyday life.”¹⁰ Similarly, Aronson notes that although some media scholars and critics have presumed reader passivity, magazines “blur the boundaries between writer and reader, coder and

⁸ Janice A. Radway, “Women Read the Romance: The Interaction of Text and Context,” *Feminist Studies* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1983): 71, 73.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁰ Bird, “Seeking the Historical Audience: Interdisciplinary Lessons in the Recovery of Media Practices,” 97.

decoder, turning audiences into co-creators of magazine content at some level.”¹¹ Women *are* an active audience, situated in dynamic cultural contexts, consuming the messages on the page and interpreting them in varying ways.

Messaging to Women During World War II

Scholars have examined war-era media messages directed to women, and perhaps no example is more iconic or a more fitting place to start than Rosie the Riveter, who “shaped the nation’s collective memory of women’s wartime experience.”¹² With her overalls and rivet gun, “her foot rested firmly on a crushed copy of Hitler’s *Mein Kampf*,”¹³ Rosie invited women to apply for jobs they might not have considered before. As a symbol of women’s wartime roles, she “made women’s industrial employment more acceptable to the public.”¹⁴ Furthermore, while Rosie’s bulk dominates the cover of the May 1943 issue of the *Saturday Evening Post*—her first “appearance” in an illustration by Norman Rockwell—and her sleeves struggle to contain the muscles of her arms, her “painted fingernails, lipstick, and the tidy arrangement of her bright red curls wittily convey her underlying femininity.”¹⁵ Historian Sheila Rowbotham sees in Rosie myriad messages about the new woman worker’s role:

¹¹ Aronson, “Everything Old Is New Again,” 320.

¹² Mei-Ling Yang, “Selling Patriotism: The Representation of Women in Magazine Advertising in World War II,” *American Journalism* 12, no. 3 (1995): 304.

¹³ David Hackett Fischer, *Liberty and Freedom: A Visual History of America’s Founding Ideas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 537.

¹⁴ Andre J. Alves and Evan Roberts, “Rosie the Riveter’s Job Market: Advertising for Women Workers in World War II Los Angeles,” *Labor* 9, no. 3 (September 21, 2012): 54, doi:10.1215/15476715-1634105.

¹⁵ “The Rosie the Riveter Story,” Norman Rockwell Museum of Vermont, accessed March 30, 2016, http://www.normanrockwellvt.com/rosie_riveter_story.htm.

Rosie's face [on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*] conveys a multiplicity of meanings: "I'm a cat's whiskers war worker," "I am not amused," "I am not sexually available" are all there on the surface. But Rosie's Irish pink-cheeked country-girl look has an expression of spiritual dedication which is in contrast to her earthy, sensual being. Rosie is both of the people and yet made exceptional through sacrifice; a quasi-religious symbol, she transcends gender.¹⁶

Rosie was an icon of the era that enabled the public to envision a woman worker in a new way. She was, however, always a wife and mother first, only taking up her factory job for the duration—an extension of her homefront duties that would help bring the troops home sooner.¹⁷

Notably, Norman Rockwell illustrated the original Rosie *Saturday Evening Post* cover. Rosie was one of 324 covers he created for the magazine over the course of his career, a portfolio that allowed readers to "[see] an edited version of their own lives, rarely marked by dramatic incident or great tragedy, but lives of decency, sweetness, and perseverance,"¹⁸ even if Rockwell's art has been "despised by the critical establishment."¹⁹ When creating the image of Rosie, Rockwell seems to have not only been influenced by a 1942 song titled "Rosie the Riveter,"²⁰ but also Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel—Rosie's pose looks strikingly similar to that of Isaiah's on the Sistine Chapel, with factory equipment essential to war work replacing the prophet's book.²¹ The realization that Rockwell had visually referenced the Sistine Chapel

¹⁶ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, 249.

¹⁷ Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 138.

¹⁸ Karal Marling, *Norman Rockwell* (New York: Harry N. Abrams in association with the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, 1997), 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

²⁰ Jack Doyle, "Rosie The Riveter, 1941-1945," *PopHistoryDig.com*, February 28, 2009, <http://www.pophistorydig.com/topics/rosie-the-riveter-1941-1945/>.

²¹ Fischer, *Liberty and Freedom*, 538.

fostered even more “national delight” around the work, and it “captured the mood of an American generation—irreverent, good-humored, casual, egalitarian, and at the same time confident, strong, and deadly serious in its cause of liberty and freedom.”²²

It is also noteworthy that Rosie was depicted as a white woman in a defense job. While black women workers appeared individually in media images during the war, “there was no black metaphor equivalent to Rosie,” according to Rowbotham.²³ The “practice of cultural segregation rendered [black women] invisible in the mass media,”²⁴ points out Mei-Ling Yang. In other ways, Rosie did not represent the typical woman’s experience. In a study of newspaper classified ads, Andre Alves and Evan Roberts found that “even at the height of advertising for women in war-related jobs in 1943, more advertisements appeared for women in household and domestic service and clerical work.”²⁵ While she may have presented a new visual image of femininity in the forties, she cannot be considered a stand-in for all women workers during World War II.

Other scholars have examined war-era magazine coverage and what it conveyed to women. In her research of wartime celebrity coverage in *Good Housekeeping*, Susan Ohmer noted the relationship between star culture and wartime realities. She found the content about cinema in the 1940s “highlighted characters who contributed to the war effort without sacrificing

²² Ibid.

²³ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, 251.

²⁴ Yang, “Selling Patriotism,” 309.

²⁵ Alves and Roberts, “Rosie the Riveter’s Job Market,” 68.

their femininity.”²⁶ Coverage conflating femininity and domesticity with wartime realities appeared in many magazines during this time, according to Nancy Walker.²⁷ Beauty advice in the fan magazine during the war also served to remind women of their temporary state as workers in previously male-dominated spaces. Jane Gaines, for example, writes that 1940s fan magazines encouraged women to maintain rituals such as putting on makeup as way to “endure a bleak work situation with no men in sight” and to preserve their femininity.²⁸ Lipstick had a “symbolic function,” she argues.²⁹ These examples aligned with rhetoric in many women’s magazines of the time which, according to Sherna Gluck, taught female readers to “be glamorous, even fashionable” while working.³⁰ In these ways, magazines were able to uphold traditional notions about a woman’s place, yet refine content to fit wartime reality.

Indeed, magazines could not ignore the fact that women’s lives had changed. To do so would risk losing readers who were unable to recognize their current realities in a favorite magazine. This message was repeated and reinforced in a range of media content. Leila J. Rupp notes as much in *Mobilizing Women for War*:

Official and unofficial propaganda might insist that women workers were “cute” with grease smears on their cheeks, and emphasize that they had only to wash their hands and

²⁶ Susan Ohmer, “Female Spectatorship and Women’s Magazines: Hollywood, ‘Good Housekeeping,’ and World War II,” *Velvet Light Trap: A Critical Journal of Film & Television* 25, no. 25 (Spring 1990): 59.

²⁷ Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers’ World*, 86–87.

²⁸ Gaines, “War, Women, and Lipstick: Fan Mags in the Forties,” 43.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 44.

³⁰ Sherna Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1987), 11.

powder their noses to be as beautiful as any woman in an evening gown, but it could not ignore their existence.³¹

Conditions may have been changed by war, but magazines reminded women that certain gendered expectations remained, often with simple adaptations of standard magazine fare. If women were going to work in filthy industrial settings, for example, a simple application of lipstick preserved their feminine traits. Masculine coveralls were refashioned for women as “Victoralls,” and short hair was a necessity for workplace safety.³² Women who engaged in war work were saving lives, helping win the war and bringing soldiers home—without sacrificing beauty.³³

As the war drew to a close, however, the message to women about the importance and expectation of work shifted. Ads began to focus on appliances, anticipating the push to get women out of the workforce and back into the home.³⁴ Some magazine editors seemed to understand that some women needed to work, so they did not actively promote an exodus from the workforce; instead, “much of the postwar advice and emphasis turned to the personal rather than concerted political or collective action,” writes Mary Ellen Zuckerman.³⁵ A spate of editorial content in magazines and other media, examined by Susan M. Hartmann, instructed

³¹ Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 150–51.

³² *Ibid.*, 147–48.

³³ *Ibid.*, 156.

³⁴ Karen Tucker Anderson, “Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II,” *Journal of American History* 69, no. 1 (June 1, 1982): 16, doi:10.2307/1887753.

³⁵ Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women’s Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995*, 198.

women to turn their attention to the well-being of returning veterans.³⁶ Women were, “above all, to be sensitive and responsive, to adjust their interests, needs and desires to those of their men.”³⁷ A woman was encouraged to provide her returning serviceman with ample examples of her femininity, lest the soldier worry too much about the independence women found while he was away.³⁸ She should also bear in mind her inability to understand his experience and forgive him any sexual indiscretions committed while away.³⁹ A woman should neither burden nor harass a returning soldier.⁴⁰ Relatedly, according to Gluck, women were to be “responsible for carefully budgeting the pay their husbands brought home, for ministering to their physical needs, and for providing emotional support to the men whose egos were battered by the threat to their role as family breadwinner.”⁴¹ Women’s needs became secondary to men’s in this discourse as the men returned home.

Additionally, an analysis by Susan Burke Odland of 1946-era issues of *Ladies’ Home Journal* indicates that the concern about a mother’s role was of paramount importance to the nation after the war. According to the study, “In a time of insecurity and anxiety, the successful performance of motherhood—continued reproduction, the instruction of proper social values, and the purchase of nutritious food—helped to ensure the future success of democratic

³⁶ Ibid., 197; Susan M. Hartmann, “Prescriptions for Penelope: Literature on Women’s Obligations to Returning World War II Veterans,” *Women’s Studies* 5, no. 3 (1978): 224, doi:10.1080/00497878.1978.9978450.

³⁷ Hartmann, “Prescriptions for Penelope,” 227.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Hartmann, “Prescriptions for Penelope,” 230.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 234.

⁴¹ Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*, 8.

civilization.”⁴² A woman’s role as a mother not only influenced the well-being of her own family, but an entire country recovering from the trauma of war. In the immediate postwar period, mothers were to eschew any other career—their career was their children.⁴³ According to the literature, magazines were a crucial tool in the communication of swiftly changing expectations and norms. Or swiftly changing back, as it were. Once the war ended, media content urged women back toward the home and domesticity. Some women workers, however, resisted this idea, embracing their new salaries and skills.⁴⁴ Even those who did follow this prescriptive to return home did so with a new sense of self, according to Gluck, who conducted interviews with 200 women about their wartime experiences:

The unintended effect of their wartime work experience was a transformation in their concept of themselves as women. This change was not translated into a direct challenge of the status quo. At the time, it was probably not even recognized by most of the women, but it did affect their status in their own eyes—and in their homes. For the first time, many of these former war workers spoke up and challenged the male prerogative to make the big decisions. The money they had earned and saved lent them the moral authority, but it was the confidence they had developed that enabled them to exert that authority.⁴⁵

Notably, while the returning servicemen seemed the real beneficiaries of media content that encouraged women to retreat to the home, women found more agency in postwar homemaking than they’d had before.

⁴² Sarah Burke Odland, “Unassailable Motherhood, Ambivalent Domesticity: The Construction of Maternal Identity in Ladies’ Home Journal in 1946,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 34, no. 1 (January 2010): 69.

⁴³ Ibid., 78.

⁴⁴ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, 268.

⁴⁵ Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*, 255–56.

Fan Magazines

As a niche form of media that shared some of the conventions of women's magazines—set against the glamorous backdrop of Hollywood—*Photoplay* and other fan magazines offered fertile ground for messages about women's wartime roles. Fan magazines “communicated volumes concerning what values mattered to the majority of Americans . . . what cultural edifices needed support, and if compromised, required meticulous rhetorical masonry to repair,” according to Anne Helen Petersen.⁴⁶ Thus, exploring the ways that fans interact with media can be of significant value to researchers as “fan practices, past and present, represent a fruitful way to examine the intersection of media events and everyday life, showing in particular how individuals actively *choose* to articulate with media in a wide range of often unpredictable ways.”⁴⁷ Fan magazines and their enthusiastic readers, therefore, can offer insight into the lives of readers. Previous research has explored this notion.

With the rise of cinema in the early part of the twentieth century came the rise of the fan, and the concept of the fan magazine was born. Initial coverage for fans involved “hobbyist discourses associated with the technology of filmmaking . . . and of synopses designed to help viewers decide which films to see, to refresh their recollection about particular narratives, or to serve as case studies in how to write scenarios,” yet slowly morphed into coverage of star culture

⁴⁶ Petersen, “Those Glorious Fan Magazines.”

⁴⁷ Bird, “Seeking the Historical Audience: Interdisciplinary Lessons in the Recovery of Media Practices,” 102.

and Hollywood.⁴⁸ As this happened, identification with the movie stars and the active participation of the reader, typically female, became a hallmark of this magazine genre.

A variety of coverage was included in the pages to speak to the female reader, according to Kathryn Fuller-Seeley. Often the stars were positioned as consumers, and in turn readers were constructed as consumers, too:

There were pieces in each issue on clothing styles worn by actresses and actors, giving inside views of the stars' homes, and reporting details of their hairstyles, diets, and use of cosmetics; there were also monthly advice columns on etiquette, manners, fashion, health, and beauty. . . . Movie stars acted as role models for consumer behavior on the screen and in *Photoplay* advertisements, while in the articles they were model consumers in private life, too, whom readers could emulate.⁴⁹

In addition to this content, women readers of fan magazines were also avid consumers of fiction. Referring to women's magazines broadly, Adrienne L. McLean notes "the importance of fiction to the women's magazine from the 1920s through the 1940s can hardly be overestimated," citing a 1930 survey that suggested women gravitated toward magazine fiction.⁵⁰ Anne Morey addresses the role of fiction in fan magazines specifically, studying both the fiction and nonfiction work of writer Adela Rogers St. Johns. Through fiction, St. Johns could comment on womanhood in ways that she could not in the nonfiction she wrote for fan magazines—that material was generally crafted to portray the studios positively and sidestep anything that might

⁴⁸ Anne Morey, "'So Real as to Seem Like Life Itself': The Photoplay Fiction of Adela Rogers St. Johns," in *A Feminist Reader in Early Cinema*, ed. Jennifer Bean and Diane Negra (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 334.

⁴⁹ Kathryn Fuller-Seeley, *At the Picture Show: Small-Town Audiences and the Creation of Movie Fan Culture* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 154.

⁵⁰ Adrienne L. McLean, "'New Films in Story Form': Movie Story Magazines and Spectatorship," *Cinema Journal* 42, no. 3 (2003): 8, doi:10.1353/cj.2003.0010.

jeopardize ticket sales.⁵¹ These variations in the tone of St. Johns' work were "intrinsic to the structure of the fan magazine itself, which [contained] an astonishing heterogeneity of discourses in each issue, given the juxtaposition of ads, letters, editorials, reportage, fiction, poems, illustrations, and photographs."⁵²

The advice that appeared in fan magazines was both explicit and implicit and supported certain ideologies. During World War II, magazines addressed "dilemmas, such as whether or not to marry a man in the service, with whom a young woman should associate while so many men were away, and what 'favors' she should allow men."⁵³ Prescriptions for these dilemmas could be contradictory in the fan magazines when the stories of stars became a forum for discussion.⁵⁴ Coverage ostensibly about stars could be an implicit conversation about "their readers' intimate problems,"⁵⁵ according to Gaines. As mentioned previously, an article discussing the recent marriage of 17-year-old Rita Hayworth to a 34-year-old man was about "the pros and cons of marrying an older man as much as gossip."⁵⁶

Readers wanted to emulate the stars they read about in these publications, says Anthony Slide.⁵⁷ Ohmer notes that coverage of Hollywood personalities in war-era *Good Housekeeping*

⁵¹ Morey, "'So Real as to Seem Like Life Itself': The Photoplay Fiction of Adela Rogers St. Johns," 344.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Gaines, "War, Women, and Lipstick: Fan Mags in the Forties," 45.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 42.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 45.

⁵⁷ Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 4.

fostered a camaraderie with the stars despite the fact that celebrity lifestyles might have “seemed very far away to homemakers coping with food rationing and a shortage of household goods.”⁵⁸ In order to make the stars relatable, the coverage often focused on aspects of stars’ lives that would “seem closer to the readers,” such as their upbringing, family life, or even pets.⁵⁹ Celebrity coverage was crafted with an expectation that women readers were receptive and would translate and apply the messages to their own lives.

Readers of fan magazines could “become actively involved” with the movie and star industry through fan magazines, and “in the process, negotiate their own identities beyond their everyday, lived experiences,”⁶⁰ wrote Martha Orgeron. Readers did not simply wish to peruse articles about stars, they wanted to *be like* the stars.⁶¹ The editorial strategy of crediting stars as authors of articles in the fan magazines, “manufactur[ed] a cloud of authenticity” that would further make their readers feel as though they knew the celebrity in question, according to Petersen.⁶² In this way, celebrities became “known” to audiences as confidantes and friends, rather than famous strangers.

⁵⁸ Ohmer, “Female Spectatorship and Women’s Magazines,” 61.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Orgeron, “You Are Invited to Participate,” 8–9.

⁶¹ Marsha Orgeron, “Making It in Hollywood: Clara Bow, Fandom, and Consumer Culture,” *Cinema Journal* 42, no. 4 (Summer 2003): 79.

⁶² Petersen, “Those Glorious Fan Magazines.”

The magazines invited readers to contribute letters or poems, to weigh in on their favorite stars, to audition for a Hollywood contract, and to ask questions about the business.⁶³ In doing so, the magazines gave readers the sense that they were “worthy of participating in the culture of celebrity and fandom”⁶⁴ and enabled them to enter into “celebrity discourse” in “an immediate and minimally exertive way.”⁶⁵ Furthermore, these exercises created the perception that fan magazine readers were part of that culture, “that what they said and did mattered,”⁶⁶ according to Orgeron. Fans believed that they had “influence”⁶⁷ in Hollywood via their participation in this fan magazine culture, notes Mark Glancy in an examination of fan magazines in wartime Britain.

Encouraging consumerism was another way the magazines fostered interactivity. As Orgeron writes, “The fan magazines exploited female audiences' desire for the ingredients of movie stardom by redirecting and extending the spectatorial, consumerist gaze to their own commercial products.”⁶⁸ Advertisements implied that female readers were in constant competition to look their best.⁶⁹ During World War II, consumption and patriotism were linked in the fan magazine, as content “attempted to align the stars with consumption—and, thus,

⁶³ Orgeron, “You Are Invited to Participate,” 4; Slide, *They Also Wrote for the Fan Magazines*, 2; Morey, ““So Real as to Seem Like Life Itself”: The Photoplay Fiction of Adela Rogers St. Johns,” 335.

⁶⁴ Orgeron, “You Are Invited to Participate,” 4.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 5.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Mark Glancy, “Picturegoer: The Fan Magazine and Popular Film Culture in Britain During The Second World War,” *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 31, no. 4 (December 2011): 457, doi:10.1080/01439685.2011.620834.

⁶⁸ Orgeron, “Making It in Hollywood,” 93.

⁶⁹ Orgeron, “You Are Invited to Participate,” 10.

Americanism, effectively establishing ‘buying things’ as their primary Hollywood activity,” according to Petersen.⁷⁰ Fan magazines during the war, writes Gaines, “were designed to ‘discover’ the working-class woman consumer and to deliver her to the advertisers.”⁷¹

The interactive, reciprocal, and complex relationship between women readers and fan magazines made *Photoplay* a natural forum for issues related to gender roles in wartime. Research suggests that fan magazines were fixtures of American women’s lives in the twentieth century, yet they have “been the subject of little serious research or historical consideration,”⁷² perhaps because of “the traditional view of fans as passive, gullible, indiscriminating consumers,” as Glancy notes.⁷³ This project aims to fill the gaps in the fan magazine research and challenge the assumption that women readers were passive participants. On the contrary, their relationship to wartime media represented a complicated dynamic during a time of significant upheaval and changing expectations about gender.

⁷⁰ Petersen, “Those Glorious Fan Magazines.”

⁷¹ Gaines, “War, Women, and Lipstick: Fan Mags in the Forties,” 42.

⁷² Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 8.

⁷³ Glancy, “Picturegoer,” 455.

CHAPTER 4: THEORY, RESEARCH QUESTIONS, AND METHODS

During World War II, *Photoplay* published the idealized stories and images of the Hollywood set to an audience of mostly women who were renegotiating their own roles as they worked to understand changing expectations of womanhood. As a fan magazine, *Photoplay* might be considered “a seemingly worthless object” or a “relatively pointless exercise in self-promotion by the film industry.”¹ Critics might view the category altogether as one of “low culture”² that was all style and no substance. However, Douglas Kellner has long argued the value of studying forms of popular entertainment as cultural forms of expression:

The artifacts of media culture are . . . not innocent entertainment, but are thoroughly ideological artifacts bound up with political rhetoric, struggles, agendas, and politics. Given their political significance and effects, it is important to learn to read media culture politically in order to decode its ideological messages and effects.³

Media emerge from and in response to the cultures that produce them. Even “lowbrow” forms are useful artifacts that can provide insight into the culture. Accordingly, this study of *Photoplay* adopts the theoretical framework of cultural studies.

¹ Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 3.

² Anne Helen Petersen, “The Gossip Industry: Producing and Distributing Star Images, Celebrity Gossip and Entertainment News 1910-2010” (PhD diss., University of Texas, 2011), 24, <http://repositories.lib.utexas.edu/handle/2152/11454>.

³ Douglas Kellner, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Post-Modern* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 93.

Cultural studies “delineates how cultural artifacts articulate social ideologies, values, and representations of gender, race, and class, and how these phenomena are related to each other.”⁴ According to Stuart Hall, codes in discourse such as messages in the media “are the means by which power and ideology are made to signify particular discourses” and “have the whole range of social meanings, practices, and usages, power, and interest ‘written in’ to them.”⁵ Individuals, Hall says, decode these messages and take meaning from them in one of three ways—by accepting the dominant or hegemonic meaning, creating a negotiated meaning by partially accepting the dominant message but on their own terms, or by decoding “the message in a *globally* contrary way.”⁶ John Fiske, writing about popular culture, argues that each audience “becomes a producer . . . of meanings and pleasures.”⁷ What’s more, “one would hardly be reckless in identifying dominant discourses presented to people in the past and suggesting that they had an impact on people’s meaning-making.”⁸ In other words, while remembering that audience responses are nuanced and varied, a researcher encountering repetitive, dominant messages from the media could conclude that those messages are reflective of or related to larger paradigms of the day.

⁴ Ibid., 27.

⁵ Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” in *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, ed. Meenakshi Durham and Douglas Kellner (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 169.

⁶ Ibid., 171–73.

⁷ John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 27.

⁸ Susan J. Douglas, “Does Textual Analysis Tell Us Anything about Past Audiences?,” in *Explorations in Communication and History*, ed. Barbie Zelizer (New York: Routledge, 2008), 69.

In addition to being a cultural artifact, *Photoplay* coverage involves the popularity of celebrities, who can also communicate the ideologies of the culture in which they exist. That the celebrities in *Photoplay* were seen as authorities on war issues or were framed as patriotic citizens calls into question the role of celebrity during the Second World War. As Daniel Boorstin writes in *The Image*, “We forget that celebrities are known primarily for their well-knownness. And we imitate them as if they were cast in the mold of greatness. Yet the celebrity is usually nothing greater than a more-publicized version of us.”⁹ Those creating the celebrities—in this case, the studios, the fan magazines, and the fans themselves—have an interest in the celebrity’s ability to “please, comfort, fascinate, and flatter us,” Boorstin adds.¹⁰ Thus, it can be valuable to consider the messages communicated in these celebrity narratives.

Fans interact with celebrities for purposes deeper than cursory entertainment, according to Samantha Barbas, author of *Movie Crazy*. Fans, like those readers of the fan magazines, consume entertainment media as part of “a quest for authenticity, influence, and involvement.”¹¹ A yearning for authenticity developed as a result of modernization, argues Charles L. Ponce de Leon in *Self-Exposure*. With more freedom to craft one’s own identity came a suspicion of the public personas of those in the public sphere.¹² This created an environment wherein celebrity coverage could thrive: “With the public sphere viewed as a realm where everyone was acting,

⁹ Daniel Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Atheneum, 1987), 74.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Samantha Barbas, *Movie Crazy: Fans, Stars, and the Cult of Celebrity* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 6.

¹² Charles L. Ponce de Leon, *Self-Exposure: Human-Interest Journalism and the Emergence of Celebrity in America, 1890-1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 41.

people concluded that a person's real self could only be viewed in private."¹³ Celebrity journalism responded by offering seemingly authentic portrayals of stars at home—like Carole Lombard and Clark Gable working in their garden and hanging out at home just like anyone else.¹⁴ These glimpses of the private life of stars created an illusion of real life contrary to the actors' on-screen personas.¹⁵ Additionally, coverage of celebrities in the early part of the twentieth century served to reify abstract values. For example, coverage of the Dempsey-Tunney boxing matches in the 1920s illustrated the larger discussion about masculinity. What was "a man" in America during this time—precise and in-control like Tunney, or a lower-class brutal brawler like Dempsey?¹⁶ Similarly, the content of *Photoplay* offers insight into the culture that created it. Its values, concerns, norms, and ideologies are embedded in its pages.

This study asks, what messages regarding women's wartime roles and behaviors did *Photoplay* communicate to its readers, and how did those messages change over time? How did *Photoplay*, as one of the highest-circulating fan magazines, reinforce or challenge prevailing mass-mediated notions about women's wartime roles? What does this analysis tell us about women readers of *Photoplay* specifically and the historical audience generally?

To answer those questions, a textual analysis of *Photoplay* was performed. Marion Marzolf notes that media historians examine their objects of analysis as "a reflection of the cultural values of a period" and "suspect linkages between information and attitudes and values

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 234.

¹⁵ Petersen, "The Rules of the Game: A Century of Hollywood Publicity," 49.

¹⁶ Elliott J. Gorn, "The Manassa Mauler and the Fighting Marine: An Interpretation of the Dempsey-Tunney Fights," *Journal of American Studies* 19, no. 1 (April 1, 1985): 27–47.

passed on through a society's media and the norms of that society.”¹⁷ I employed what Marzolf refers to as “content assessment.” Using this method, the researcher studies the material by “reading, sifting, weighing, comparing, and analyzing” a significant amount of text to “tell the story.”¹⁸ Textual analysis illuminates the story—or at least part of the story—of how one celebrity magazine, as a cultural artifact, addressed ideologies regarding womanhood during the war.

While textual analysis does not allow a researcher to know the meanings that any particular individual might have made of a text such as *Photoplay*, it can provide important insight into the society in which readers were living and how certain messages were situated within it. As Douglas argues, researchers can use this method to connect the meanings in text to the audience.

In this view of the media as rein-forcer [*sic*] of ideology, it is not necessarily that the media create these meanings out of whole cloth and impose them on the population, but rather that the ongoing iteration and intertextuality of such meanings, which draw from and magnify certain socially held worldviews over others, find widespread purchase because they come to seem like the culture's “common sense.”¹⁹

Douglas encourages researchers to triangulate their research—to use textual analysis to examine the medium in question, to look for context within the broader history and culture, and to refer to audience reaction and response when it is available.²⁰

¹⁷ Marion Marzolf, “American Studies—Ideas for Media Historians?,” *Journalism History* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 14, 15.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁹ Douglas, “Does Textual Analysis Tell Us Anything about Past Audiences?,” 68.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 69.

Following Marzolf's instructions to surround myself with content, I read *Photoplay* issues from October 1942 through November 1945—38 issues in total, each generally consisting of 100 to 120 pages. These dates were chosen to correspond with the dates during which the Hollywood Canteen was open.²¹ The involvement of celebrities in the Hollywood Canteen suggests that this was a time when they were especially active in wartime service; women played a crucial role in this, as the establishment allowed “the soldiers, for one, fleeting night, [to live] the life of the movie star, surrounded by beautiful, bountiful women.”²² As such, the dates of its operation serve as an appropriate indicator by which to study the peak of Hollywood's war involvement and messages.

I examined the 38 *Photoplay* issues in their entirety—including editorial content and images, advertisements, letters to the editors, advice columns and fiction pieces—for larger themes and narratives that provide insight into ideologies and values regarding women's roles and behaviors during the war. Elements in a magazine may seem like disparate pieces, but, as Jennifer Scanlon argues in *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture*, these parts combine to produce a larger message.²³ Of *Ladies' Home Journal* from 1910-1930, Scanlon wrote:

These stories, editorial pieces, and advertisements, although seemingly fragmentary and perhaps unrelated, actually worked together to provide this larger, dominant picture. And by offering several elements and distinct points of view, the magazine promoted the idea that there were many choices for women to make, but that the average woman—the middle-class woman with aspirations—was represented by the consensus view.²⁴

²¹ “Hollywood Canteen Closes,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 23, 1945.

²² Petersen, “The Hollywood Canteen.”

²³ Jennifer Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings: The Ladies' Home Journal, Gender, and the Promises of Consumer Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7–8.

In other words, to look at only one element of a magazine would not take into account the components of the publication working in tandem to communicate ideological messages. I was also mindful of what Scanlon refers to as “reading against the grain” and what Hall describes as negotiated or oppositional reading; that is, acknowledging that the reader may have made a different meaning from the text than the one the text ostensibly promotes.²⁵

Other scholars have used textual analysis to study media in the war years. For example, Martin Shingler writes about how Bette Davis’s androgynous image was subverted in the early 1940s; with the release of *Now, Voyager*, she became a glamour girl.²⁶ Shingler studied magazine coverage of Davis, as well as the trend of makeover coverage in women’s magazine like *Ladies’ Home Journal*. He uses content that to align Davis’s makeover with the narrative that women, potentially heading into masculine workspaces, could and should maintain their femininity. Shingler’s study is also notable for its application of textual analysis to visual images. This study of *Photoplay* likewise considers visuals a text to be studied.

Another scholar, Jennifer Frost, examines the gossip column of Hedda Hopper before, during, and after the war to show how conservative messages consistently appeared implicitly and explicitly in her writing.²⁷ For example, Hopper promoted isolationism before the war, and believed that Roosevelt had permitted the bombing of Pearl Harbor to speed up mobilization. Further, she consistently conflated American Japanese citizens with the enemy Japanese. Frost’s research offers an alternative to the narrative that Hollywood went to war with gusto, and that the

²⁵ Ibid., 137–68; Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” 169.

²⁶ Martin Shingler, “Bette Davis Made over in Wartime: The Feminisation of an Androgynous Star in *Now, Voyager* (1942),” *Film History* 20, no. 3 (September 2008): 269–280.

²⁷ Frost, “Dissent and Consent in the ‘Good War.’”

conflict was a “Good War” supported by all. Her work, and others like it, are a reminder of the importance of examining change or continuity of coverage over time. Scholars who describe the method of textual analysis and have used it to answer their own research questions provided guidance for this study of *Photoplay*.

A limitation of this project is that it focuses on one publication in its entirety rather than numerous fan magazines. While *Photoplay* is considered a leader of the industry,²⁸ there were other successful fan magazines during the same period. However, by focusing on this leading magazine, the study acknowledges that *Photoplay*’s messages were repetitive and cumulative. Examining a single magazine across a historical period provides depth and breadth that a thesis-length study of multiple magazines might not.

²⁸ Higashi, *Stars, Fans, and Consumption in the 1950s*, 4.

CHAPTER 5: WOMEN AND ROMANCE IN *PHOTOPLAY*

The role of women as spouses and sweethearts was a frequent topic in the pages of *Photoplay* during World War II. In a 1943 article, for example, Hedda Hopper discussed love during wartime, and why it was important to talk about it in the pages of the magazine:

“Otherwise what would we have to brighten the dreary days when talk-about-town is running low, since you certainly can’t talk about the war all the time and keep your sanity?”¹ Hopper may have been defending her work as a famous-but-despised gossip columnist, for which she often reported on the status of celebrity romances, but there was surely truth in the notion of romance as a welcome distraction from the dreariness and sorrow of wartime living.

Contrary to Hopper’s proposition, however, love and war were not incompatible; rather, they were often conflated with one another. According to one scholar, testimonies from servicemen suggest that “individual emotional values represented by sweethearts, wives and families”² were what men were fighting for, as opposed to any overt commitment to country or freedom. *Photoplay* coverage of romance and love serves as one artifact of wartime attitudes toward women and their romantic interactions. These attitudes were often conflicting, and they changed over time.

¹ Hedda Hopper, “Love Stories You Want to Know More About,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, December 1943, 30.

² John Costello, *Love, Sex, and War: Changing Values, 1939-45* (London: Collins, 1985), 9.

The Early Years: Morale Boosters and War Dates

As men mobilized for war, women were drafted for another role in the war effort—boosting the serviceman’s morale. Magazines were on the front line of spreading the message of the importance of this feminine duty,³ and *Photoplay* was no exception. In a 1943 issue, actress Anne Gwynne wrote, “No one can lift a soldier's morale more than a girl who is willing to help. Give him something to look forward to—a hope and a confidence in the greatness of his future. Men look to girls for hope more than ever in these days.”⁴

Arguably, *Photoplay* did other magazines one better—taking their formula for encouraging a surge in morale and raising the stakes with star power. The magazine unleashed a veritable barrage of material, likely influenced by the Magazine Bureau’s war guide given that 400-600 magazines received—and welcomed—the guide by the end of 1943,⁵ about how women readers could have a positive impact on soldiers waiting to deploy. In a period of rapid-fire change, when new expectations about companionship with the opposite sex rained down, famous faces—or perhaps, even, “friends”—modeled appropriate behaviors in this new world in a palatable way. Women seeing a star with whom they identified could follow her lead as the Hollywood set dove into their new roles in the most public of ways. For instance, in 1942, writer Ruth Waterbury gossiped about fraternization between servicemen and Hollywood’s stars:

Every weekend the town is simply packed with soldiers, sailors and marines all out for a good time and all of them having it . . . the ones smart enough to find out the addresses of their favorite stars have learned that by merely happening around they are always sure of food, laughter, and in most instances a swim in in a private pool . . . what they don't know is that Hollywood hostesses cherish them fondly, not alone because they are giving their

³ Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women’s Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995*, 193.

⁴ Anne Gwynne and Ann Sheridan, “Uniform Date-Iquette,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, August 1943, 80.

⁵ Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 36–38.

all for the service but also because their presence means that for once Hollywood has more men than girls, a most pleasant state indeed.⁶

Thus, a woman reading this during the early 1940s was to be, like the Hollywood stars, a cheerful and accommodating hostess, pampering the men who were giving their all and grateful for their company.

Coverage about the celebrities was accompanied by an abundance of celebrity advice from actresses. Sometimes contradictory, the prescriptive advice for women indicates a certain level of anxiety and confusion accompanying the new social order women were thrust into for the sake of the fighting men. Yet the wide array of content also suggests that, during a time when “women rediscovered the community of other women” to help them through the challenges war brought,⁷ *Photoplay* curated images of the country’s top stars to serve as a kind of Greek chorus to which women could refer. Take, for instance, the 1943 article “How to be an Armed-Force Riot” (Figure 1), which had a group of Hollywood personalities sharing their tips for engaging with the military. Ann Sothern encouraged women to mind their manners in the company of a serviceman; let him be gallant and chivalrous. She should find interesting places to take him, and always return him to camp on time.⁸ Betty Grable advised against aloofness. “The most popular girls at the Hollywood Canteen, for instance, are the really good listeners; the ones who hang onto a man's words as if he were the Oracle of the War and the only person in the room,” according to Grable.⁹ Marsha Hunt simply said to treat a serviceman like family and be natural

⁶ Ruth Waterbury, “Close Ups and Long Shots,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, November 1942, 4.

⁷ Gail Collins, *America’s Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines* (New York: Harper Collins, 2004), 388.

⁸ “How to Be An Armed-Force Riot,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1943, 54.

⁹ *Ibid.*

and at ease, while Anne Shirley advised that the reader show her escort how proud she was of him.¹⁰ Paulette Goddard instructed women to “dress a little extreme. You know—with *voom* to take their minds off the boom! Get yourself to make the boys look. Soft, swishy materials, lovely colors, lines that are strictly *a la femme*.”¹¹ Manners, conversation, praise, and dress, according to this article, were all forms of “voom” for which women were made responsible.

Photoplay served as an arbiter of the new order, establishing war dates and morale boosting as an acceptable and important part of a woman’s wartime duty. The magazine made clear what the expectations were. Using a time-honored fan magazine tradition, bylines in much of this content went to the actresses themselves, fostering “authenticity” and emphasizing the notion that this advice was personal.¹² For instance, actresses Gwynne and Ann Sheridan were presented as experts on the subject of war-date manners.¹³ The location of a date to a reader’s outfit to her conversations with men to how the bill was settled were all things that could affect the man’s morale and must be given careful consideration. Their bona fides for sharing this wisdom? The two authors were among the top six pin-up girls in a February issue of *Life* magazine that year.¹⁴ Sheridan was dubbed “the Oomph Girl” due to her “breezy sex appeal, pin-up curves, and love of a good time.”¹⁵ In choosing these two actresses to present this guide for

¹⁰ Ibid., 55.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Petersen, “Those Glorious Fan Magazines.”

¹³ Gwynne and Sheridan, “Uniform Date-Iquette.”

¹⁴ “Speaking of Pictures....,” *Life*, February 15, 1943.

¹⁵ Andrea Sarvady, *Leading Ladies: The 50 Most Unforgettable Actresses of the Studio Era*, ed. Frank Miller (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2006), 177.

women, *Photoplay* created content that linked boosting morale with a sexualized version of femininity.

Gwynne's expertise on the subject was learned, she said, from going out with various servicemen,¹⁶ indicating an acceptance of fraternizing with multiple men in a casual setting. Sheridan and Gwynne instructed readers on how to navigate potentially awkward situations, such as taking the lead when planning a date, being deferential to a serviceman's interests and gauging his enthusiasm, and paying for a date in ways that wouldn't bruise a man's ego.¹⁷ Thus, the "rules" of dating were being rewritten. This new era necessitated guidance on managing new roles, and *Photoplay* used the stars to do this in a unique way—through the use of discursive strategies like direct address ("Get yourself to make the boys look!"), the magazine created the illusion of personal communication between reader and celebrity.

The advice given by Gwynne and Sheridan also reflected concern about blurring gender lines and the potential threat that posed to men. The guidelines espoused by the actresses often encouraged women to remain tethered to traditional roles despite being confronted with new situations and new expectations in wartime. By listening to their advice and maintaining their femininity, *Photoplay* readers could bolster, not undermine, their dates' masculinity. Prescriptions hemmed women in, and made them responsible for the success or failure of every encounter. Don't be too assertive, or you'll hurt a man's pride. Don't be too alluring or dress too provocatively, or you risk your reputation. On the other hand, "being too cuddly and cute" might lead a man on. "Don't give him the impression that you're replacing his best girl back home. . . . You're a stranger to him on what may be only a date for one night. Don't think it's cute to be

¹⁶ Gwynne and Sheridan, "Uniform Date-Iquette."

¹⁷ Ibid.

cute.” Don’t put yourself in compromising situations. Be wary of men who want more than a date.¹⁸

They emphasized a “ladylike” appearance. As Gwynne said, dressing carelessly would be “an offense” to the man you’re out with, as “it’s like telling him bluntly, ‘You’re not important—I’m just doing you a favor.’ Don’t forget, girls, the men in our armed forces are yearning to see you looking your loveliest.”¹⁹ Sheridan echoed these sentiments. She noted that men would appreciate bright red nails and perfume but discouraged women from overdressing. And above all, Sheridan said, “Don’t wear slacks—ever! The men see enough of trousers in the service. Forget suits and the like and steer toward feminine frills.”²⁰ These directives point toward a duty to look feminine on dates, a visual cue that women were part of the war effort, but they were not soldiers. Rather, it was a woman’s job to affirm the idealized differences between men and women, and to make a soldier “feel like a man” so he could fight like one on the battlefield.

Not only did the advice about wartime companionship give women a guide for using their feminine assets in ways that served the country’s needs in wartime, it further connected with readers by suggesting that the stars contended with many of the same issues and anxieties as other women on the home front experiencing newfound independence. For example, stars, too, had to show appreciation for a man’s chivalry even as they took the lead in planning activities while he was home. Stars, too, felt the pressure to look “just so” to distract men from the horrors of war. They had to perfectly act the part of the girl “worth fighting for” while appearing completely natural to their companion. Thus, the stars validated women’s wartime anxieties and,

¹⁸ Ibid., 80.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

in doing so, perhaps offered some relief. Importantly, this content was directed to women readers from women stars. As another bit of advice, women were discouraged from sharing their worries with men, and in addition, men would have to find other outlets for expressing their fear and apprehension about war.

Maureen O'Hara alluded to this in a piece she wrote for *Photoplay-Movie Mirror* about her marriage to Will Price. She "confided" to readers that she fretted about her husband's impending deployment, but knew it was an impulse she should fight:

The most natural instinct in the world is for a wife to rush into her husband's affairs, with advice and urgings and criticisms. If only women would realize that husbands must work out their own problems! We can help in morale, with encouragement and understanding. But we must keep our fingers out of the problem pie!²¹

O'Hara was "miserable," but then, "what wife isn't, even though she knows how vital it is that every man do his duty?" A wife mustn't let on how upset she was, O'Hara told readers.²² The selection of O'Hara to communicate this message deftly linked her off-screen life to her onscreen image. Known to fans for roles that "called on her to take charge of situations or find courage in the face of adversity,"²³ she could ask the same of readers, while at the same time offering comfort that they were not alone in their fears and insecurities. *Photoplay* served as an official manual for civilian women in wartime, manifesting in its content the kind of rigid gender roles sanctioned by government while simultaneously providing a site at which women could express their hopes and fears and have them mirrored back by the stars.

²¹ Maureen O'Hara, "What Marriage Has Taught Me," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, April 1943, 89.

²² Ibid.

²³ Aubrey Malone, *Maureen O'Hara: The Biography* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 2.

This forum was one in which the readers themselves were actively engaged, reaching out to the famous contributors for guidance. Many wrote in to *Photoplay*'s star-penned advice column "What Should I Do?" to seek advice for the challenges presented by the romantic chaos caused by the war. For example, in 1943, a young woman who had been involved with two men—both of whom proposed marriage—wrote to Bette Davis for advice. Unable to choose between the two, she had told them both they would have to wait until after the war for her answer. Davis applauded the letter writer's solution—she should continue to date both men and write to them when apart. And who knows, Davis continued, "You might even meet a third man who would solve your problems."²⁴ That *Photoplay* suggested the writer keep her romantic options open demonstrates that certain social norms were changed by war, even as it presumed marriage was the goal. At a time when "the fear of imminent death intensified the yearning for emotional relationships that might give some transient reassurance in an uncertain future"²⁵—Davis affirmed the writer's decision and offered her a vision of an even happier future. This letter and its response would have been especially salient to a portion of readers—some women in "California cities where sailors embarked for the Pacific had a dozen or more proposals" during the war.²⁶

Another young woman who wrote to Davis found herself on the receiving end of gossip about her dance outings and sailor escorts. The actress responded that servicemen as a rule were respectable, and she counseled the woman to ignore the gossip; her actions were no one else's

²⁴ Bette Davis, "What Should I Do?," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, June 1943, 24.

²⁵ Costello, *Love, Sex, and War*, 25.

²⁶ Doris Weatherford, *American Women during World War II: An Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 109.

business.²⁷ While the effort might have been to assuage any guilt the writer felt about clumsily navigating a new romance paradigm, Davis's response also carried with it the gendered imperative to boost morale in the early years of the war. As Doris Weatherford points out, under any other conditions, the accommodations made out of concern for soldiers' wellbeing might look altogether different:

To maintain the morale that allowed them to face death with youthful spirit, the USO and other groups arranged dates in a way that would border on "procurement" if it were done outside of a military setting. From California to Maine, countless towns found an unused building that was turned into a club, where civilian women were bused in for dates with soldiers.²⁸

Much like the aforementioned piece written by Maureen O'Hara, which served both to remind women to place the morale of servicemen before their fear, as well as to create camaraderie with a movie star who felt similar anxieties, these responses from Davis could serve multiple purposes. While insisting men's wellbeing was paramount, the material also offered women positive reinforcement for behaviors that were new to them—and not totally unwelcomed by the women themselves.

The exigencies of war upset the status quo in other ways, as well. Whereas the thought of a woman with a beau meeting up with another man might have previously been subject for neighborhood gossip, the war made it acceptable, for a time, at least. For example, in 1943, *Photoplay-Movie Mirror* posed the question, "Are you a Woman without a Man," a question that speaks to the underlying anxieties about being a woman alone, as well as promising some guidance on how to manage this new independence. The author was Veronica Lake—an actress whose hairstyle was coveted and copied by so many women during the war that "the government

²⁷ Bette Davis, "What Should I Do?," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, September 1943, 80.

²⁸ Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 108.

prevailed on her to change it because too many ‘riveting Rosies’ were getting their dangling tresses caught in machinery.”²⁹ In the article, Lake assured women that crying over their men leaving was to be expected, and would even inspire the troops to fight. She had followed her husband when he was mobilized for military duty, and she encouraged war brides to do the same. It was “good for a man's morale and ego when his wife follows after him,” she wrote. “And a girl isn't running after a boy if she goes to him when he can't come to her.”³⁰ Notably, this suggests that one of the anxieties women faced was thinking of themselves as pursuers, rather than pursued in a relationship. This anxiety was likely amplified by the resentment directed by those on the homefront toward “camp followers,” or women who accompanied their spouses to the towns where they were stationed. These women were “seen as not making the same kinds of sacrifices as everyone else, not strong enough to take the real heat of wartime.”³¹ Yet Lake’s position implied that it was incumbent upon women—as wartime duty—to set aside their discomfort or ignore derision from others in order to boost her man’s morale and ego.³²

Ultimately, Lake answers the article’s proposition: “A life without masculine society is abnormal. . . . We need men in our lives to keep us on an even keel,” she writes.³³ Thus, in the

²⁹ Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 12.

³⁰ Veronica Lake, “Are You a Woman without a Man?,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, January 1943, 64.

³¹ Yellin, *Our Mothers’ War*, 16–17.

³² Lake’s advocacy for following one’s husband in this article avoids one piece of the narrative—that her husband might have been unsatisfied with her commitment to following him to camp, believing she put her career first. See Karina Longworth, *Veronica Lake (Dead Blondes Episode 4)*, *You Must Remember This*, accessed March 4, 2017, <http://www.youmustrememberthispodcast.com/episodes/2017/2/20/veronica-lake-dead-blondes-episode-4>.

³³ Lake, “Are You a Woman without a Man?,” 64.

absence of spouses and other romantic partners, women were encouraged to socialize with available men. Wartime was no time for “hidebound conventions,” Lake wrote. “Because this is an emergency and calls for emergency measures, I believe a girl should go out with other men while the man she loves is away, but not with anyone the man she loves mistrusts, naturally.”³⁴ Importantly, she had to be good company. A woman, then, was charged with cheering all of the servicemen she might come into contact with on the homefront.

The risk in this proposition, however, was that women would fall victim to their impulses. “Certain girls are too inflammable for their own good,” Lake warned. “Their ardor, easily aroused, isn’t easily controlled. . . . I can only hope that when they find themselves in another man’s arms, kissing him, that they won’t confuse a chemical attraction, no matter how overpowering it may be, with love.”³⁵ Should that happen, however, Lake wrote that dalliances must be quickly forgotten and not ruin meaningful relationships with a loved one in the armed forces.³⁶ Indeed, the infidelity of women on the homefront was a frequent motif in enemy propaganda.³⁷

Although it could be argued that men were the ultimate beneficiaries of this arrangement, such advice suggests that women’s morale was being served, too. First and foremost, this article acknowledges that women felt psychological effects from the war. When one reads against the grain, as Scanlon recommends,³⁸ subtext that women could benefit from spending time with men

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Costello, *Love, Sex, and War*.

³⁸ Scanlon, *Inarticulate Longings*.

and counteract some of the ill effects of the war on their psyches is revealed, suggesting that women saw value in their own socialization needs, as well—war dates were not intended to boost only the serviceman’s morale. Nonetheless, they did benefit a larger social order created to enlist women to offer themselves as entertainment for troops—but *only* within the bounds of their traditional marriages and *only* for the duration of the conflict.

Actress Ida Lupino’s wartime advice carried additional authority by her role as a lieutenant in the Women’s Ambulance and Defense Corps.³⁹ In the March 1943 article, “Wives Should Have War Dates,” Lupino wrote that socializing was a “form of service of which women can be proud.”⁴⁰ Much like Lake, in justifying this new way of socializing, Lupino reinforced the idea that a woman without a man is unnatural:

I think we all agree that women need the company of men, their conversation and viewpoint, unless they want to grow stuffy. Of course they should do all kinds of war work to fill spare time, but now and then a respectable social evening in the company of a man is advisable.⁴¹

Thus, Lupino likewise recommended that women maintain a social life for their own benefit—but notably, this coverage says nothing of the benefit gained by spending time with other women. Again, this was ostensibly presented as a way to be a better companion to men in the future in order to “be less nervous [and] more interesting.”⁴² A woman’s casual date with a serviceman who was not her significant other was “adding directly in the morale-building we

³⁹ William Donati, *Ida Lupino: A Biography* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 87.

⁴⁰ Dorothy Haas, “Wives Should Have War Dates,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, March 1943, 90.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 40–41.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 41.

know is so vital.”⁴³ But this message also advocates for women fulfilling their own wartime needs for (male) companionship.

Like much *Photoplay* content that seemed to encourage women to embrace a more assertive role in romance, however, Lupino’s take came with rules. Her rules for war dates, like Lake’s, were designed to “protect” women from giving in to sexual impulses. She said a woman should secure her husband’s consent and that she should only go out with men known to her husband and of good standing. Double dates were a must, even better if the other couple was married. And after the date was over, a wife was to write her husband and tell him about it. Lupino conceded women in Hollywood might have had different duties than women nationwide—“an actress, for business reasons, can’t just crawl into a shell and never be seen anywhere,” she wrote, “but the principle is exactly the same. I firmly believe that any war wife should occasionally enjoy the company of men.”⁴⁴

War dates, however, were not the only method by which women could help the deploying soldier. *Photoplay* reinforced the idea that a soldier could take his pick of women who would then attend to his emotional needs as a surrogate sweetheart. On more than one occasion, the magazine offered up starlets waiting for the chance to serve in this way. Whereas previous content contained meanings that could be negotiated by women, pin-ups were femininity personified, there for the male gaze. Pen-pal relationships were offered for the purpose of comforting those who served. In October 1942, *Photoplay*’s gossip section featured a subsection called “News Letter to Our Boys,” designed to help men in service reach out to Hollywood

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 90.

stars.⁴⁵ The piece listed actresses to whom servicemen might want to correspond, such as “unengaged lovely” Jennifer Holt, or Gloria Jean, “now fifteen” and “looking pretty grown-up these days.”⁴⁶ Donna Reed was described as “unaffected, sweet, and natural . . . you’d be crazy about her, fellows.”⁴⁷ One actress was described as a “cutie”⁴⁸ and “full of pep.”⁴⁹ The emphasis on wholesomeness established an expectation for prospective pen-pal relationships. “We’ve given you the choice of lovely unmarried girls who could be your best pal’s sister,” the author wrote. “That’s how nice they are. What’s more they’ll answer your letters, we feel sure.”⁵⁰ A year later, the same *Photoplay* column encouraged servicemen to consider a list of lesser-known stars they might reach out to. While “Hollywood stars and starlets like being your pin-up girls,” the item read, “why not choose those lovelies who are just coming along and have more time to cooperate?”⁵¹ More so than many of the articles in *Photoplay*, this construction of wartime duty commodified women, once again using actresses as a model for how that might be done. Studios used this opportunity to acknowledge the success of their established stars and introduce aspiring actresses, and in both instances treated the women and their time as a resource for the war effort. Interestingly, the column mentioned women in service, noting, “If the boys can pin up the girls, you can pin up the boys,” and encouraging the women to write the star of their choice’s

⁴⁵ Cal York, “Inside Stuff,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1942, 9.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Cal York, “Inside Stuff,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1943, 11.

publicist.⁵² While the men were not presented in quite the same way as the women celebrities, it's telling that women in service were granted enough agency to pin up men, as well.

The lines between star and reader were purposefully blurred by *Photoplay's* editorial staff, who invited civilian women to aspire to pin-up status, as well. This was an extension of the morale machine. "Whether as aides for a soldier's private sexual fantasies, romantic reminders of home, or public statements of masculinity, the pin-up . . . contributed to boosting individual servicemen's morale as comforting symbols of what many believed they were fighting for."⁵³ A June 1943 column encouraged women who weren't in a relationship with a serviceman, who might already have her picture above his bunk, to "get busy" and join the "throng" of women who were pin-up girls.⁵⁴

The Pin-Up Girl belongs strictly to War World II, with every studio in Hollywood busy supplying pin-up pictures of their stars to boys who ask for them. The real difference between a Pin-Up Girl and just a pretty girl from a soldier's hometown is that the Pin-Up honey is usually a stranger—the dream girl a soldier secretly yearns over. She's different somehow from the picture of the girl he carries in his wallet. She's his imaginary heartbeat, really, and can be a pretty stranger from a magazine cover, a movie star or a social debbie clipped from a newspaper.⁵⁵

Photoplay received several letters from readers asking how to become a pin-up girl. The response? "It's almost imperative to be young and pretty."⁵⁶ If a reader met that requirement, she could then have her picture taken and printed on paper that wouldn't be too heavy for a soldier to hang on the wall of his tent—which, the magazine said, would almost certainly happen "if you

⁵² Ibid., 12.

⁵³ Costello, *Love, Sex, and War*, 192–93.

⁵⁴ Cal York, "Inside Stuff," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, June 1943, 11.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

don't photograph looking like his maiden aunt."⁵⁷ The call to women to fulfill this role, even among strangers, is indicative of a cultural desire to use women's sexuality and femininity as a representative source of encouragement to advance the war effort.

Yet *Photoplay* was fundamentally a magazine about the movie industry and, increasingly, it owed its popularity to public curiosity about the private lives of celebrities. Focusing on the wartime romances of Hollywood stars was escapist fare on one hand, but validated impulsive romances and hasty marriages on the other.

Whirlwind War Romances

Marching orders for men in the United States correlated with a significant increase in trips down the aisle across the country. In the weeks after Pearl Harbor shook the nation, Americans married at "the phenomenal rate of a thousand a day."⁵⁸ The marriage rate skyrocketed by 25 percent between 1939 and 1942,⁵⁹ with 1.8 million couples marrying in 1942 alone⁶⁰ and some towns seeing as much as a 300 percent increase in marriage licenses.⁶¹ Weddings were put together quickly, often in the span of a soldier's furlough, and while "some were impulsive acts between virtual strangers," most were between men and women with a "courtship history."⁶² Women were "rushed into marriage by soldiers desperate for emotional

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Costello, *Love, Sex, and War*, 24.

⁵⁹ John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 87.

⁶⁰ Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 5.

⁶¹ Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 485.

⁶² Ibid.

security before they were posted overseas.”⁶³ The military, the government, and the media were wary of these wartime weddings; some media coverage aimed at men even went so far as to suggest that marriage was “unpatriotic,” as bachelors made better soldiers.⁶⁴ Troops overseas had to “obtain official permission to wed, on threat of court martial” if they found themselves taken with a woman from another country.⁶⁵ Weddings and marriage, with their deeply entrenched traditions, were changing in the face of the conflict, and Americans tried to keep up.

The frenetic energy surrounding wartime romance and marriage was reflected in the pages of *Photoplay*. Coverage of stars’ hasty romances and weddings, which primarily appeared in 1942 and 1943 in *Photoplay* with a few relevant pieces in 1944, tapped into the circumstances women on the homefront faced when their casual war dates turned into something more, or when they married their sweethearts in a bid for romantic comfort in a frightening time. In the earlier years, the magazine and its star contributors often presented these blink-and-you’ll-miss-them nuptials as romantic. Interestingly, this highlights the contradictory messaging men and women received, which likely caused emotional strife for both as they tried to sort through an onslaught of information about appropriate wartime courtship and marriage. The men might have been told that tying the knot was unpatriotic, but women readers were being sold a Hollywood love story.

Or make that several Hollywood love stories. The stars were busy in the early years of the war, falling in love and marrying fighting men—quick. In “Mrs. Ginger Briggs,” writer Sally Jefferson recounted that Ginger Rogers and Jack Briggs went on a mere seven dates before he

⁶³ Costello, *Love, Sex, and War*, 24.

⁶⁴ Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 294–95.

⁶⁵ Duncan Barrett, “Love and War,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 21, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com.libproxy.lib.unc.edu/docview/1614251167/abstract/236B5C0C99294981PQ/1>.

proposed.⁶⁶ Ruthy Hussey and Bob Longenecker's relationship was the focus of a 1942 article. The pair had only known each other for weeks, but decided to get married quickly before he was called to duty. Even though it rained on their wedding day, Ruth didn't care because she was so happy to be married, the author wrote.⁶⁷

Carole Landis, readers were told in a 1943 article, met her husband Thomas Wallace in England, and it was love at first sight. Their wedding was so quick that they had to borrow ration coupons from others for her dress and couldn't find a men's wedding band.⁶⁸ Their "divinely beautiful" wedding cake was just "a fraud, fashioned of fluted, crimped paper."⁶⁹ Likely these make-do wedding preparations had to do not only with the hasty timeline, but with rationing limitations as well—in England, where they married, butter, sugar, eggs, and other foods were closely rationed, while materials that might have been used to make wedding dresses were likewise in short supply; silk, for example, was used to make parachutes.⁷⁰ Despite this, Landis's story cast a dreamy filter on the stark reality of wartime weddings. Women could not only see themselves in this story, they could also project illusions of glamour on their own wartime weddings—after all, if Carole Landis fawned over her fake wedding cake, they could, too.

⁶⁶ Sally Jefferson, "Mrs. Ginger Briggs," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, April 1943, 25.

⁶⁷ Dora Albert, "Destination Happiness," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, November 1942.

⁶⁸ Carole Landis and Adele Whitely Fletcher, "My Wartime Honeymoon," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, June 1943.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁷⁰ "Rationing in World War Two," BBC, accessed March 4, 2017, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/topics/rationing_in_ww2; Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 486.

Landis and her new husband only spent a few days together before she left on a tour, and she was thrilled when her request to return to Wallace was granted.⁷¹ “I’ve never seen anything more beautiful than the plane which took me to England and Tommy. As it stood there on the field it seemed like some wonderful bird in some wonderful fairy tale,” Landis was quoted as saying.⁷² She moved into a guesthouse near his base and would see him as often as possible.⁷³ The *Photoplay* coverage of the Landis-Wallace happy union was not unique. The marriage had “captured Hollywood’s imagination” and was splashed across the pages of many magazines, as was her “war-widow existence” after the fact.⁷⁴ Landis’s “private life really could not be distinguished from a movie-magazine fantasy,”⁷⁵ suggesting that magazines such as *Photoplay* blurred the lines of reality and fiction, increasing readers’ identification with the waiting wife and giving readers an “inside look” at how a star was handling the happiness and hardships of a war marriage.

Emphasis on the happiness. Love, in *Photoplay*, was stronger than any force, including the war. While the weddings featured in its pages might not have been strictly in-line with the military’s agenda to discourage servicemen from marrying, they were used as an uplifting force in these early years. Greer Garson and her *Mrs. Miniver* costar Richard Ney married shortly before he was to leave for duty. *Photoplay* reported:

⁷¹ Landis and Whitely Fletcher, “My Wartime Honeymoon,” 73.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Eric Lawrence Gans, *Carole Landis: A Most Beautiful Girl* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2008), 117–118, <http://site.ebrary.com/lib/alltitles/docDetail.action?docID=10282578>.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 118.

They thought it over carefully. They discussed it from every angle and decided, as people have since the beginning of time, that love was more important than a world at war, or the time and space that war would put between them. And because Greer Garson and Richard Ney found it so, they were married at the very close of Richard's leave.⁷⁶

While the publicity about the fact that she played his mother in the movie wounded Garson's pride,⁷⁷ the article implied that nothing could stand in the way of their love, not even a world at war. Similarly, Olivia de Havilland's relationship with John Huston was framed as stronger than anything else, including her career:

It's the kind of love that comes first—before anything else. Recently she turned down a good part at her studio. The reason she gave was honest and brave. The man she loves is leaving this country. He may be gone for a long, long time. Many things can happen to both of them during that period. Who knows when they may meet again?⁷⁸

This piece and the others like it framed rushed wartime courtships as emblematic of romance. A reader facing the similar challenge of falling in love during the war could plausibly envision her love story as a happy Hollywood tale worthy of the corresponding happy ending. The harsh realities of wartime weddings could be avoided, at least for a time.

In 1944, ads for two movies seemed to exploit public appetite for wartime wedding stories characterized by romance and, of course, urgency and intensity. Of the starring duo in *Days of Glory*, the movie's ad said, "They could plan no tomorrows, for life was theirs to give, not to keep. Yet this night was theirs and love was not to be denied by the two so young, so vital, so eager to live out each reckless moment!"⁷⁹ October's ad for *The Impatient Years* was marketed to "the impatient girls and soldiers who rush into marriage: For the first time, the

⁷⁶ Sally Jefferson, "Navy Lady," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1943, 29.

⁷⁷ Jefferson, "Navy Lady."

⁷⁸ John Burton, "New Love for Livvie," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1943, 34.

⁷⁹ "Days of Glory," advertisement, *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, June 1944, 11.

screen brings you the story of marriage before combat . . . and combat after marriage!”⁸⁰ It’s telling, however, that by the time the movies featured in these ads reached the big screen, Photoplay’s related editorial content had shifted to a very different—and critical—narrative about wartime romance.

“War Emotionalism”: A Slippery Slope to Virtue Lost

As the war progressed, a paradox emerged when it came to the expectations women faced. Romance—and, relatedly, sexuality—had been conflated with women’s war duties, and men and women sought comfort in each other as “even the most fleeting wartime affair took on a special intensity because of the shared apprehension that it might be each partner’s last chance to discover affection in sexual solace.”⁸¹ As such, “chastity was an early casualty” of the war as “it seemed that sexual restraint had been suspended for the duration.”⁸² The scarcity of able-bodied men on the homefront made pairing up feel all the more urgent, and both men and women “yearned for someone who was waiting for them, or for whom they were waiting.”⁸³ Whereas in years past, dating multiple men had proven a woman’s popularity, now “going steady” was the goal, which “raised the sexual stakes”—content about “how far to go” would begin to “preoccupy” media aimed at women.⁸⁴ Since the turn of the century, the media had “featured issues on female sex and sexuality by Freud and the sexologists and on flappers, bohemians, suffragists, and more,” which had framed the evolving behaviors of women into a “scientifically

⁸⁰ “The Impatient Years,” advertisement, *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1944, 11.

⁸¹ Costello, *Love, Sex, and War*, 25.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 23, 25.

⁸³ Collins, *America’s Women*, 387–388.

⁸⁴ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, 266.

grounded' . . . exposé of female sexuality as a source of social disruption and degeneration."⁸⁵

Now, the media were faced with a conundrum—balancing “female sexual obligation” with “exacerbated fears regarding overly sexual women.”⁸⁶ Were the “Victory Girls”—or women who gained a reputation for promiscuity by fraternizing with servicemen at dance halls and bars as well as being “sexually available” to the departing troops⁸⁷—and their ilk necessary for morale, or were they a threat to the nuclear family, a symbol promoted as part of the American way of life soldiers were fighting to protect?

This anxiety seeped into the pages of *Photoplay* in a spate of content about the threat wartime romance posed to women’s happiness and virtue. Carole Landis summed it up in a 1945 article:

“Hurry! Hurry! Claim every emotion. Take your love where you find it. Tomorrow we may die!” If we don’t think this consciously, we think it subconsciously. However, most of the time tomorrow comes. And unless we discipline ourselves to stand clear of war emotionalism we doom those tomorrows to being poorer, lonelier and more bitter days than they otherwise might be.⁸⁸

Landis’s marriage, which had been so popularized and romanticized by the press,⁸⁹ had ended in divorce. Now, her star power was harnessed to personalize and neutralize a perceived threat to women, as well as to American values.

⁸⁵ Marilyn E. Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 114.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁸⁷ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 91.

⁸⁸ Carole Landis, “Don’t Marry a Stranger,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, January 1945, 62.

⁸⁹ Gans, *Carole Landis*, 117–118.

One way these anxieties manifested was in a “groundswell of public concern about the fidelity of service wives,” and the threat that infidelity posed to morality and the American family.⁹⁰ Worse yet, politicians and the media blamed unfaithful partners of the fighting men for “driving servicemen to suicide or draining men of the will to fight.”⁹¹ Questions about how to handle “disloyalty” among war wives even surfaced at legislative hearings about the allowances paid to servicemen’s dependents.⁹² Some women, dubbed “Allotment Annie,” would take multiple enlisted men as husbands, making “bigamy a business” by accepting a monthly payment for each serviceman-spouse.⁹³ Others were “emotionally starved” and “susceptible to the chance of temporary emotional solace with other men.”⁹⁴ These tensions appeared in *Photoplay* alongside messaging encouraging women to be available as a distraction for deploying men. In this way, the magazine reflected the contradictions in public attitudes and discourse. On one hand were all the stars giving advice about war dates. On the other, those who purported to be giving women insider information about the turmoil promiscuity wrought—usually men. Actors—familiar and admired figures—cautioned women to reconsider wartime fraternization.

After Ida Lupino encouraged wives to accept and arrange war dates while their spouses were away, *Photoplay* writer Roberta Ormiston interviewed actor John Shelton and countered

⁹⁰ Ann Pfau, “Allotment Annie and Other Wayward Wives: Wartime Concerns about Female Disloyalty and the Problem of the Returned Veteran,” in *The United States and the Second World War: New Perspectives on Diplomacy, War, and the Home Front*, ed. G. Kurt Piehler and Sidney Pash (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 100.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 99–100.

⁹³ Costello, *Love, Sex, and War*, 269.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 271.

with, “If your man’s in service, don’t have war dates.”⁹⁵ Ormiston offered in argument a letter sent to her from a serviceman—one of many, she said. He wrote to her:

We, the service men [*sic*] of Fort Sheridan, feel such a statement should be contradicted and wives be made to feel it is their duty not to go out with other men while their husbands are away fighting to make this a free country for all of us.⁹⁶

Where other content implied that fraternizing with servicemen was an important way that women could boost their morale—in fact, the same issue of *Photoplay* includes an article in which the writer imagines wartime dates with 10 different actors⁹⁷—Ormiston’s piece suggested they crushed battlefield morale when they did. The same concern was expressed by others in the media and by many politicians.⁹⁸

Actor Shelton told Ormiston that men in service “get the jitters, even go AWOL sometimes because wives and sweethearts have war dates.”⁹⁹ He argued that fidelity was the best way to boost morale. Having his wife, actress Kathryn Grayson, nearby “makes me a better soldier.” He added, “I’m wholly satisfied the very first job any girl or woman has today is keeping her man in service happy and content, satisfied at all times that she’s one hundred percent loyal and faithful.”¹⁰⁰ When a woman went on war dates, he said, her man’s imagination

⁹⁵ Roberta Ormiston, “If Your Man’s in Service Don’t Have War Dates,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, June 1943, 57.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Dorothy Kilgallen, “10 Knights in My Hollywood Date Book,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, June 1943, 20.

⁹⁸ Pfau, “Alotment Annie and Other Wayward Wives: Wartime Concerns about Female Disloyalty and the Problem of the Returned Veteran,” 100.

⁹⁹ Ormiston, “If Your Man’s in Service Don’t Have War Dates,” 57.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

would run wild, his jealousy exacerbated by the fact that the woman he loves “represents home.”¹⁰¹ Shelton conceded that some men might not mind, but that “the majority do mind, terribly.”¹⁰² Women in wartime were surely taking advantage of newfound independence, and socializing with others likely provided escapism, a sense of normalcy and a feeling that they were contributing to the war effort. Yet this article, considered in relation to the magazine’s interview with Lupino, was just one example of the mixed signals to civilian women throughout the war. Messages that told them repeatedly their wartime role was to boost morale (“Go show our boys a good time!”), were countered with messages that expressed the opposite (“Don’t even think about war dates!”).

Actor Alan Ladd offered his thoughts the same year in another article that was framed as an intimate, firsthand account brought to the living rooms of women readers. Ladd wanted to give women the intimate details on what men were saying about them in camp.¹⁰³ “What happens now in soldier-and-girl relations will determine, throughout the peace years to come, whether you, and the right man for you, get your share of that happiness,” he said.¹⁰⁴ In other words, a woman who gave in to lust with wrong man during the war might just lose her chance at bliss with the right man in the future. Ladd sympathized with the plight women faced as war “[made] every departing soldier seem very precious—and the girl would be a poor patriot, a poor sample of femininity, who didn’t experience that excited and desperate reluctance at parting.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Alan Ladd, “A Soldier’s Code for Women,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1943.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 34.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

While the juxtaposition of soldier-men with “girls” might come across as patronizing, Ladd claimed to want to steer clear of acting “the moralist.” Rather, he purported to know the thoughts of the soldiers.¹⁰⁶ Ladd explained that the American soldier “divides girls into two classes, the girl of an evening and the girl a man would prize.”¹⁰⁷ Ladd left no doubt for which class he thought women should strive. “You have self-sufficiency, self-control, and self-respect,” he wrote. “You have a wholesome desire to remain, in the moonlight, the somebody whom you can happily face—in the mirror—next daylight.”¹⁰⁸ Soldiers wanted women to remind them of home, he said, with good manners, common sense, and high morals. Ladd warned against burdening a soldier with “trivial worries of your own.”¹⁰⁹ He discussed the hasty marriages that had so often filled *Photoplay*’s pages, noting that the war bride would not know who her husband really was at home, and that those marriages might not survive the absence wrought by war.¹¹⁰ But Ladd wanted to end on an optimistic note—he spoke in-depth about an experience he had visiting an airplane plant staffed by women war workers, who didn’t despair at the war or, as Ladd reported the manager said, “laze around and flirt.”¹¹¹ As such, Ladd placed these war workers squarely in opposition to women who accepted the call to an “armed-force riot”¹¹² and harness their

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 35.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 35–36.

¹¹⁰ Ladd, “A Soldier’s Code for Women.”

¹¹¹ Ibid., 36.

¹¹² “How to Be An Armed-Force Riot,” 54.

femininity in service of comforting the troops. Women who had internalized that as a patriotic duty were now being disparaged.

The apprehension over war wives' potential dalliances found its way into *Photoplay* in other interesting ways. For instance, the magazine's advice column received a barrage of letters about women who had fraternized with more than one serviceman. Claudette Colbert, Bette Davis's successor as columnist for "What Should I Do?," expressed concern about the ways that women were behaving and advised and admonished as she saw fit. Interactive content such as advice columns in *Photoplay* and other fan magazines had a history of "relentlessly promot[ing] self-improvement" that benefitted their advertisers.¹¹³ It is not hard to imagine that another outside force—the government's Magazine Bureau—influenced the tenor of Colbert's advice. The letters below might have reflected the problems of the men and women who wrote them, but they almost certainly described domestic issues of concern to the country's leaders—problems that might respond to Colbert's influence.

In 1944, an 18-year-old wrote a letter to Colbert lamenting that his fiancée had been engaged to him and another man at the same time. Colbert encouraged understanding. She explains, "It means that, particularly in war time, everyone tries to spare the feelings of others. There have been cases where girls married two boys, just because of an exaggerated notion of patriotism."¹¹⁴ At this point in the war effort, Colbert continued to show empathy for the women in question in these letters, but still took care to correct their follies. Be social, but don't overdo, she cautioned in another issue of the magazine. "Be careful not to give the impression that you have become emboldened or coarsened in any way by your contact with great numbers of

¹¹³ Orgeron, "You Are Invited to Participate," 5.

¹¹⁴ Claudette Colbert, "What Should I Do?," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, June 1944, 70, 82.

men.”¹¹⁵ Her response to another letter writer was also interesting: the letter’s author told his wife she could go out while he was at war. She did and fell for another man. Her guilt led her to stay at home, and her husband could sense her unhappiness. Colbert advised:

She should have the fun and companionship that seems so necessary to her. It is not right for her to be sitting home alone as she is doing now. This will only make her unhappy and will not solve your problem.¹¹⁶

Colbert prioritized the morale of the young woman in question here, and thus assuaged the guilt of other women who might have found themselves emotionally invested in men other than their husbands.

Yet tensions rose. By the following year, Colbert showed less tolerance with some of her correspondents. In early May 1945, the German Army surrendered to the Allies and thus, thoughts turned to spouses and sweethearts returning from war. After receiving a letter from a woman whose sister was falling for another man in her husband’s absence, Colbert expressed frustration. “I am sorry to say this, but it’s true: I am completely losing patience with wives who cannot remain true to husbands who happen to be away at camp, or on the battle fronts.”¹¹⁷ Each letter to Colbert’s “What Should I Do?” had a different degree of romantic drama, but her responses contributed to a larger discussion about the expectations of women on the homefront, particularly as the conflict began to draw to an end.

While Colbert’s advice gave explicit directives about appropriate behavior, the private lives of stars in *Photoplay* became fodder for examples to imitate or reject. In the process of

¹¹⁵ Claudette Colbert, “What Should I Do?,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, November 1944, 105–106.

¹¹⁶ Claudette Colbert, “What Should I Do?,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1944, 68.

¹¹⁷ Claudette Colbert, “What Should I Do?,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, May 1945, 83.

relating to or judging the stories, readers absorbed “normative cultural ideals,” as Carolyn Kitch explains, and furthered their own “identity formation.”¹¹⁸ In the 1943 article, “How Loyal are Hollywood’s Women?,”¹¹⁹ a gossipmonger going by the name of “Fearless” assessed the conduct of several stars. Fearless criticized three women, including one who left her husband for someone else while maintaining relationships with other men. Another who earned Fearless’s ire was a starlet who fell for her leading man while her beau was away, resulting in “a serious situation off screen.”¹²⁰ Even too much war work was a threat to happy coupledom. In a blind item, Fearless noted, “If the wife of a certain director had not busied herself with war work to the exclusion of all else, even her own home, her husband would not have fallen so deeply and hopelessly in love with a star.”¹²¹

The ease with which Fearless passed judgment for any number of perceived sins is striking. Even the woman who was jilted was afforded no sympathy, for her loyalties were not with her man, but her war work. On the flip side of the coin, Kathryn Grayson was praised for rethinking her divorce to make marriage work with her enlisted husband, John Shelton, and for leaving Hollywood to follow him.¹²² For formerly “restless” women, Fearless said, marriage had a taming effect. “The loyalty that war subconsciously demands has worked wonders,” she wrote,

¹¹⁸ Kitch, “‘Useful Memory’ in Time Inc. Magazines,” 96.

¹¹⁹ Fearless, “How Loyal Are Hollywood’s Women?,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, August 1943.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 63.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² Fearless, “How Loyal Are Hollywood’s Women?”

noting that women such as Lana Turner, Carole Landis, and Gingers Rogers found satisfaction and stability in being a wife.¹²³

Interestingly, competing fan magazine *Screenland* was more prudish than *Photoplay*. Actress Marjorie Woodworth served as an example of good behavior; her “recipe” in a 1942 issue was to shun promiscuity and avoid “laying aside feminine reserve and womanly ideals.” War led to a situation ripe for mistakes:

Feminine hysteria venting emotional strain—to give all the love a girl’s heart can give to the boy going away. It is true that when a boy dons the uniform of which we are all so proud, it seems such a little thing to do—to give him a few goodbye kisses.¹²⁴

But, Woodworth argued, chastity and self-restraint set American women apart from enemy women. “If the girl takes the viewpoint that it is such a little thing to do—to promiscuously kiss and pet with the boys because they are in uniform,” she risked her good name and respect. Worse, such behavior was akin to embracing Nazi principles, which “glorifies the girls who disdain all convention and ideals of womanhood. Who consider it a woman’s duty to sacrifice herself for the pleasure of the Nazi soldiers.”¹²⁵ For *Screenland*, chastity wasn’t simply a matter of morals—it was a way to denounce the enemy and suggest the ways that American women could perform Allied ideals.

Actress Bonita Granville indicted young women in *Photoplay*’s “My Wartime Morals,” suggesting, though not in such extreme terms, that easing one’s moral boundaries was a slippery

¹²³ Ibid., 91.

¹²⁴ May Mann, “Should Girls Let Down the Bars in Time of War?,” *Screenland*, December 1942, 20.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

slope. Granville, known as a debutante and a “beautiful innocent” thanks to her starring role in Warner Brothers’ *Nancy Drew* series,¹²⁶ was an ideal celebrity to chide young readers:

I thought my generation was smart. Now I'm not so sure. I read these days about girls who jeopardize everything that matters most to women for a cheap thrill. . . . One would think every man was about to vanish from the earth and any emotional experience that wasn't crammed into these days would be lost forever.¹²⁷

She referred to “war hysteria” that led women to “disregard standards which are as necessary to the preservation of a woman’s happiness as helmets and guns are to the preservation of a soldier.”¹²⁸ The implication was that young women carried away by the urgency and intensity of wartime—qualities that *Photoplay* and its ilk promoted throughout editorial and advertising content—were spoiling themselves and destabilizing the ideals for which war was being fought. Official and mass-mediated messages to women described many ways to be on the job in wartime; as Hegarty points out, “guarding their respectability”¹²⁹ was a weapon women could wield for their protection and the protection of others.

Guarding the homefront, then, included “guard[ing] against any mistake that will make us as truly war casualties as the boys who are killed and wounded,” Granville insisted.¹³⁰ Thus, lust and promiscuity could be lethal to women—in some sense, this was true, as the rates of venereal disease reached “almost epidemic proportions” as the war ensued.¹³¹ And while more than 80

¹²⁶ Ilana Nash, *American Sweethearts: Teenage Girls in Twentieth-Century Popular Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 107.

¹²⁷ Bonita Granville, “My Wartime Morals,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, September 1943, 37.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes*, 2007.

¹³⁰ Granville, “My Wartime Morals,” 37.

¹³¹ Costello, *Love, Sex, and War*, 127.

percent of the US enlisted men who were gone for more than two years “admitted . . . to having had regular sexual intercourse with the women they met ‘over there,’”¹³² women shouldered much of the responsibility for the consequences of sex. For example, a “series of articles on the perils and evils of venereal disease focused on females as disease carriers and as dangerous and even treasonous if their contagion reached the armed forces.”¹³³ And while equating any and all sexual activity with certain death was hyperbole, to be sure, this article reflected the anxieties about a crisis facing the population from inside the United States’ own number. A woman reading this article might have surmised that she could no more come back from traveling down the wrong path than could a fallen soldier. Granville warned that future relationships might suffer from bad decisions—suggesting an unmarried woman with sexual experience was a less desirable prospect as a wife. Should women fail to prepare themselves for postwar marital life, Granville added that women “usually are responsible—to some extent, anyway—for what we get.”¹³⁴

Actor John Payne also argued the importance of virtue in order to protect the futures of the men who came home. In a *Photoplay* article, “An Ex-G.I. Challenges American Women,” Payne described a similar sense of urgency among men and women—“quick-happiness grabbing”—but placed the responsibility with women for rational thinking.

The strain of war produces a desperation that makes us wager to grab what little happiness we can while the grabbing is good. Women and men both are doing plenty of quick-happiness grabbing. They’re afraid what they have is all they will get and it’s not as much as they deserve. But women defeat themselves when they adopt the old creed, “eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.” Tomorrow we don’t die! It isn’t to die that we are fighting. It is to live; individually and nationally! That’s what this war is all

¹³² Ibid., 147.

¹³³ Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes*, 2007, 114.

¹³⁴ Granville, “My Wartime Morals,” 83.

about—the preservation of every man’s chance for a decent life and a happy one, which translates itself into the job he wants, the woman he loves and the faith he believes in.¹³⁵

Of returning soldiers, Payne noted that “the great portion of their bitterness is caused by women themselves” when they broke off relationships “in favor of spur-of-the-moment romance and marriage.”¹³⁶ A broken heart might sully a man’s next relationship, which Payne said could be the reader herself.¹³⁷ Women could still enjoy the company of men, he conceded, but should proceed with caution, as women had roles that they needed to fill on the homefront.¹³⁸ Notable is the double standard at play. According to a 1945 study, three-quarters of the soldiers who shipped out had sex while deployed.¹³⁹ Women were to protect themselves *and* the returning soldiers, while men were held to a much lower standard when it came to guarding sexuality and sexual health.

The optimistic stories about stars’ wartime romance from earlier issues also found a counterpoint. Carole Landis wrote an article in 1945 detailing the breakup of her marriage, a whirlwind romance she had written about with enthusiasm less than two years before. Landis said that she was “lucky” to have a wartime romance “adventure,” but lamented that she had not “accepted it for what it was” and instead “turn[ed] it into marriage before I knew whether or not it belonged to marriage.”¹⁴⁰ Quick marriages, Landis said, did not allow a couple to discover if

¹³⁵ John Payne, “An Ex-G.I. Challenges American Women,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, March 1945, 85.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹³⁷ Payne, “An Ex-G.I. Challenges American Women.”

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 457.

¹⁴⁰ Landis, “Don’t Marry a Stranger,” 37.

they were truly compatible: “Tommy and I—and the hundreds and hundreds of boys and girls who are flinging themselves into marriage today—gave ourselves no opportunity to make any such discoveries.”¹⁴¹ Landis had planned to keep her career until Wallace completed his service and established his career, but said she put her marriage first and passed on jobs even after he finished active duty. Wallace was jealous of her star power and attention, and the two fought.¹⁴² During one of his furloughs, the two spent time alone and got along; Landis attempted to be the wife she thought he envisioned.¹⁴³ Yet after he left, the two realized they had been performing marriage rather than behaving as themselves. While “it might be all right for us to do this for the duration of a furlough,” wrote Landis, they “couldn’t possibly do it for an entire lifetime.”¹⁴⁴ She warned against what she saw as a threat to the future happiness of young people and hoped that “by being honest about my impulsive war marriage, I might save other girls from making the same mistake.”¹⁴⁵

In addition to relying on the “expertise” of actors, *Photoplay* engaged a psychologist to counsel readers on sex and romance in wartime. In a 1944 article, “These Men Are Dangerous,” Lawrence Gould typified men that women might have met as they left the private sphere for the public, whether for work or socializing.¹⁴⁶ The threat of becoming entangled with one of these dangerous men—self-centered men, playboys, wolves, for example—was heightened, Gould

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Landis, “Don’t Marry a Stranger.”

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 62.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Lawrence Gould, “These Men Are Dangerous,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1944.

said, if “the war has broken up your normal circle of friends and left you dependent for dates on relative strangers, or even on men you wouldn’t think of going out with under ordinary circumstances.”¹⁴⁷ Thus, *Photoplay* acknowledged that women in wartime were having to negotiate new social environments. If they fell victim to cads, they weren’t entirely to blame. Importantly, the magazine forged a connection with its audience by demonstrating that some Hollywood stars had been gullible, too. Take Marjorie Riordan, for example, who shared the story about the man she had been seeing who already had a wife:

When I confronted him with my great discovery he was, or seemed to be, very upset. He said he didn’t want to hurt his wife. Nor did he want to hurt me by telling me that he was married. His entire attitude was that he was being very kind and considerate and really being quite magnanimous and long-suffering. Personally, I think he was a first-class heel.¹⁴⁸

Riordan offered this story as a warning rather than an admonishment—the dangerous men were lurking.

But the first line of defense against threats to true womanhood? Women themselves. Save for violent acts, “no man can do any more harm to you than you let him,” Gould wrote. The need for love “may make you vulnerable to the men I have been talking about,” and “the further you go with any man . . . the harder it will be to stop.”¹⁴⁹ There was a double standard at work in this “expert’s” advice: Men’s predation was framed as natural, but a woman was expected to control her emotions and impulses, or she might spoil herself for “good men.”

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 55.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 72.

There's a good man waiting for you, even though you may never have seen him and he may be thousands of miles away. Don't let either your impatience or another man's false glamour ruin your big moment for you.¹⁵⁰

From *Photoplay*'s actor-experts to mental health experts came the repeated message: men were a threat, women were a threat to themselves, fraternization was a threat. As the war progressed, the threats against women's virtue on the homefront piled on top of one another and loomed larger in the pages of *Photoplay* than the hazards on the battlefield.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

CHAPTER 6: THE WOMEN WHO WAIT

The influx of women entering the workforce, as well as their newfound wartime independence, has led many scholars to label World War II a watershed moment in American women's history.¹ Some, such as women's rights advocates and writers of the time, even thought of it as a "revolution."² Yet conventional women's roles remained paramount to the war effort. The "traditional family" was framed "as a comforting shelter from the storm of combat [for soldiers] and as the way of life they were defending."³ As a press release for the film *Women at Arms* phrased it: "If she goes right on being a good housewife, she's among the strongest, bravest, and most valuable of America's women-at-arms. She's the keeper of the Home, the thing we're all fighting for."⁴ Women were expected to "defend steadfastly the very idea of traditional home and family, and their central place in it" even as everything changed around them.⁵

The pages of women's magazines were filled with advice for these women. The magazines shared information and advice about rationing, morale, and more, "stressing women's

¹ John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 16.

² William H. Chafe, *The Paradox of Change: American Women in the 20th Century*, Kindle Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

³ Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 94.

⁴ Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 140.

⁵ Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 36.

role as guardians and managers of the home.”⁶ Making do with available resources while minimizing waste was a homemaker’s patriotic duty.⁷ Ads in magazines at the time “reinforced the idea among middle and upper class women that they needed to look no further than their kitchens and their families to do their part for America.”⁸ The media portrayed traditionally feminine tasks, such as food preparation and makeup application, as tasks that helped the war effort.⁹ Gail Collins posits that “if housewives had paid strict attention to the barrage of demands and warnings from the government propaganda machines, they probably would have gone mad with anxiety,” as they were instructed to ration everything from stockings to food, and to balance government restrictions with high-quality meals to prevent a lapse in productivity or morale due to hunger and tightening restrictions.¹⁰

Caring for the homefront was considered by many to be the most significant role for American women during World War II, according to historian John Jeffries:

The principal and overwhelmingly preferred wartime role of American women was that of wife and homemaker. Indeed, World War II may well have had a larger impact in promoting nationalism and the primacy of family than in expanding employment and the public roles of women. . . . Most housewives thought their best contribution to the war effort was in the home.¹¹

⁶ Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women’s Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995*, 193.

⁷ Mei-Ling Yang, “Creating the Kitchen Patriot: Media Promotion of Food Rationing and Nutrition Campaigns on the American Home Front During World War II,” *American Journalism* 22, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 65.

⁸ Tawnya J. Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images: World War II Mobilization of Women through Magazine Advertising* (New York: Lexington Books, 2011), 148.

⁹ Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers’ World*, 69.

¹⁰ Collins, *America’s Women*, 371.

¹¹ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 101–2.

In other words, “furlough wives and sweethearts who wait, watch, and work for the men who live in their hearts,” as an ad for the Ginger Rogers movie *Tender Comrade* put it in February 1944,¹² were manifestations of a wartime ideal. Homemaking remained the wartime duty of two-thirds of American women,¹³ and by tending to the home, by mothering their families, and by keeping up their own morale, these women were doing their part for the war effort. *Photoplay* depicted these duties and often positioned stars as role models for how waiting women should conduct themselves.

“Guardians of the Home”

A letter sent by a reader to *Photoplay* suggested that a wartime wife’s domestic duties were closely linked to patriotism. The reader, whose letter impressed the editors enough to earn her a \$1 prize, wrote in the hope that it would encourage Hollywood to make movies exalting the housewife as another kind of war worker.

We homemakers, too, would like to see ourselves as our next-door neighbors see us. Saving ration points, turning our flower gardens into Victory gardens, canning vegetables, stretching fats, sewing for the Red Cross. A series of such pictures would bring spiritual consolation to millions of homefront women, secure in the knowledge that our boys—all over the world—could see that we “moms” are behind them every moment of our existence.¹⁴

This letter writer expressed pride in her homemaker role and recognized that the sacrifices women made under the country’s rationing scheme, for example, were an important contribution to the war effort.

¹² “Tender Comrade,” advertisement, *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, February 1944, 9.

¹³ Rowbotham, *A Century of Women*, 261.

¹⁴ “Speak for Yourself,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, August 1943, 20.

Indeed, the “kitchen patriot” became a “prominent model” for women during the war¹⁵ as rationing programs were instituted across the country.¹⁶ Staples and other resources were in short supply as civilians, many of whom struggled during the Depression, enjoyed their newfound ability to buy and thus increased demand at the same time the government was trying to feed a growing number of US troops—resulting in a tension between civilians and the government when rationing began.¹⁷ The solution? Involve the media, particularly the women’s pages, in an effort to inspire these kitchen patriots “to give up the right of individual choices for the common good.”¹⁸ Appealing to women was the way to do this, according to a report by social scientists of the time led by Margaret Mead, who told the National Academy of Sciences that women were “the ones in the family through which the government could influence and alter civilian eating and shopping habits, as necessary, during wartime.”¹⁹ Women seemed to respond to the rationing initiative—by the end of 1942, a poll in *Business Week* said 76 percent of women understood the complex rationing system, while only 53 percent of men did.²⁰

Media such as *Photoplay*, at the behest of the government, strove to foster that understanding. Directives about specific domestic duties, food, cooking, and maintaining the kitchen were prominent in *Photoplay* in 1943 and 1944. In March of 1943, Carole Landis told

¹⁵ Mei-Ling Yang, “Creating the Kitchen Patriot,” 57.

¹⁶ Joanne Lamb Hayes, *Grandma’s Wartime Kitchen: World War II and the Way We Cooked* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2016).

¹⁷ Mei-Ling Yang, “Creating the Kitchen Patriot,” 55–56.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Yellin, *Our Mothers’ War*, 20.

²⁰ Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 374.

the reader, “Don’t Ration Your Appetite.” Landis’s article suggested that women’s traditional roles in the household—as hostess and cook, for example—could be temporarily transformed into wartime service. She said she had been responsible for mobilizing women and driving them, “all laden with doughnuts and cookies and sandwiches, to the bases where they would feed and entertain as many as 4,000 sailors and Merchant Marines an evening.”²¹ Because it was an extension rather than subversion of a traditional feminine role, feeding the forces was depicted as appropriate wartime service for women.

Additionally, the article offered recipes for women’s use with certain foods that “won’t always be as cheap as you would like, but they will be reasonably priced in relation to other foods.”²² By purchasing ingredients such as cabbage, which was plentiful, Landis explained:

You’ll be helping relieve the demands on scarce products and, in the case of fresh fruits and vegetables, you will also be helping conserve a perishable crop while releasing canned and dried varieties for shipment—all of which are important toward providing a fair and efficient distribution of our wartime foods.²³

In other words, “lucky . . . stay-at-homes”²⁴ who chose their rations wisely were “doing their part” by considering first the welfare of soldiers fighting overseas. Learning new ways to prepare food for the family allowed precious resources to be directed toward the war effort. With stories like these, especially written by famous stars like Landis, the government and the media could persuade women to embrace the need for rationing and could counteract the psychological

²¹ Carole Landis, “Don’t Ration Your Appetite,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, March 1943, 98.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

challenge of rationing—notably that many women who had been unable to buy during the Depression were now being asked to forego buying goods they could finally afford.²⁵

This article promoted the government's agenda. Landis wrote, "If you'll just follow the Government's program, there's no need to ration even the biggest appetites in your family!"²⁶ The act of eating and cooking intelligently according to official recommendations would make wartime women heroes in their own right, and it could be done in a way that was almost fun, this coverage suggested, rather than a sacrifice. In this way, Landis's guidance fell in line with other coverage of the era, which framed women's adherence to and acceptance of rationing "as an expression of patriotism as well as female prowess."²⁷ The kitchen patriot had the ability to make food shortages bearable and were vital to the war effort. *Photoplay* recruited one of Hollywood's elite to drive that message home.

Stars and their best-loved roles were marshaled to demonstrate appropriate food-related homemaking duties in a few articles in the magazine. Translating her role on the screen into real-life domesticity, Donna Reed, a "star housewife who does a big wartime job in a small apartment," saved excess fats rendered from cooking for the war effort. "Every pound of salvaged kitchen fat contains enough glycerine to fire four anti-aircraft shells," the magazine instructed.²⁸ Actress Jane Darwell, "who knows a good stand-in when she sees one," encouraged the reader to forego butter and use margarine in the kitchen instead. Darwell had supposedly been heard telling her stand-in that there were no nutritional disadvantages to using margarine in

²⁵ Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 21.

²⁶ Landis, "Don't Ration Your Appetite," 98.

²⁷ Mei-Ling Yang, "Creating the Kitchen Patriot," 67.

²⁸ "Save That Fat!," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, September 1943, 20.

place of butter.²⁹ This “behind-the-scenes” framing made the reader feel like she had been let in on a celebrity’s private conversation, and by connecting Darwell’s onset musings to her domestic role as a homemaker, the magazine strengthened the bond between its content and reader.

Government propaganda emphasized the importance of food preparation and consumption, but food *production* was billed as “the first line of defense” in the war.³⁰ At a time when many Americans had access to more resources than they had had in years during the Depression, the government was attempting to convince them to turn again to frugality—not out of necessity for their families’ survival but for the good of the war effort.³¹ Tending to a victory garden and canning the resulting yield were “quintessential symbols of home front sacrifice and patriotism.”³² By 1943, surveys revealed that 75 percent of women canned food,³³ and by 1945, 40 percent of the country’s fresh vegetables were grown in more than 20 million civilian gardens.³⁴ *Photoplay* was peppered with references to food production and examples of stars helping out the war effort by tending to their gardens and conserving their food. In June 1943, Ann Hamilton mentioned Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz’s Victory Garden and their commitment

²⁹ “Better than Butter,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1943, 102.

³⁰ Amy Bentley, *Eating for Victory: Food Rationing and the Politics of Domesticity* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 114.

³¹ Terrence H. Witkowski, “World War II Poster Campaigns: Preaching Frugality to American Consumers,” *Journal of Advertising* 32, no. 1 (2003): 71.

³² Bentley, *Eating for Victory*, 115.

³³ *Ibid.*, 131.

³⁴ Quentin R. Skrabec, *The 100 Most Important American Financial Crises: An Encyclopedia of the Lowest Points in American Economic History*, (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2014), 158.

to canning their own produce in “We Can.”³⁵ She lauded Ball and Arnaz’s idea of trading their crops with neighbors to get a greater variety of food. Perhaps in an effort to assuage the reader about any fears she had of being so involved in the production of her own food, Hamilton noted that Ball was scared of canning at first, but overcame her fear.³⁶ As readers may have recalled from a December 1943 issue of *Photoplay*, Ball’s tomatoes were award-winning, garnering her a first-place prize in the Valley Garden Show.³⁷

Lucy and Desi weren’t the only ones who tried their hand at a Victory Garden. In the 1943 article “Fun on the Farm,” writer Jessie Henderson highlighted several stars and their ups and downs with food production. For example, Deanna Durbin “grew beets so big she had to dig ‘em up with a shovel.”³⁸ Ann Sothern’s corn stalks looked wonderful, but never grew corn since she didn’t know that she needed to plant two rows for them to pollenate correctly.³⁹ Martha O’Driscoll had a “traveling garden” because she didn’t account for the downward slope in her land that caused the seeds to move.⁴⁰ Perhaps the gold star should have gone to Janet Gaynor, whose table featured food she produced:

Besides the vegetables and fruit—name your favorite, she’s sure to have it—Janet has acquired a flock of quack-less ducks. For milk, as well as for laughs, she bought several goats, too. And the ducks have nothing on the goats, either, because—the wonders of science or something—these are smell-less nannies.⁴¹

³⁵ Ann Hamilton, “We Can,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, June 1943, 92.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Cal York, “Inside Stuff,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, December 1943.

³⁸ Jessie Henderson, “Fun on the Farm!,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, August 1943, 17.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 18.

⁴¹ Ibid.

The commitment of these stars was “remarkable”⁴² according to Henderson, given that they also had movies to film and other war work to do. When asked how she made the time, Barbara Stanwyck quipped that she worked “from daybreak to back break.”⁴³ Another short item in 1944 showed Evelyn Keyes watering her Victory Garden “so that soldiers won’t go hungry,” as the sizeable Army consumed a lot of food and would “need more in ’44.”⁴⁴ The piece referred readers to another block of text reminding them that food grown in Victory Gardens freed up more food for the Army.⁴⁵

In these ways, *Photoplay* helped women to embrace the government’s rationing initiative. Readers not only received information from recognizable faces, they could identify with the trials and tribulations their favorite stars experienced when trying to adapt to this strange new world. The successes and pitfalls—or pratfalls—of tending to a garden, calculations on how to keep the family fed with meals that both adhered to government guidelines while being nutritious and tasty, insecurities about trying something alien—all of these potential responses were considered by the stars of *Photoplay*. Thus, readers could take solace that the idealized women they saw on screen and in the pages of their favorite magazine were wrestling with and overcoming the same challenges they were. While the government made celebrities out of veteran homemakers to advance its agenda,⁴⁶ celebrities themselves became homemakers in the

⁴² Ibid., 88.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “So That Soldiers Won’t Go Hungry...,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, April 1944, 105.

⁴⁵ “Help Feed Your Soldier!,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, April 1944, 71.

⁴⁶ Mei-Ling Yang, “Creating the Kitchen Patriot,” 56.

eyes of the public. They became the kitchen patriots with whom readers could identify. Food, however, was not the only way for a reader to nourish the homefront. Motherhood was framed as an exalted way women could help the country prosper.

Motherhood as War Duty

Mothers during and after World War II symbolized the future of the nation as “in a time of insecurity and anxiety, the successful performance of motherhood—continued reproduction, the instruction of proper social values, and the purchase of nutritious food—helped to ensure the future success of democratic civilization.”⁴⁷ In other words, a mother’s role was not only the wellbeing of her family, but the recovery of the entire country from the trauma of war. The media of the time “emphasized the mother’s role as citizen by drawing on the archetype of the patriotic mother” who “moved the task of maternal work from her private sphere to the public arena where she shared her work with the military and the government, where she cared for all of the nation’s soldiers.”⁴⁸ She was responsible for helping her children “understand democratic principles and participate in observing them.”⁴⁹ In other words, mothers were the ones who would soothe the nation’s fears after years of war and once again point Americans down a path to prosperity.

In the years before the war, birth rates had fallen as a result of the Depression even as motherhood and marriage remained the things for which women were, “above all,” supposed to

⁴⁷ Odland, “Unassailable Motherhood, Ambivalent Domesticity,” 69.

⁴⁸ Ana C. Garner and Karen Slattery, “The World War II Patriotic Mother: A Cultural Ideal in the US Press,” *Journalism Studies* 11, no. 2 (April 2010): 152–53, doi:10.1080/02615470903217329.

⁴⁹ Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 81.

strive.⁵⁰ During the war, however, the birth rate rose as women who had waited for children during the Depression could now afford to have them while at the same time a rush to the altar led to a sharp increase in the number of younger mothers.⁵¹ The term “baby boom” was used as early as 1943; “When faced with the possibility that a man might lose his life, millions of couples looked to the future and created a legacy” by having children.⁵² Furthermore, infants called “good-bye babies” were “conceived on the eve of departure, products not only of last minute and perhaps careless lovemaking but also of a calculated desire to ensure a next generation”⁵³ in the face of a conflict that would surely take the lives of many. This echoed the attitudes in Europe, where the war brought concerns about repopulation.⁵⁴ Yet the exigencies of war complicated motherhood. While the War Manpower Commission maintained that “a woman’s first duty was to her children,”⁵⁵ few social supports existed to help her successfully navigate a double-day’s duties of work and childcare.⁵⁶ Neglectful mothering became the subject of public discourse, as publications “ran stories of infants locked in cars parked in employee lots,

⁵⁰ Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*, 8.

⁵¹ Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 44; Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 170.

⁵² Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 356.

⁵³ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 88.

⁵⁴ Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe’s Families After World War II* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011), 20.

⁵⁵ Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 138.

⁵⁶ Chafe, *The Paradox of Change*, 143; Allan Winkler, *Home Front USA: America during World War II*, 3rd ed. (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2012), 58.

young children shut up in apartments most of the day, and juvenile delinquents.”⁵⁷ In fact, across the country, “no issue about women’s changing wartime roles garnered as much attention as did her children or possible children.”⁵⁸ With the news of hundreds of thousands of American servicemen dying in the war,⁵⁹ a lack of childcare support for war workers,⁶⁰ and uncertainty about the future of the American society, anxieties about motherhood must have loomed large for readers. The path for wartime mothers or potential mothers was anything but clear, but the Hollywood stars of *Photoplay* attempted to light the way.

Coverage in *Photoplay* focused on a woman’s role as mother or matriarch and how that related to the war effort. For example, in “Should War Wives Have Babies,” several stars responded to the question, their answers directed to “thinking women everywhere, women who are unselfish, who want to do what is right.”⁶¹ Overwhelmingly, these stars presented having children as a positive path for wartime wives. Gene Tierney encouraged women who were debating having a child during the war to “have it—and know the greatest happiness of your life!”⁶² Linda Darnell Marley and her husband decided to wait because they were newlyweds,

⁵⁷ Sara Evans, *Born for Liberty* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 224.

⁵⁸ Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 356.

⁵⁹ “Research Starters: Worldwide Deaths in World War II,” The National WWII Museum, accessed July 26, 2017, <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/students-teachers/student-resources/research-starters/research-starters-worldwide-deaths-world-war>.

⁶⁰ Rosalind Rosenberg, *Divided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century*, Revised edition (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008), 132.

⁶¹ “Should War Wives Have Babies,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, December 1943, 54.

⁶² *Ibid.*

but Darnell noted that was not necessarily related to the war itself.⁶³ Lucille Ball Arnaz said women should have children if their marriage was stable enough, while Maria Montez Aumont answered in the affirmative, saying she hoped for twins.⁶⁴ Carole Landis said that a waiting family provided motivation to a soldier fighting abroad:

Having a child makes a soldier realize that he has something very real to fight for. With a home and family waiting for him, he has an incentive to give everything he has. When the war is over, we intend to buy a large ranch in Nevada. Lots of space, several children, simple living, is our dream. Although my career will be secondary, it will be necessary for me, like a lot of other wives, to help financially until my husband gets back into civilian life. Children will come after, I hope. Like many another army wife, I am making plans for the family I hope will come in the future.⁶⁵

Motherhood, then, was something women should aspire to, and another way that women contributed to the war effort. Reinforcing that message was the fact that childless women were depicted in negative ways. Choosing not to have a child, according to Maureen O'Hara in June 1944's "I'm Waiting for My Baby," was "an admittance of selfishness."⁶⁶ Furthermore, she said, "No woman can be truly happy until she has a child."⁶⁷ O'Hara's husband was in a marine camp when she found out she was pregnant. O'Hara described using her pregnancy as an elixir for the loneliness she felt without him. She imagined herself and husband Will standing and looking at their baby together, and "there is no loneliness or fear then."⁶⁸ Pregnancy and motherhood

⁶³ "Should War Wives Have Babies."

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 55.

⁶⁶ Maureen O'Hara, "I'm Waiting for My Baby," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, June 1944, 86.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 85.

expected of women; indeed, they were a wartime obligation, even if that meant giving birth while a husband was away at the front. O'Hara explained:

To be afraid alone is not easy. But it's even harder to be brave alone. . . . Still, I mustn't forget my responsibility to my husband. I must remember that this is my fight. If I have to wage it alone, wage it alone I will! If my child gets his first view of this world without his father near, it'll be my responsibility to see that nothing happens to me or to the baby. . . . Our love will unite [Will and I] at that moment when our child is born. Then I'm sure we can both say to each other, "I'm with you—and I'm proud."⁶⁹

In this passage, O'Hara put maternity on a par with combat. She mentioned that at the moment of her labor and her child's birth, she and Will would each express admiration for the other's wartime contributions.⁷⁰ This passage equated having a child during wartime with the efforts of the men who were serving, thus framing childbirth and motherhood as a woman's war duty in the same way a man's duty was to go to the front and fight.

Women who wrote in to "What Should I Do" seeking advice from Claudette Colbert at this time received replies that indicated domesticity and motherhood were appropriate roles and ambitions for women. For example, one mother of two in 1944 found herself bored with her family life. "I am no longer in love with my husband," she wrote. "I want to be happy with him, but I am not satisfied with just being a housewife. I don't want to stay at home. I am never content there."⁷¹ Her admission might have provided solace to other women feeling a similar restlessness, but it was met with chastisement from Colbert.

It would be very easy for the average woman to fly into a rage at you, my dear, and storm at you in loud tones. You have everything on earth that the normal woman wants: A home, a husband, two lovely children, a social life and the prospect of a secure future.⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid., 86.

⁷⁰ O'Hara, "I'm Waiting for My Baby."

⁷¹ Claudette Colbert, "What Should I Do?," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, September 1944, 60.

⁷² Ibid., 61.

According to Colbert, the author of the letter was taking for granted the many advantages she had and flouting the values of “normal” women. The next year, a “Mrs. Doris W.” found herself expecting a child with her husband, while longing for an old flame. She sought Colbert’s advice. “Have you ever stopped to realize how many girls pray every night to find themselves comfortably married and anticipating a child,” Colbert asked.⁷³ The idea that marriage and motherhood were not enough to satisfy a woman made her uncooperative at best, abnormal at worst—deserving of frustration and scorn. While the letters did not specifically involve the war, they suggested that the desire for motherhood and domesticity were expected of women. Furthermore, as the deaths of hundreds of thousands of servicemen became a reality⁷⁴ and more than 100,000 soldiers found brides in other countries while they served,⁷⁵ resentment brewed among American women.⁷⁶ With a perceived scarcity of men as a result of the war, a rejection of domesticity was met with condemnation, encapsulated in the response of one of Hollywood’s stars whose advice readers sought and presumably respected.

⁷³ Claudette Colbert, “What Should I Do?,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, April 1945, 111.

⁷⁴ “By the Numbers: World-Wide Deaths,” The National WWII Museum, accessed April 7, 2017, <http://www.nationalww2museum.org/learn/education/for-students/ww2-history/ww2-by-the-numbers/world-wide-deaths.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>.

⁷⁵ See, for example, Barbara Friedman, *From the Battlefield to the Bridal Suite: Media Coverage of British War Brides 1942-1946* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007); Elfrieda Shukert and Barbara Smith Scibetta, *The War Brides of World War II* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988); Jenel Virden, *Good-Bye, Piccadilly: British War Brides in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996); Susan Zeiger, *Entangling Alliances: Foreign War Brides and American Soldiers in the Twentieth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2016).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

The symbolism of a mother's influence would extend beyond the war years, according to the stars in *Photoplay*. Mothers would be crucial for America's success postwar, argued Jane Wyman in 1944 in "Our Child Must Not Hate."⁷⁷ Wyman overheard her daughter saying she hated a doll, which concerned her and husband Ronald Reagan, and she used this article as an opportunity to address other mothers who were worried about the influence of intolerance and violence that had characterized the war.⁷⁸ While Wyman said conversations with children might seem a trivial thing to worry about, "they add up to something important."⁷⁹ Also concerned about juvenile delinquency, she said, "the solution must start at home."⁸⁰ In response to Wyman's piece, Mrs. Gilbert B. Loomis of Carthage, New York, wrote to the magazine to express her agreement that post-war world peace would be taught by parents in the home, writing "that in order to secure a lasting peace, we must first show our children how to live in harmony with the rest of the world. Thus if the parents of today fail, the peace of tomorrow will fail."⁸¹

Motherhood and children were portrayed in this coverage as a way to protect future peace. Above all, motherhood was framed as a way women were crucial during the war. The celebrities relating these messages to their own experiences served as potential models for women looking for ways to do just that, and those who addressed readers directly served as heralds for a renewed commitment to domesticity.

⁷⁷ Jane Wyman, "Our Child Must Not Hate," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, May 1944.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 85.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 86.

⁸¹ Mrs. Gilbert B. Loomis, "Speak for Yourself," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1944, 98–99.

Independence and Self-Sufficiency

While the traditional roles of homemaker and mother were reinforced in *Photoplay* and reframed as a woman's wartime duty, another theme emerged. Several articles advised women on how to be self-sufficient and independent in the absence of men. Women began to be "more self-reliant" as the war forced them to "develop a new sense of who they were and of their capabilities."⁸² By the war's end, the mobilization of women would endow them with "a new dimension to citizenship and to their sense of self."⁸³ *Photoplay*'s coverage highlighted this growing need for self-sufficiency in wartime, casting popular stars as women on the homefront who were making do.

Some of these tips in the magazine's coverage were practical, perhaps in an attempt to boost confidence in "handy women" and reassure the departing troops that their homes would be well-cared for in their absence. For example, Gene Kelly and Betsy Blair posed for images of him teaching her how to weatherproof their home for the winter. The article stated that a "handy man—or woman—around the house can weather-strip his home in no time flat."⁸⁴ The corresponding images (Figure 2) showed Betsy learning how to carry out this "snug-as-a-bug business" as Kelly supervised.⁸⁵ The coverage was another indication that, in the absence of most men—including spouses and maintenance workers—women needed to cultivate a new kind of awareness and set of skills to care for their homes in wartime. In addition, *Photoplay* readers

⁸² Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "US Women on the Home Front in World War II," *Historian* 57, no. 2 (Winter 1995): 352.

⁸³ Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 229.

⁸⁴ "Chill-Chasers," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, January 1944, 86.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

were given instruction and encouragement for managing family finances, a new role for some women.⁸⁶ One article, for example, instructed women on how to “smash that personal income-tax bugaboo,”⁸⁷ quoting several stars and their approaches as well as a quick primer on who owed income tax and how it should be paid (Figure 3). Income taxes were a new responsibility for many families as the government had to find new ways to pay for a war that “was ten times more expensive than its predecessor.”⁸⁸ Prior to the war, “the fiscal system . . . was based on government securities, excises, tariffs, corporate taxes, and individual income taxes on the wealthy.”⁸⁹ By 1943, most working families were paying income taxes, in contrast to the past when “very few Americans had felt the tug of the Treasury’s purse strings directly.”⁹⁰ The stars in this article helped to sell this new reality to families—and particularly women—tasked with sorting out income taxes, for possibly the first time. Marjorie Reynolds said that “each small tax adds up . . . and I feel that I’m being a good home-front American” since taxes helped the military buy weapons and supplies that might have brought soldiers home that much sooner.⁹¹ Anne Baxter budgeted for her taxes, and Janet Blair abstained from the bigger apartment she wanted because putting the money she saved into a tax-day fund might end the war and bring

⁸⁶ Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 491.

⁸⁷ “Here’s Your Chance!,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, March 1944, 72.

⁸⁸ James T. Sparrow, *Warfare State: World War II Americans and the Age of Big Government*, Reprint edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 122.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 122, 124.

⁹¹ “Here’s Your Chance!,” 72.

American men home.⁹² The stars emphasized the importance of paying taxes to the war effort, and provided readers with the logistics of tax day.⁹³ These practical tips acknowledged that *Photoplay* readers might need help acclimating to new roles, and presumed they could and would rise to the occasion.

In addition, *Photoplay* offered general advice about how its readers might achieve confidence and self-sufficiency despite the fact that their worlds had shifted. In her 1943 article, “Don’t Be Afraid,” actress Barbara Stanwyck told readers about a book quote that touched her so much that she made it “the cornerstone of my life.”⁹⁴ She had engraved the quote—”Tisn’t life that matters! ’Tis the courage you bring to it”—on tags for servicemen and adopted it as a personal motto.⁹⁵ In repeating this phrase, Stanwyck said she prevented herself from being overcome by fear. Furthermore, she cautioned women against sharing their fear with others, whether they be neighbors, friends, or “most of all our men.”⁹⁶ Stanwyck acknowledged that some servicemen wouldn’t come home from the war, but advised women not to let that “riddle your days and your lives with the terror of anticipating that they won’t. The sheer waste of so much unnecessary anguish is appalling.”⁹⁷ Stanwyck encouraged women to channel their fear into strength. Additionally, she told the reader to maintain perspective, to compare her problems to others’. This resolve was crucial for her personally:

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Barbara Stanwyck, “Don’t Be Afraid,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, December 1943, 34.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 100.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Bob has gone and I have joined the ranks of all the women in the world whose men have gone to war. We're all learning the same lessons as we go through almost identical experiences. . . . Some will learn them well . . . and their men will be proud of them. Some will whimper and flinch . . . and their men will be troubled.⁹⁸

In other words, the way that women went about their duties on the homefront affected soldiers' ability to fight the war. In framing this message as a way women could put soldiers' minds at ease and allow them to concentrate on fighting the war, *Photoplay* impressed upon its readers the necessity and collective experience of their redefined, independent roles.

Writer Adele Whitely Fletcher more explicitly stated this in "Deal Yourself in on Life," an article about Anne Shirley's resolve to approach life with more purpose. Shirley had a whirlwind romance with Victor Mature, to whom she'd been briefly engaged.⁹⁹ Before that, Shirley had been married to John Payne, a relationship that taught her, in the end that "the only person who is consistently going to do anything for you is you."¹⁰⁰ After her 1944 breakup with Mature, Shirley said that the negative responses people hurled at her might have upset her at one point, but with a sense of independence, she'd overcome the need for others' approval.¹⁰¹ While Shirley said that it took time for a woman to stand on her own two feet, small steps such as "meeting people more bravely" added up.¹⁰² Tellingly, Shirley explained that this was often an internal battle women had to fight, and she advised them to be more assertive—to express their

⁹⁸ Ibid., 102.

⁹⁹ Adele Whitely Fletcher, "Deal Yourself in on Life," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, January 1944.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 41.

¹⁰¹ Whitely Fletcher, "Deal Yourself in on Life."

¹⁰² Ibid., 88.

opinions, and to speak loudly and clearly rather than speeding through their conversations.

Shirley told the author of the *Photoplay* article:

For obviously it is only by standing on your own feet, by asserting yourself, that you can hope to win the favors life has to dispense. Obviously it's stupid to sit back and expect individuality, popularity, success or love—or anything else—to drop into your lap. . . . I've found it an exciting business, too—discovering what I really think, what I really want, what I really feel—really meeting Anne Shirley. For twenty-two years I didn't know myself at all; I lived with a stranger. That's no fun. And it gets you nowhere—that is, nowhere you want to go.¹⁰³

The piece said little explicitly about the war, but surely resonated with many women on the homefront, who found themselves having to assume new, unfamiliar roles and do so in the absence of most men.

Loneliness

While women on the homefront might have been making great strides toward independence and self-sufficiency, a deluge of loneliness and fear also followed the onset of the war. The media responded, with women's magazines validating women's emotions, yet encouraging "martyrlike stoicism and contributions to the war effort as the acceptable solutions."¹⁰⁴ Women, often isolated by the realities of war, were encouraged by various media to "frequently get out of the house to prevent depression" as the more time she spent alone, the "more likely that she would succumb to anxiety and moodiness that was not good for her or people around her."¹⁰⁵ Letters became a "lifeline" for couples, with tens of millions of pieces of mail crossing the seas each week.¹⁰⁶ In addition, "millions of waiting wives spent countless hours

¹⁰³ Ibid., 89.

¹⁰⁴ Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 12.

¹⁰⁵ Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 377, 492.

¹⁰⁶ Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 9; Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 272.

in theaters” and “bought as many magazines as they could afford, hoping to fill their endless empty evenings.”¹⁰⁷ *Photoplay* was perfectly positioned company for those empty evenings, reinforcing movies as an acceptable form of escapism and movie stars as arbiters of wartime behavior. Who better than actors to understand the need for well-managed emotions in times of crisis, whether onscreen or off?

Several items in *Photoplay* addressed loneliness, worry, and fear caused by or coinciding with the war. Joan Crawford in a 1943 article, “I’ve Been Lonely,” said she had found ways to overcome loneliness. Marriage was not the solution, she said. In fact, she had “conquered loneliness while I was still alone.”¹⁰⁸ Solitude allowed her the time to remember her dreams of acting and provided an opportunity to become reacquainted with herself. “We’re right with ourselves only when we spend enough time alone to know ourselves,” she wrote, “the manner of person we want to be, and exactly what we want from life; and when we go on from there to bring all these things to pass.”¹⁰⁹ Loneliness was a means to and also was cured by self-reflection and the setting of personal goals. *Photoplay* encouraged women to look within for the strength to combat one of the emotional challenges of wartime.

Author Adela Rogers St. Johns used the emotion of wartime to bond readers to the stars. In a 1943 feature, “Women Who Wait,” St. Johns wrote that she never imagined Hollywood stars lived the same kind of life as their fans, but a recent trip to Hollywood had altered her thinking. “After war had laid its hand upon us,” she “found that the vast and mighty demands of our country in these days of battle have gathered us all into a wave of kindred emotion that seems to

¹⁰⁷ Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 492, 282.

¹⁰⁸ Joan Crawford, “I’ve Been Lonely,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, April 1943, 80.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

me a very touching thing.”¹¹⁰ Just like the readers at home, she said, Hollywood stars were missing their beaus and husbands.¹¹¹ Actress Brenda Marshall, for example, told her that “the home Bill [William Holden] and I built together is just as empty as any other home,” and that she hadn’t been able to eat in the dining room since he had gone, as that was where they would end the day together.¹¹² St. Johns combined the stories of a Minnesota woman waiting for the birth of her child with Sue Carol and Alan Ladd’s impending childbirth. Both women anticipated delivering children while their significant others served abroad.¹¹³ Similarly, she reported the story of a group of women living together on a Jersey farm, divvying up housework and collectively tending a Victory Garden: “As they explained it to me it’s not only somebody to talk to, somebody for companionship, but if you get interested in the other fellow’s problems you aren’t so concentrated upon your own. It makes you feel better to be part of all the other women.”¹¹⁴ Not only did banding together help women stave off loneliness; this hints at a budding sorority among women united by common challenges. Similarly, Ty Powers’s wife Annabella, like these women, was living with someone else—her sister-in-law. That arrangement made Annabella less lonesome, St. Johns said, and allowed her to be of help to someone else, an easier task than helping only oneself.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Adela Rogers St. Johns, “Women Who Wait,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, May 1943, 32.

¹¹¹ Rogers St. Johns, “Women Who Wait.”

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 32.

¹¹³ Rogers St. Johns, “Women Who Wait.”

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹¹⁵ Rogers St. Johns, “Women Who Wait.”

Another woman St. Johns met shared her worries about her Air Force husband, but told her:

I know that I haven't any right to add to his task by letting him ever think I am worried about him. I think that's the most unfair thing a wife can do. He wants me to go ahead with my life. He says after all that's what we're fighting about, so that wives can live normal lives and safe lives.¹¹⁶

The woman said she would be taking a skiing trip because it would make her husband happy—he wouldn't think she was moping in his absence.¹¹⁷ Similarly, Jeanette MacDonald said she continued to sing to please her husband Captain Gene Raymond.¹¹⁸ St. Johns used both the everyday woman and the Hollywood star to communicate the same message—wait for your husband with his well-being in mind. Don't add to his worries by causing him concern about your emotional state.¹¹⁹ This back and forth between civilian and Hollywood tales tangibly connected the stars' loneliness and their strategies for enduring the long wait for their men to come home with that of the reader. St. Johns continued to praise the women at home, saying the *Photoplay* community could “be as proud of the women of Hollywood as we are of all our women today. And wish them luck and maybe remember them in our prayers for all the women who wait. Waiting . . . takes the supreme courage.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 92.

¹¹⁷ Rogers St. Johns, “Women Who Wait.”

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Soldiers also received much instruction on what was appropriate to share with those back home. See Darcy C. Coyle, *Censored Mail* (Francetown, NH: Marshall Jones Company, 1990).

¹²⁰ Rogers St. Johns, “Women Who Wait,” 93.

Brenda Marshall connected her experience with that of women across the country in “What Loneliness Has Taught Me,” creating a sisterhood of sorts with her readers. Marshall’s struggle after her husband William Holden enlisted was universal to waiting women:

We may live in different lands, but broken home ties, love, and loneliness are the same in every language. . . . War had made us sisters, sharing the same heartaches, struggling to learn a new way of living, and trying to fit ourselves into a strange world without the protection, companionship, and devotion of the man we love.¹²¹

Yet this loneliness was also a source of strength, Marshall proposed. She said that she had become stronger and more self-reliant as a result, gained new perspective and a greater drive to take on responsibility. She believed she owed that to Bill, and to do any less would be failing to live up to her duty to preserve a home worth fighting for.¹²² This piece emphasized the message that women were to overcome their loneliness and sublimate the emotions that might threaten the war effort by worrying the servicemen. Yet in acknowledging it as a universal problem, one that even the most glamorous of Hollywood stars had to wrestle with too, it also could have created a space for women to feel less alone in their loneliness.

Judy Garland addressed loneliness another way—through fiction. In 1943, she wrote a short story titled “Lonely Girl” that seems a thinly veiled version of her own struggles with loneliness. Twenty-one-year-old Joan, the story’s protagonist, was a lonely singer and movie star who felt “lost and hopelessly sad.”¹²³ She liked her work and was surrounded by friends, yet she felt aimless, “and, though she knew loneliness was a disease, striking millions of other women in America right now, company did not ease her misery. She certainly had—what would you call

¹²¹ Brenda Marshall, “What Loneliness Has Taught Me,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1943, 44.

¹²² Marshall, “What Loneliness Has Taught Me.”

¹²³ Judy Garland, “Lonely Girl: A Story,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, November 1943, 31.

it?—the wartime blues.”¹²⁴ In acknowledging the “wartime blues,” Garland was giving name to what women were experiencing, validating their emotions, and enabling readers to feel like part of a broader community of women who shared their struggles. Later, after an encounter with soldiers, Joan decided to stop performing for servicemen from the safety of a camp stateside and to instead travel abroad to those about to fight.¹²⁵ While presented as a work of fiction, this piece resonated with the emotions that women readers were confronting. The piece also continued the trend of *Photoplay* messages encouraging women to find strength in loneliness and use it as a way to embrace new possibilities.

Bette Davis encouraged women to “Save Those Tears!” in Helen Louise Walker’s 1944 article. Davis’s husband had died a few months before the article was published, and the way she dealt with her grief was used as a guide for women dealing with their own loneliness and fear.¹²⁶ As war widows were rarely shown in the media,¹²⁷ perhaps this was a coded way to reach women who had lost their husbands in the war without focusing directly on wartime casualties. Early on, the article noted how people thought Davis might not be able to contribute to the war effort as she managed her grief. Yet Davis would not be underestimated, the article implied, as she “began dauntlessly to piece her life together and to resume her place wherever she felt that she was needed” soon after her loss.¹²⁸ Davis returned to her work both in the movies and at the Hollywood Canteen with such verve that “no stranger in either place could have guessed that

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Garland, “Lonely Girl: A Story.”

¹²⁶ Helen Louise Walker, “Save Those Tears!,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, June 1944.

¹²⁷ Weatherford, *American Women during World War II*, 488.

¹²⁸ Walker, “Save Those Tears!,” 47.

here was a woman whose life had recently been torn asunder.”¹²⁹ Davis related her grief to that of other women:

When someone asked her to talk, for publication, about her so-recent grief, she said, quietly, “Millions of women are enduring or facing the possibility of just such breaks in their lives. I don’t see that I can add anything to what they all must be thinking and feeling. I only know that we mustn’t waste these emotions. We must save those tears.”¹³⁰

By connecting Davis’s pain to the readers’, *Photoplay* also connected her grief to theirs, using it as a model for how women could deal with devastating wartime emotions—channel them into wartime work.

Davis shared with *Photoplay* the story of a friend who steeled herself as soon as she knew her spouse would be serving in a dangerous capacity.¹³¹ While this friend acknowledged that “mental cushion” wouldn’t prepare her for the grief that would come if something were to happen, it might “lessen the stunning, paralyzing impact of bad news.”¹³² To fall apart would “nullify the effect of what our men accomplished in those battles!”¹³³

While Davis’s experience and the anecdote about her friend served as examples, the piece also included tips from Davis for the reader. Readers could prepare for shock in little ways to “grow strong” and face smaller challenges to learn how to cope with larger ones.¹³⁴ “We can’t

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Walker, “Save Those Tears!”

¹³² Ibid., 47.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

afford to waste” tears, Davis told the reader, also reminding her to not “let your own bitterness and grief and dismay poison the lives of people around you.”¹³⁵

Maureen O’Hara noted that giving in to such emotions might encourage a waiting woman to also give in to discontent.¹³⁶ The average “heart cries out for relief,” O’Hara acknowledged, recalling that she found herself pondering nightmarish scenarios when her husband was in Iwo Jima.¹³⁷ Dwelling on those negative emotions would have failed to “dignify the work my husband was doing in the war or my own responsibility as his wife and the mother of his child.”¹³⁸ And while O’Hara recognized that no one could tell a woman waiting on a serviceman not to be lonely, she, like Bette Davis before her, advised the women reading her piece to find a way to dull the effect of these negative emotions.¹³⁹ O’Hara encouraged constant activity or “any kind of work that will keep them mentally occupied and physically tired.”¹⁴⁰ By this, she said, she did not mean “going to parties and having any dates” but something that would make the reader “tired, dog-tired” to the point that they didn’t “feel like spending . . . time on senseless pleasures.”¹⁴¹

¹³⁵ Ibid., 103.

¹³⁶ Maureen O’Hara, “Temptations of a Girls Who Waits,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1945.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 47.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ O’Hara, “Temptations of a Girls Who Waits.”

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 47.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

Lonely women could be tempted in other ways, too, O'Hara warned.¹⁴² Because friendship could "so easily develop into an infatuation," women were told vigilance was key when it came to fraternizing with men.¹⁴³ O'Hara warned that women who started to compare their beaux to the man she was spending time with were "generally heading for a fall."¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, they were to remember their servicemen might not have much time to write, and thus they should be careful not to consider a "lack of mail as an excuse for going out and losing her sense of perspective."¹⁴⁵ Nor should they allow themselves to lose interest in their lives—their routines, their appearances.¹⁴⁶ O'Hara said she couldn't comprehend why a woman allowed herself to doubt her man's return, at the risk of "losing most of her fineness as a woman."¹⁴⁷ In other words, these solutions to loneliness also served the function of keeping women busy and protecting them from impulses that might get them into trouble.

As the war carried on, certain conduct among women was increasingly seen as threatening to their role as honorable women. Perhaps that attitude reflected concern "that women had become tough and competent and would challenge men in all spheres after the war."¹⁴⁸ *Photoplay* began turning its attention to content that prepared civilians for the troops' eventual return.

¹⁴² O'Hara, "Temptations of a Girls Who Waits."

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 145.

When the Waiting Was Over

During the latter years of the war and after its end, the media and experts instructed women how to behave with their veteran husbands, and this advice overwhelmingly emphasized women's traditional roles.¹⁴⁹ Even before it was clear when troops would be demobilized, attention in women's magazines turned to what would happen when they returned to a country that had changed in their absence.¹⁵⁰ They highlighted women's duty "to assist the returning vets and help them adapt"¹⁵¹ as, by 1944, "large numbers of writers and speakers defined the readjustment of 16 million veterans as the major domestic problem."¹⁵² The same year, women's magazines began to advertise products "for the 'after-victory' homes," symbols of a post-war economy and encouragement for consumerism. These products, including washing machines and vacuum cleaners, were also a reminder of women's "proper domestic role."¹⁵³ *Photoplay* covered the impending arrival of the servicemen in various ways, using the stars to make a point about how women were expected to treat returning servicemen.

"What kind of woman will your man come home to," asked Ann Sothern in 1943. Sothern was known for her role in MGM's film series about Maisie Ravier, "a tough,

¹⁴⁹ Leff, "The Politics of Sacrifice on the American Home Front in World War II," 228; Hartmann, "Prescriptions for Penelope," 224.

¹⁵⁰ Zuckerman, *A History of Popular Women's Magazines in the United States, 1792-1995*, 197.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Hartmann, "Prescriptions for Penelope," 224.

¹⁵³ Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*, 16.

scatterbrained, down-on-her-luck Brooklyn chorus girl with a heart of gold.”¹⁵⁴ Her portrayal of Maisie as an aircraft worker in 1943 had helped construct a “new icon of American womanhood.”¹⁵⁵ In this article, however, she was speaking as “a war wife” who told readers “how to prepare” for the “great day” when their men returned.¹⁵⁶ While she noted in her article that the reader’s beau had probably held an image of her “wearing your perkier hat and your bravest smile” while he was away, war will have changed both of them. She urged women to consider how that would affect their relationship.¹⁵⁷

I think that the smart girl will want to devise for herself a pattern of living which will assure her that her man will come back, if not to the identical woman he left, to the sort of woman who will be fitted to go hand in hand with him into whatever strange new world will be emerging.¹⁵⁸

While the men were away learning more about the world and how it operated, and had begun to grasp their mortality in new ways, women were to strive to live “fully” and “usefully” and avoid “mental ruts” in order to “keep up” with their returning servicemen, according to Sothern.¹⁵⁹ A reader could do so by engaging in the new things that piqued her beau’s interests and by reading anything she could about the war and what it meant for her, her husband, the country.¹⁶⁰ She also

¹⁵⁴ Aljean Harmetz, “Ann Sothern Is Dead at 92,” *The New York Times*, March 17, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/17/arts/ann-sothern-is-dead-at-92-savvy-star-of-b-films-and-tv.html>.

¹⁵⁵ Shingler, “Bette Davis Made over in Wartime,” 270.

¹⁵⁶ Ann Sothern, “What Kind of Woman Will Your Man Come Home To?,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, November 1944, 45.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 45, 85.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 85.

mentioned “more serious things to consider,” such as the emotional toll war might have taken on the returning serviceman, saying that no matter the situation that befell the couple, “the woman who loves him must be ready to help him solve it and defeat it.”¹⁶¹

Importantly, Sothern emphasized how this role was a woman’s responsibility:

Always she has to come back to the realization that she will be different, too. It’s her job—not his—to see that the changes in both of them do not affect the fundamental bonds between them. So she watches her own mental attitude—today and tomorrow and next week. . . . She must preserve the essence, the important ingredients of the girl he fell in love with, the girl he longs to come back to.¹⁶²

Yet Sothern also allowed women to consider their own fulfillment in the process. She told her readers that war work would potentially help them avoid those mental ruts, but that their war work should be something they personally found enjoyable or fulfilling, as their “morale [was] important” to their own well-being as well as the soldiers’.¹⁶³

As 1945 commenced, *Photoplay* coverage increasingly addressed the men’s return. In April, actress Patricia Morris, who used the byline Mrs. Wayne Morris for this piece to emphasize her role as wife, wrote “My Husband is Home.” Morris had “prayed harder than ever” after her husband joined the service, her “prayers flying upwards mingled with the prayers of women everywhere” as she waited for him.¹⁶⁴ Her daughter was born while her husband was away, and taking care of her child and home occupied her time. After unexpectedly hearing her husband broadcasting on the radio one night, Morris guessed he might soon come home but

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Ibid., 85–86.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 86.

¹⁶⁴ Patricia Morris, “My Husband Is Home,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, April 1945, 32.

didn't want to share her suspicion lest others think she was "indulging in wishful thinking."¹⁶⁵ Rather, she prepared for him by housekeeping, saving money so she could hire a maid and devote more time to him once he was home, buying a new dress, and devotedly attending to her beauty regimen so that "his first sight of me after all our months apart wouldn't let him down."¹⁶⁶ Women reading this could have considered it a primer for the behavior they should adopt to prepare themselves for their husband's return after the upheaval of war. Morris's husband surprised her by returning early one morning, yet the surprise was bittersweet as his stateside publicity efforts for the war prevented them from spending much time together.¹⁶⁷ Morris decided not to feel sorry for herself, however, after receiving a package from the mother of a boy who had been killed, which made her realize "how lucky I was to have a husband."¹⁶⁸ In other words, there was no time for self-pity, especially not if you were one of the lucky ones whose serviceman came back.

As the significant others of Hollywood stars began to return, their behavior continued to serve as a model of appropriate behavior. Louella O. Parsons, in 1945's "The Miracle of Kathryn and Johnny," recounted the story of Kathryn Grayson and John Shelton, who had quarreled often before the war but found new love for one another once they realized "what they might have lost."¹⁶⁹ In their first year of marriage, Grayson filed for divorce twice and left Shelton six times;

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 33.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 115.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Morris, "My Husband Is Home."

¹⁶⁹ Louella O. Parsons, "The Miracle of Kathryn and Johnny," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, November 1945, 29.

he, on the other hand, had “a chip on his shoulder where Kathryn was concerned” because she was more famous.¹⁷⁰ Shelton joined the Air Force when the war began. When he joined the Air Corps, Grayson reconsidered her plan to file a third petition for divorce since a woman was not allowed to divorce her husband without his consent if he was serving.¹⁷¹ Additionally, Parsons said, Grayson “was determined to have another go at her marriage.”¹⁷² Ultimately, Grayson said the war brought them closer together—afterward, she wanted to stop strangers to brag about her husband’s war achievements and to tell people that she and her husband were no longer spoiled children, but adults. Grayson told Parsons that early in their marriage, she “wanted to be boss” but Shelton, like “any man in the world who is worth his salt . . . felt he should wear the trousers,” a dynamic that led to their fighting.¹⁷³ Grayson, through *Photoplay*, provided the contours of a mature marriage post-war, in which a wife ceded power to the returned head of household.

Loretta Young’s 1945 article, “Because You’re Brave Enough,” was drafted to help women prove their love and loyalty if their beau were to come home physically disabled or with his spirit broken:

For in the midst of rejoicing over the end of the war and the bravery of the men who made it possible, we must not for one moment forget that thousands of these men are facing another fight more difficult and, spiritually, a more dangerous battle—that of adjusting to and overcoming the injuries with which they bought the world’s peace.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Parsons, “The Miracle of Kathryn and Johnny.”

¹⁷² Ibid., 29.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 95.

¹⁷⁴ Loretta Young, “Because You’re Brave Enough,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, November 1945, 52.

Young wrote about a wife whose husband lived to the “fullest capacity” in spite of his disabilities.¹⁷⁵ When he was injured and asked his wife why this had happened to him, she replied it was because he was “brave enough” to handle it.¹⁷⁶ To help the returning serviceman adapt to life at home—especially if he still suffered emotionally or physically from the war—was considered the duty of the woman who had been waiting for his return.

The women on the home front who waited while the war raged overseas found a variety of suggestions and role models within the pages of *Photoplay*. Whether practical tips about how to keep house and make do during the conflict or deeper discussions about the emotional ramifications of war, the stars offered instruction. And in doing so, the magazine captured a moment in time where women—though still ostensibly focused on the well-being of the servicemen—began to explore a new camaraderie forged of their shared experiences.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 53.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER 7: WOMEN AT WORK & WOMEN WHO SERVED

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, *Photoplay* filled many a page with advice for women waiting on the homefront, portraying domesticity as a crucial wartime role for women. Yet the magazine also reflected societal shifts in attitudes toward working women. At times, war work was framed as a way to cope with loneliness or a way to serve while waiting. On other occasions, the evolution of the working woman was portrayed as an exciting new frontier. The evolving dialogue about working women was different from previous conflicts. As Ginger Rogers, said to *Photoplay* in 1945, “There used to be an adage, ‘While men fight, women wait and weep.’ In this war it’s, ‘While men fight, women work and pray.’ Intensive work, intensive prayer are great sustaining forces.”¹

And work they did. Dramatic changes in the workforce followed the onset of the war. During the Great Depression, the job shortage “led during the height of unemployment to the denunciation of ‘double earners,’ employed women whose husbands or fathers worked.”² As World War II broke out, women became an untapped reserve for a nation looking to fill jobs left open by enlisted men.³ There first was an increase in women working in administrative jobs,⁴ and from there they began working in increasing numbers in a variety of other fields both in the

¹ Elza Schallert, “Wartime Wife: A Surprise Story about the Ginger Rogers of Today and the Pattern She Had Figured out for Her War-Waiting,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, May 1945.

² Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 3.

³ Ibid., 4.

⁴ Daniel, *American Women in the 20th Century*, 123.

public sector and in defense industries.⁵ Additionally, women enlisted in the military. The Navy accepted them into the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) and the Army into the WAAC (Women's Army Auxiliary Corps), which later became the WAC (Women's Army Corps).⁶ These servicewomen "were used in almost every capacity except combat."⁷ The female workforce during this time grew to "some 6.5 million," and, nationally, the percentage of American women working increased from 25 percent to 36 percent over the course of the conflict.⁸ A publication from the Office of War Information's Magazine Bureau declared:

It's a woman's war now. No discussion of the work of the woman volunteer would be complete without emphasizing the fact that we are in this war all the way, it's a woman's war right now, and women should be thinking in terms of going into full-time work and carrying along many of their volunteer activities as side lines.⁹

The government sought to rally women for the workforce and the press was there to help.

Photoplay presented varied messages about these working women. The stars—working women themselves—served multiple purposes. Their careers were used as a way to wrestle with the changing paradigms. In fact, the magazine's fiction often upheld traditional norms more than nonfiction coverage ostensibly about the women of Hollywood. The Hollywood set also served as confidantes, of sorts, for the reader, guiding her to the right kind of work for the war effort.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ John W. Jeffries, *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1996), 99–100.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith, "US Women on the Home Front in World War II," *Historian* 57, no. 2 (Winter 1995): 353.

⁹ *War Jobs for Women*. (Washington, DC: Office of War Information, Magazine Section, 1942), 45, <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112064528323>.

1942 Brings Change

The proliferation of women workers during the war began as a numbers game. As the men mobilized and enlisted, they left jobs behind, and, after Pearl Harbor, the country seemingly “overnight . . . transformed . . . from a country with endemic unemployment into a nation with an impending labor shortage, especially in job areas monopolized by men.”¹⁰ As 1942 progressed, the supply of available male workers dried up, and government surveys “reported marked shifts that year in employers’ willingness to hire women,”¹¹ though the images of the war workers “were meant by the government, and understood by the public, to be temporary.”¹² Both the government and employers made the recruitment of women a priority as they “waged a concerted campaign to persuade women to work outside the home.”¹³ The Office of War Information as well as its Magazine Bureau were formed in 1942,¹⁴ and magazines in particular, according to government files, were “major supporters of the ‘womanpower’ campaign, perhaps because their audience was primarily female.”¹⁵

¹⁰ Daniel, *American Women in the 20th Century*, 123.

¹¹ Evans, *Born for Liberty*, 221, 223.

¹² Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 138.

¹³ Allan Winkler, *Home Front USA: America during World War II*, 3rd ed. (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2012), 56.

¹⁴ Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 36; Laura Sparaco, “June 13, 1942: The Office of War Information Is Created,” *The National WWII Museum Blog*, June 13, 2012, <http://www.nww2m.com/2012/06/june-13-1942-the-office-of-war-information-is-created/>.

¹⁵ Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 38.

In fact, the Magazine Bureau claimed to inspire a spate of magazine coverage in the fall of 1942 that encouraged women to join the workforce to help the war.¹⁶ As the closing months of 1942 mark the beginning of this study, *Photoplay* coverage from the last quarter of the year provides an ideal starting point for examining how attitudes toward working women took shape as the war effort escalated. Some content promoted a fantasy of women settling into lives of domestic bliss. Yet other content from the end of 1942 suggests that advocacy for women in the workforce had a healthy spark and the fan magazine was fanning the flames.

Two fiction pieces from October 1942 suggest that women faced challenges when opting to work. In “The Hard Way,” a short story adapted from a Warner Brothers film, an entertainer named Katie meets an actor named Albert. She marries him quickly, yet while Katie becomes a Broadway star, Albert fails to find success and ultimately commits suicide.

Albert’s last conversation with Katie was an argument about her quitting, and when his body was found, it was with her photo and an audio recording of her show. Katie wonders if “perhaps she had been selfish in wanting a career separate from Albert’s.”¹⁷ Albert’s partner Paul equates Katie’s pursuit of the limelight with the murder of his associate, but his opinions eventually soften and the pair find themselves infatuated with one another. Katie and Paul talk about the future, “a white house with a lawn and garden,” but he asks if she’s sure she doesn’t want her career instead. Katie’s response? “I never want to see or hear of a career again.”¹⁸ The messaging here was fairly heavy-handed. Not only would too strong a focus on a career prevent

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Lee Pennington, “The Hard Way,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1942, 83.

¹⁸ Ibid., 85.

a woman from finding love, it could compel a beau to kill himself. “The Hard Way” did not herald in an age of acceptance for women in pursuit of professional fulfillment.

In the same issue, “Highroad to Hollywood” told the fictional story of career driven Julia Burns of Ohio who wins the radio version of Miss America and goes to Hollywood, leaving her admirer Tod Jenkins back in the Midwest.¹⁹ Tod had been on the verge of proposing before Julia left but instead only asked her to send him “Hollywood ideas” for the house he planned to build.²⁰ In her ascent to stardom, Julie is injured on set and ends up in the hospital. Both Tod and her new LA beau Curt send her get-well gifts; the two ultimately battle for her affections. Curt wants her to stay in Hollywood, while Tod wants her to come back to Ohio. Tod develops a ruse about cutting down Julie’s favorite elm tree in order to build the aforementioned house, and, in this way, lures her back home. Ultimately, their reunion shapes the story’s “happy ending”:

“Have you never noticed, Mr. Jenkins,” she remarked, her head fitting ever so cozily into the hollow of his shoulder, “that in the stories about Hollywood, the heroine always goes home in the end?” Indeed she wondered how she could possibly have considered any *other* ending, when all the time she must have known that it would have to be this one!²¹

Reading this story, a woman might have assumed that the logical, perhaps even unavoidable, way to achieve a happy ending would be to sacrifice career and ambition for love. Notable is the fact that, of the examples discussed in this section, the two pieces that present a career as detrimental or immaterial to women are fiction. The nonfiction pieces encouraged or argued for the acceptance or advancement of women in the workforce. Perhaps this indicates that the

¹⁹ Dixie Wilson, “Highroad to Hollywood,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1942.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

fantasy, or assumed fantasy, of many readers was still the traditional tale of domestic bliss rather than one of a career while in reality many women sought work for a variety of reasons.

In the same 1942 issue, Rosalind Russell delivered a fiery rebuttal to a previously published article titled “George Sanders Puts Women in Their Place.” Sanders had written about women’s equality, sharing opinions such as “I believe it will be a sorry day for woman is she ever becomes our equal,” or “No woman has ever touched the best man. Personally, I doubt that one ever will,” as well as “I emphatically believe that woman’s place is in the home—and nowhere else.”²² Sanders’s piece garnered “protests demanding vindication after the brash comments” and Russell, described in the piece as a “champion of careers and career girls” responded.²³ Russell’s reputation made her uniquely qualified to contradict Sanders. “Typed as a career woman”²⁴ in her films, Russell’s “sassy career gals were a movie staple,”²⁵ which may have garnered a perception that she had authority to offer a counterpoint to criticisms of women in the workforce. At a time when many husbands still opposed their wife taking a job, even if only for the war,²⁶ Russell’s argument with Sanders might have even served as a primer for conversations women were having themselves.

²² Dora Albert, “Who Said Women Aren’t Men’s Equals?,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1942, 38.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ David Thomson, *The New Biographical Dictionary of Film* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 786.

²⁵ Andrea Sarvady, *Leading Ladies: The 50 Most Unforgettable Actresses of the Studio Era*, ed. Frank Miller (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2006), 169.

²⁶ Rosenberg, *Divided Lives*, 131.

Russell began by acknowledging that staying in the home might work for some women, but that other women needed livelihoods.²⁷ In other words, even though the patriotic war worker might have been the gold standard in recruitment propaganda, Russell recognized women who worked because they had to—likely a large group of her readers as later research would show that many women needed the money to maintain a “reasonable standard of living.”²⁸ Russell further alleged that women who seemed helpless and fragile were often acting and that men who perceived them as such ended up with women who were either “stupid and bovine” or “cunning, shrewd and conniving,” knowing how to put on the act.²⁹ Confident men, Russell said, go for smart and beautiful women: “A man who wants to marry a fragile miss is a man who is fundamentally afraid of himself. It is the intelligent, knowing, shrewd men who can put up with a woman equally clever.”³⁰ Russell’s tone reflected a larger frustration about perceptions of women’s equality and with women who were resistant to changing the status quo. Interestingly, Russell said that a confident man could “put up with” an equal woman,³¹ rhetoric that suggests equal women were something to be tolerated, not accepted or encouraged. Negative stereotypes of independent women still snuck into even the most impassioned arguments against the perception of women as the weaker sex.

²⁷ Albert, “Who Said Women Aren’t Men’s Equals?”

²⁸ Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 19.

²⁹ Albert, “Who Said Women Aren’t Men’s Equals?,” 39.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Albert, “Who Said Women Aren’t Men’s Equals?”

Russell went on to say that a “big” man wouldn’t mind “if the woman he loves wants a career in addition to her home,” especially since women were “clever enough” to manage both.³² Furthermore, women, given the opportunity, would undeniably show their value in the workforce:

Why talk about what women didn't achieve in the days when they weren't allowed out of the house and weren't allowed to study? If a woman of even the past generation had a grammar-school education and could sew beautifully, she was considered fit. Fit for what? To be a wife and mother! What else did a woman have to be? . . . Women helpless? They proved during the last war, they are proving again during this war how far they are from being silly, coy, childish creatures. Ask the men who run the war plants. Ask the men who manage the airplane factories. The man behind the man behind the gun is often a woman!³³

In this way, Russell indicted outdated notions that women were not as able as men to work. Society stood to benefit from the work women could do, Russell asserted—and thus offered a ringing endorsement in *Photoplay* for working women.³⁴

Reader Betty Lu Carwile from Salt Lake City also took umbrage with Sanders’s article and wrote in to *Photoplay* in October 1942.³⁵ Citing examples such as Catherine the Great, Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, the Bronte sisters, and Amelia Earhart, Carwile wrote that they were “equaled by men, but not surpassed by them.”³⁶ Perpetuating the myth that women were inferior to men was simply a way to flatter a man’s ego, she said. And Sanders himself? She ventured that he “must be either the most egotistical man in Hollywood or

³² Ibid., 39.

³³ Ibid., 78.

³⁴ Albert, “Who Said Women Aren’t Men’s Equals?”

³⁵ Betty Lu Carwile, “Speak for Yourself,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1942, 20, 104.

³⁶ Ibid., 104.

the loneliest.”³⁷ The response to Sanders’s article, from readers and from Rosalind Russell, indicates a backlash to the idea that women couldn’t or shouldn’t work.

Writer Helen Louise Walker also used Rosalind Russell as an example in her November 1942 article “Don’t be a Doormat.” Russell, Walker said, struggled at one time to win the parts she wanted.³⁸ Once Russell asked why, a producer told her she wasn’t the romantic type, a description that made the actress angry: “History doesn’t record whether or not the producer, faced with this lovely fury, hid under something. But it does record that Roz got her text, won the role and proved herself; and that things have been different for her ever since.”³⁹ The moral of the story presented here is that “every career girl must learn that she mustn’t be a doormat all her life.”⁴⁰ While getting along with people was important, a woman also had to learn how to stand up for herself.

The article also presented advice from Mary Martin. Martin encouraged the reader to “grab a chance” if a chance wasn’t offered to her, to “fight—even if you aren’t fighting for what you would choose to fight for!”⁴¹ Olivia de Havilland, according to the article, advised a secretary to speak up, helping her gain confidence. De Havilland herself had learned to fight for what she wanted while auditioning for roles in Hollywood. She had “stopped weeping on anyone’s shoulder” and had learned to stand “on her own feet and facing her own future,” attitudes that helped her stop feeling and acting like a doormat. “When you stop asking for

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Helen Louise Walker, “Don’t Be A Doormat,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, November 1942.

³⁹ Ibid., 42.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

advice, then you stop asking for sympathy, too,” she said. “You’re on your own. And it’s a fine feeling!”⁴² Walker also told Lana Turner’s story. Turner took a career opportunity she wasn’t excited about and used it to boost her position since she wasn’t invested enough to worry about messing up.⁴³

The article, however, did not only focus on the stars and their efforts to avoid being a doormat. The reader was encouraged to engage, to “look at the successful women you know and see if the rules these picture girls learned don’t apply to all of them.”⁴⁴ By offering the stars’ stories as examples of behavior to model and by enlisting reader participation, *Photoplay* advocated for women to take agency over their careers and goals. Despite the fictional pieces in *Photoplay* in 1942 that spun narratives about women suffering by pursuing a career or choosing love over work, new expectations about the ability of women to work and serve surfaced. As the war continued, those expectations were often communicated as both explicit calls to action by the magazine and some of Hollywood’s most popular stars.

Calls for “Womanpower”

As 1942 came to a close, the Magazine Bureau published a booklet for magazine editors titled *War Jobs for Women*, which outlined the ways women might work and serve for the duration. Enlisting in the armed services, working in the war industries, finding a job in the professional world and volunteering were all options laid forth by the publication.⁴⁵ “Every American woman wants to help win the war,” the booklet said. “The problem is how and where

⁴² Ibid., 98.

⁴³ Walker, “Don’t Be A Doormat.”

⁴⁴ Ibid., 99.

⁴⁵ *War Jobs for Women*.

to fit into that big word which is daily growing bigger—*Womanpower*.⁴⁶ The staff of *Photoplay* sounded the womanpower alarm, explicitly calling women to action in a variety of ways. Everything from blood donation—the magazine told readers, “Call yourself a loyal American only if you have gone through the same stirring experiences as these stars” who had donated blood⁴⁷—to salvaging paper—one article featuring Joan Crawford declared that the fighting men couldn’t “get along without waste paper” women collected⁴⁸—became fodder for *Photoplay*’s wartime messaging.

Readers often did not even need to open the magazine to get this message. *Photoplay*’s covers reiterated wartime directives and positioned the stars as stand-ins for the much-lauded war worker. On the July 1943 cover (Figure 4) Judy Garland posed as a “crop corps girl.”⁴⁹ The accompanying article said the image was “dramatizing America’s need for millions of women to harvest our country’s crops this summer.”⁵⁰ The cover story wasted no time in listing some of the ways Garland was active in the war effort, whether gardening, staffing the Hollywood Canteen, or wishing for the opportunity to go overseas.⁵¹ The article also used the growing wartime appreciation for comic strips, “among the most popular conveyors of cultural heroes and heroines,”⁵² to sell war work to readers. From 1942 to 1946, the number of monthly comic sales

⁴⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁷ Muriel Milland, “A Pint for Life,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, January 1944, 57.

⁴⁸ “Her Paper Goes to War...Does Yours?,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, February 1944, 72.

⁴⁹ “Cover Image,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1943.

⁵⁰ Sidney Skolsky, “Judy—Victory Model,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1943, 30.

⁵¹ Skolsky, “Judy—Victory Model.”

⁵² Hartmann, *The Home Front and beyond*, 189.

rose from 12 million to 60 million, while millions more readers followed their favorite strips in the newspaper or in comic books produced specifically for servicemen and women.⁵³ The illustrations that surrounded the cover story's text of Garland performing her wartime work (Figure 5), with their simplistic and straightforward depictions, capitalized on this affinity for comics and resembled a grade-school primer of good wartime behavior.

The Office of War Information requested that magazines choose women war workers for their covers in September 1943.⁵⁴ In August, *Photoplay* previewed this cover (Figure 6), explaining that "Washington asked our help in calling for women to fill certain civilian jobs to release more men for service" so they asked Olivia de Havilland to pose "doing a job Uncle Sam wants a lot of you to do!"⁵⁵ With her uniform and decals and her hair tied back, as well as the fact that her work is related to mechanics, the cover image calls Rosie the Riveter to mind. De Havilland also likely called to mind the reputation her films had built for her—one of a "soft-boiled sweetheart" in contrast to many of the iterations of the "treacherous woman" of "moral ambiguity" that were popular on the movie screens of the 1940s.⁵⁶ This very softened, feminine image of de Havilland in the mind of readers likely served the purpose of communicating a specific message—even the most delicate of women could work for the war. Despite the fact that the dramatized war worker de Havilland wore little to no makeup and is covered in grease, her presence on the cover associated femininity with war work perhaps even more than Rosie could.

⁵³ Winkler, *Home Front USA*, 39.

⁵⁴ Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 95.

⁵⁵ "Cover Girl for Next Month," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, August 1943, 94.

⁵⁶ Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 191–93.

In the accompanying article, *Photoplay* shared the story of shooting de Havilland as an airport mechanic. The article reminded readers who saw her on the cover that “thousands of men, unknown to her, unseen by her, are thanking her for what she is doing here. . . . They are cheering her silently today because she is, in this cover portrait, an example of what American women can do to help keep America, the land of these fighting men, alive for them.”⁵⁷ Other women were called to emulate the star, to devote themselves “to an industry that is badly in need” of their help.⁵⁸ Due to the war, the magazine said, one out of three working men had been lost to domestic air transport; the women readers could help the industry keep its power.⁵⁹ Importantly, the women were also encouraged to work for their own benefit—the industry would provide opportunity for training and advancement, as well as the “personal satisfaction that you are doing your wartime job.”⁶⁰

Photoplay covers also implored women to buy war bonds. Readers were encouraged to spend any spare money they had by purchasing bonds, which helped the government finance the war.⁶¹ Bonds graced the cover of *Photoplay* more often than most stars did. From the sample studied for this project, three covers—October 1942, August 1943, and July 1944—dealt with war bonds in some way (Figures 7-9). War bonds starred in coverage inside the magazine as well, leaving no doubt as to what *Photoplay* was asking the reader to do. And the stars were integral to this considering that “when it comes to selling war bonds, nobody can top Hollywood

⁵⁷ “The Men Behind the Girl on the Cover,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, September 1943, 19.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 79.

for getting people to open their hearts and their pockets books or staging their Bond-selling with glamour.”⁶² Stars sold millions of dollars’ worth of bonds; for example, in one day, Hedy Lamarr sold \$17 million for the government.⁶³ The stars held weight with their audiences, and the government used that to full effect when attempting to fund the war with citizens’ money⁶⁴—assets those citizens likely wouldn’t see again until war’s end.

Additionally, sidebars with simple reminders to purchase war bonds peppered several issues. *Photoplay* editors offered readers autographed portraits from stars in exchange for the purchase of bonds.⁶⁵ In December 1943, the editor’s letter included an illustration instructing readers to buy bonds and give them as Christmas gifts (Figure 10). The letter continued to highlight the stars’ efforts to sell bonds and offer an appeal for readers to buy.⁶⁶ Dorothy Lamour was quoted as knowing that she was “only a woman and . . . [couldn’t] enlist” but she knew she could sell bonds.⁶⁷ When she asked the president of Paramount for a leave of absence to do so, he helped arrange it for her with the Treasury Department, thus starting Hollywood’s bond-selling tours.⁶⁸ In fashion articles, women were discouraged from spending money on clothes because “the girl who makes last year’s clothes do can buy this year’s War Bonds”⁶⁹ and,

⁶² Cal York, “Inside Stuff,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, September 1945, 8.

⁶³ Yellin, *Our Mothers’ War*, 79.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 79–82.

⁶⁵ Fred R. Sammis, “Any Bonds Today?,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, May 1943.

⁶⁶ “Editor’s Letter,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, December 1943.

⁶⁷ Ruth Waterbury, “Close Ups and Long Shots,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1942, 17.

⁶⁸ Waterbury, “Close Ups and Long Shots,” November 1942, 4, 17.

⁶⁹ Sara Hamilton, “Put Easter in Your Clothes,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, May 1943, 58.

according to Rosalind Russell, “the bulk of our money should certainly go to buying bonds.”⁷⁰ A focus on bonds rather than fashion also likely served to shift the attention away from wartime shortages of metal, fabric and rubber that otherwise might have been used to make varying garments affected the available clothing.⁷¹ That same year, *Photoplay* editors awarded a \$10 prize to letter writer Naomi Levinson in Texas who encouraged readers to “join Hollywood in helping your husbands, brothers, and sweethearts win the war” by buying bonds—while also spelling out “Buy More Bonds” with the first letter of each line of her missive (Figure 11).⁷² The efforts of stars selling bonds were lauded, such as Betty Hutton, who the magazine said was only able to develop confidence and a sense of success after going on a bond tour.⁷³ Janet Blair was quoted as saying that the only way to bring servicemen home was “to buy all the War Bonds we can and pay our taxes.”⁷⁴ By channeling money into the government, readers were told, the war would be sooner won.

Victor Mature’s third bond drive inspired the article “So Your Man Can Come Back” in 1944.⁷⁵ He met the mother of a man named Ted, who was killed in the war. Mature shared part of a letter Ted had sent to his mother, in which he wrote, “There’s only one way to get this war over and bring your boy home—and that’s by buying war Bonds and Stamps not only with the

⁷⁰ Rosalind Russell, “Hollywood’s Best Dressed Woman,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, April 1943, 86.

⁷¹ Winkler, *Home Front USA*, 42.

⁷² “Speak for Yourself,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, April 1943, 14.

⁷³ Cal York, “Inside Stuff,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, January 1945.

⁷⁴ “Here’s Your Chance!,” 72.

⁷⁵ Victor Mature, “So Your Man Can Come Back,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, January 1944.

money you can spare but with the money you can't spare—by buying Bonds and Stamps to a point of sacrifice.”⁷⁶ The emphasis the stars in *Photoplay* placed on the importance of war bonds left little room for interpretation—women should buy as many bonds as often as possible to bring the troops home.

While the stars' efforts to sell bonds for the government were widely publicized, the magazine also promoted other wartime activities and passion projects that emphasized how the war effort needed attention from America's women. Joan Crawford wrote a piece that “no woman who is true to herself” would have been able to read without being “stirred to action.”⁷⁷ Crawford, whose mother had worked in domestic service and who had developed a drive to succeed from “living behind the laundry,”⁷⁸ wrote that she had been shocked by a newspaper story about “the army of little children, infants and pre-school children . . . who are being left without care while their mothers work.”⁷⁹ The mothers of these children, she said, “are turning out tanks and planes and guns for our fighting men” and the children who lacked proper care as a result were “just as much casualties of the war as are their fathers and brothers and friends.”⁸⁰ Severe childcare shortages, “latchkey children,” juvenile delinquency, and rising truancy rates were concerns that people associated with the rise of women workers during the war, especially during a time when “the prevailing assumption remained that a mother's primary duty was to her

⁷⁶ Ibid., 64.

⁷⁷ Joan Crawford, “These Lives Are at Stake,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1943, 48.

⁷⁸ Sarvady, *Leading Ladies*, 41.

⁷⁹ Crawford, “These Lives Are at Stake,” 48.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

home and children.”⁸¹ Magazine Bureau chief Dorothy Ducas recognized the need for childcare in order to free up women to work and serve; she also noted the role magazine editors were playing in advocating for this need.⁸² Crawford’s words tapped into these anxieties.

The newspaper story that inspired Crawford had shared tales of babies left in cars while their mothers worked, small children walking around with their names, addresses, and house keys tied around their necks, a baby murdered by its foster mother while its mother looked for a home, and a toddler who walked away and was presumed drowned while its mother slept after working the “graveyard shift.”⁸³ Rather than use this platform to admonish the working mothers, however, Crawford encouraged assistance for them. She thought of her own children and used her interest in workplace issues and childcare to help the American Women’s Voluntary Services to organize a nursery initiative, “not as a motion picture star, but just as a mother who knew of the needs of other mothers.”⁸⁴ She invited readers who believed “that our children, the citizens of the future, are our most sacred responsibilities in wartime” to take action.⁸⁵

Crawford continued the piece with instructions for the reader to start a nursery. She argued on behalf of working mothers:

There are those who fight the advent of nursery schools, clamoring that woman's place is in the home, that a mother of small children shouldn't be working, anyhow. But who is to say who should work, and who shouldn't? . . . And how many mothers are working because, for the first time in their lives, they can make enough money to see that their children eat decent food, wear warm clothes, have medical and dental care when they need it, and a chance in tomorrow's brave new world? Who are we to say that women are

⁸¹ Winkler, *Home Front USA*, 51, 58.

⁸² Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 38.

⁸³ Crawford, “These Lives Are at Stake,” 48.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

working for 'luxuries?' Who am I to begrudge women things I have taken for granted for years?⁸⁶

Crawford, here, specifically rebutted an expected argument that women belong in the home. The country had asked them to work, she said, and many more women would join the workforce before the war's end, freeing up men to join the service.⁸⁷ The job of women who couldn't make airplanes or fight was to "see to it that they can work with free minds and free hearts, knowing that their children are safe from harm."⁸⁸ While this article suggests anxieties about how children would suffer if their mothers worked in 1943 were swirling in the public discourse, *Photoplay* resisted the urge to use that as a reason women shouldn't work—rather, the magazine used it to call readers to action to help make work a possibility for women.

Actress Susanna Foster's passion was her work as a nurse's aide, and she wrote about her experience in the hopes of convincing readers to consider a career in nursing, "a wonder career for American women, one that will banish loneliness, offer personal triumph—and hasten the return of our American men."⁸⁹ A critical shortage of nurses arose with the onset of the war, which resulted in a 1943 act that established federal funding for the training of thousands of nurses and an increased acceptance of women of color in the profession.⁹⁰ Additionally, at the time Foster wrote this article, she had recently appeared in *The Phantom of the Opera*, a role she was well-known for and a version of the story that was "true to its 1940s days of the

⁸⁶ Ibid., 78.

⁸⁷ Crawford, "These Lives Are at Stake."

⁸⁸ Ibid., 78.

⁸⁹ Susanna Foster, "Cadets on Call," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, December 1944, 62.

⁹⁰ Hartmann, *The Home Front and beyond*, 105, 151.

independent, working woman” with the end focusing on Foster’s character enjoying “the rewards of her own career” rather than choosing a suitor.⁹¹ Her piece acknowledged the loneliness and confusion women waiting on the homefront experienced while highlighting the benefits of joining the workforce. Foster herself felt great frustration at the start of the war and said she threatened to cut her hair and enlist before a friend explained her work in film was important in its own way.⁹² She instead graduated as a nurses’ aide and discovered “the wonderful sense of satisfaction that comes from nursing” and “a wonderful opportunity . . . to heal and restore those who have been wounded in the service of their country—to guard the health of those on the homefront.”⁹³

Foster’s *Photoplay* article made clear she derived great satisfaction from her work as a nurse’s aide, perhaps rivaling her work as an actress. She recounted a time when she had to get plasma for a patient from another area in the hospital in which she worked.⁹⁴ Knowing the patient’s life depended on getting the plasma, she got the “thrill that comes from a sense of vital responsibility.”⁹⁵ This job gave her a sense of usefulness during the war, and she implied that women who enlisted as nurses would find the same satisfaction.⁹⁶ If self-satisfaction and a sense of purpose weren’t what the reader sought, Foster assured her that the nurse’s uniform was

⁹¹ Jeanine Basinger, *A Woman’s View: How Hollywood Spoke to Women, 1930-1960* (New York: Random House, 1993), 317–18.

⁹² Foster, “Cadets on Call.”

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ Foster, “Cadets on Call.”

attractive, that there was a high marriage rate for nurses. She added, “Nurses make fine wives and good mothers.”⁹⁷ In other words, a career and family were not mutually exclusive. This was a point Foster belabored, suggesting it was of importance to women entering the workforce. The messages women read in *Photoplay* were not always this explicit, however. Sometimes, the experiences and actions of the stars were used to subtly demonstrate the ways wartime women were expected to act.

The Stars Light the Way

With the upheaval of conflict looming over the nation, fan magazines often had to steer away from the glitz and glamour of Hollywood life to show their stars in a different light. As fighting continued overseas, “celebrity culture transitioned from promoting the fantasy of attaining massive wealth to one of shared sacrifice” and an “emerging sense of collectivism and focus on the greater good” began to take shape in fan magazines.⁹⁸ Time and again, examples of the work the stars were or were not doing, as well as stories about the working women they encountered were presented in the *Photoplay*, the sum of which was a primer on the necessity of, the benefits of, and the values wrapped up in war work and service. Some of that coverage warned against ignoring jobs that needed to be done. For example, one piece in 1944 provided a list of actresses, either praising or criticizing the work they had done for the effort. The article called Greta Garbo, an actress who had been well known for decades at this point and was

⁹⁷ Ibid., 119.

⁹⁸ Karen Sternheimer, *Celebrity Culture and the American Dream: Stardom and Social Mobility* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 95.

devoted to her privacy,⁹⁹ the “woman who has done the least for the boys in camps or in service.”¹⁰⁰

Adela Rogers St. Johns’s “Listen to Me, Alice Faye!” demonstrated a sense of urgency when encouraging women to consider duties outside their comfort zone for the good of the war effort. Alice Faye wanted to leave her career to be a homemaker.¹⁰¹ St. Johns, however, implored her to see her talent as irreplaceable, as soldiers looked forward to seeing Faye’s movies. While she empathized with Faye, the needs of these servicemen mattered more than the star’s wishes.¹⁰² Her words are almost presented as advice from a friend:

You're up against a mighty tough decision, my girl. You said it yourself—it's wartime. None of us is being allowed to do what we want to do. None of us can make any kind of move however big or little without figuring out first whether it has any bearing on the war effort and what part that circumstance plays in it. . . . So as you stand at the crossroads of your amazing decision, remember you're *not* just a mother and a wife and a housekeeper. You're a girl named Alice Faye who has sung herself into the love of the American people, who are now going out to a fight. You can't, you see, go back on that.¹⁰³

During the Depression, Faye had evolved into a symbol of “the American work ethic” playing characters who didn’t “[expect] good things to come easily.”¹⁰⁴ St. Johns’ admonitions to Alice Faye could be interpreted as a personal chastisement to readers resistant to step up in the effort and might have been especially impactful when a star recognized as a hard worker was on

⁹⁹ Sarvady, *Leading Ladies*, 69.

¹⁰⁰ Cal York, “Cal’s Inside Stuff,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, May 1944, 8.

¹⁰¹ Adela Rogers St. Johns, “Listen To Me, Alice Faye!,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, August 1943.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 82.

¹⁰⁴ Jane Lenz Elder, *Alice Faye: A Life Beyond the Silver Screen* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 7.

the receiving end of this scolding. The implication here was that the *right* choice is for Faye to put the country's needs above her desires. The way for her to do that was to work, contrary to what history and tradition might have dictated.

Unlike Alice Faye, many of the stars were framed as relishing their new wartime roles—if *Photoplay* was to be believed, that is. The magazine showed them as honored and joyful while serving. For example, images in the magazine featured stars such as Joan Crawford sorting waste paper, Shirley Temple spoon-feeding troops, and Carole Landis collecting clothing for children in Greece (Figures 12-14). Others touted their work overseas, ostensibly giving readers an inside look at the conditions troops and others faced an ocean away. Paulette Goddard wrote about her experience traveling to entertain servicemen; she was the first civilian American woman to visit the China-India-Burma Theater.¹⁰⁵ During her 12-week tour, she married Captain Burgess Meredith, also an actor. While touring, she tried to follow the lifestyle of the servicemen around her, “except for the sequins” on her feminine clothes she tried to keep.¹⁰⁶ Goddard emphasized both femininity even on the battlefield as well as the hardships of life on the front lines—she described how scary, cold, and exhausting this travel was and how it made her have more respect for nurses.¹⁰⁷ In this way, Goddard conflated femininity and the toughness they saw on the battle lines and praised the women who had entered into service as a nurse.

Lynn Bari also journeyed worldwide for the war. After visiting military hospitals and traveling 7,500 miles over the course of “Three Wonderful Weeks,” she wrote about her

¹⁰⁵ Paulette Goddard, “I Went to the End of the Line,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, August 1944.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁰⁷ Goddard, “I Went to the End of the Line.”

experience in 1944.¹⁰⁸ Despite less than ideal sleeping conditions and 16-hour days, Bari told her husband it was “the best trip” she’d ever taken.¹⁰⁹ The weeks were wonderful, Bari said, because “they had shown us the courage, the spirit, that beautiful, inexplicable something which makes our soldiers and sailors and airmen and Marines the best in the world.”¹¹⁰ Her service was meaningful because of the hardships she saw firsthand, not in spite of them—she understood the reality of war and was fulfilling her duty to the men fighting.¹¹¹ Bari talked of the soldiers’ reluctance to speak about the war, instead hoping to wax poetic about “home and family and girl friends.”¹¹² One medal-winning patient even changed the subject when Bari asked about his awards.¹¹³ Another patient commented that while the care given to the wounded was wonderful, “it isn’t half so wonderful as the spirit and the courage of the men it is being done for.”¹¹⁴ Going on tour and witnessing how “you can’t keep an America boy down” was “a privilege I shall always be grateful for,” Bari wrote.¹¹⁵ She described her service and war work as an honor to be grateful for. In this way, the work of the celebrities as well as the nurses and other women they encountered implicitly encouraged the women reading the magazine to join the cause, to serve or volunteer by praising the role models on the page and the worthiness of their work.

¹⁰⁸ Lynn Bari, “Three Wonderful Weeks,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, December 1944.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Bari, “Three Wonderful Weeks.”

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 29.

¹¹³ Bari, “Three Wonderful Weeks.”

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Of course, not only white entertainers felt called to work overseas for the war effort. Yet notably, when featuring an article about African American entertainer Lena Horne, *Photoplay* did not focus on her war work.¹¹⁶ Another fan magazine, *Modern Screen*, was the one to highlight Horne's contributions to the war effort. (It should be mentioned, however, that neither of these magazines featured Horne on their cover, while *Motion Picture* did in October 1944—unfortunately, it was a “gamble...considered high risk” and hurt sales, according to Anthony Slide, author of *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*.¹¹⁷) Horne, who advocated for African Americans to be portrayed as “normal” people in Hollywood as opposed to stereotypes, amassed a following of fans both black and white with her wartime movies.¹¹⁸ In the *Modern Screen* article, Horne discussed being pleased that she could be a “symbol” for African Americans.¹¹⁹ And while she sang for both black and white troops, she preferred performing for black military bases since not as many entertainers visited them.¹²⁰ Her proudest moment, the article said, was her visit to the Tuskegee Army Air School. She was thrilled “to see those three or four thousand boys of her own race, from pre-flight cadets to near-graduates, so young and eager, rising so gloriously to their first opportunity to fly.”¹²¹ She toured, talked, danced, and entertained, and at the end of her time with the men, the colonel spoke to the crowd and Horne:

“I’ve given wings to a lot of you boys,” he said. “You’ve proven that, granted the opportunity, courage and gallantry, the will and the power to learn, aren’t confined to one

¹¹⁶ Elliot Paul, “Naturally—Lena Horne,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, September 1944.

¹¹⁷ Slide, *Inside the Hollywood Fan Magazine*, 199.

¹¹⁸ Koppes and Black, *Hollywood Goes to War*, 86, 183.

¹¹⁹ “Dark Angel,” *Modern Screen*, September 1944, 73.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 83.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

group of people. In her way, Miss Horne proves the same thing—that charm and beauty and graciousness in women aren’t confined to one group either.” He turned to Lena. “Would you mind standing up, Miss Horne?” And he pinned the silver wings over her heart.¹²²

Maureen Honey writes about the effect of this. While the pin-up model might have “trivialized” white women, “this new glamorous image of African American entertainers [redefined] black womanhood to include sexiness, romance, beauty, courage, and passion.”¹²³ Yet Honey also notes that this “breakthrough” was “piecemeal, incomplete, and largely illusory” and that “the much vaunted new roles for women trumpeted by dominant culture propagandists were a joke for most African Americans looking for work.”¹²⁴ In other words, the coverage about Horne reflected changing attitudes but most likely to a much smaller degree than presented in *Modern Screen*.

As the mid-1940s commenced, however, the energy with which the stars spoke about war work began to change. As the conflict eventually wound down, the magazine hinted at shifting attitudes, and a larger conversation about women’s working roles after the war found its way to *Photoplay*. It indicates tension as the country grappled with which of these changes that had occurred over the war years would stick going forward.

After the War, Then What?

The war ended in Europe in May 1945 and in Japan the following September, and women who had answered the call to work and serve faced an uncertain future. Women’s magazines

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Maureen Honey, *Bitter Fruit: African American Women in World War II* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), 28.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 30–31.

“expressed the sense . . . that a time of transition was imminent.”¹²⁵ The recruitment campaigns that had urged women to step into the workforce earlier in the war had positioned that work as patriotic, thereby putting the emphasis on “women’s obligation to their country rather than the personal satisfaction of employment.”¹²⁶ By 1944, two million women who had joined the workforce since 1941 had already returned home.¹²⁷ While many younger women were ready to become homemakers after the unsettling years of war, many older women wanted to stay to earn money to support their families.¹²⁸ In fact, 61 to 85 percent of women surveyed between 1943 and 1945 wanted to keep their jobs.¹²⁹ For many, that was not to be:

It was inevitable that many of the women would lose their jobs—the defense industry was shutting down, and the employees that the heavily unionized factories were going to keep were the most senior, male workers. The enlisted men had been guaranteed their jobs back, and sentiment for hiring the men was so high that new male applicants were given jobs over women with seniority. The public relations machine that had gotten the women into the factory worked double-time getting them out.¹³⁰

The government, industry and the media were working to sell a return to the home to women. The content of *Photoplay* in 1945 did subtly reflect some of these brewing anxieties. Yet it also was a unique vehicle for the discussion of women’s roles outside the home. The stars themselves, of course, were career women and as such created a space that was fairly supportive of alternatives to the traditional path of domesticity.

¹²⁵ Walker, *Shaping Our Mothers’ World*, 97.

¹²⁶ Hartmann, *The Home Front and beyond*, 211.

¹²⁷ Jeffries, *Wartime America*, 102.

¹²⁸ Collins, *America’s Women*, 394–95.

¹²⁹ Winkler, *Home Front USA*, 62.

¹³⁰ Collins, *America’s Women*, 395.

For example, *Photoplay* asked actress Diana Lynn what kind of wife she would be in 1945. Her answer? “Awful . . . unless the man I marry likes things a little whimsical,” since she was unable to cook and not interested in housekeeping.¹³¹ While she said she did not care what her future husband’s line of work was, she did care if he was comfortable with her acting career as it was “part of her for the rest of her life.”¹³² Perhaps this gave voice to a resistance among women to go back to the home as the war was ending.

Another 1945 article suggested that divorced actress and mother Jennifer Jones wrestled with choosing between domesticity and career. She said she doubted whether she was a good mother, wondering if “a career mother is ever as good as the domestic type mother.”¹³³ Yet she offered an alternative point of view that perhaps assuaged some of the guilt a woman facing this choice might have felt, asking, “Do you think that perhaps the vividness we bring into our children’s lives may make up for some of the helter-skelter we bring, too, the having to dash away to the studio in the mornings, the going on location trips, and all that?”¹³⁴ Interestingly, her tone was hesitant here, yet perhaps this alternative to the myth that working women were a detriment to their children encouraged new ways of thinking.

A 1945 piece titled “They Might Have Been—” turned on its head any notion readers might have had that the female stars would have been homemakers if they weren’t famous. Writer Elsa Maxwell polled several celebrities, both men and women, to see what they

¹³¹ Diana Lynn, “Scrapbook on Diana,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, August 1945, 52–53.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 53.

¹³³ Rebecca Carey, “Jennifer Jones Speaks for Herself,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, September 1945, 116.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

envisioned themselves doing in an alternate life. The women's responses were varied. Lauren Bacall said she would own a dress shop, whereas Marie McDonald would have been a dress designer. Ginger Rogers had visions of farming, Paulette Goddard said she would have pursued dancing, and Joan Bennett described a hypothetical career as an interior decorator. Notably, this list did not affirm any assumption that women's options were limited—they had many choices.¹³⁵

Of the women interviewed, only Joan Fontaine mentioned an alternative life that could be interpreted as homemaking. She said she would like to be able to cook better food. Maxwell countered with a sarcastic response: "You don't mean, Joanie darling, that you want to bend over a stove so you can serve dinner piping hot, to your lord when he returns from the office, with your camellia cheeks flushed and moisture on your alabaster brow!"¹³⁶ Fontaine, after supposedly blushing, replied that she wanted simply to learn how to make some dishes better than her cook and create meals that her husband would appreciate.¹³⁷ Maxwell's mocking tone, at the very least, indicated that there was a contingent of people who were beginning to question and criticize the notion that women's primary place was in the home.

Finally, the conclusion of a piece of serialized fiction in the magazine hinted at a struggle for the delineation of women's roles in 1945. "It Had to Be You" by Katherine Albert told the story of three women who had journeyed to Hollywood to make a go at stardom. Jeannie had found success singing in movies, "but would have traded her fame any day for the vibrant love of

¹³⁵ Elsa Maxwell, "They Might Have Been—," *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, November 1945.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹³⁷ Maxwell, "They Might Have Been—."

Peter Blake,”¹³⁸ a relationship Jeannie’s mother Rosie had foiled. Gloria, a beautiful and scheming woman, had married Peter after his break-up with Jeannie, but was working to attract the attention of Paul, who had gotten engaged to Jeannie. Finally, Marian “would have sold her soul to the devil for her career in order to become a truly great actress;”¹³⁹ Jeannie was helping to facilitate her career. After Peter talks about enlisting and Jeannie’s mother sees Gloria and Paul kissing, Jeannie has a breakdown and spends time in the hospital. Marian gets a role intended for Jeannie as a result.¹⁴⁰

Jeannie, Gloria, and Marian eventually tour together to entertain the troops, with Gloria and Marian feuding for much of the trip. Unbeknownst to the trio, Peter is slated to escort them. During their time with the military, there’s an air raid, and Peter shuffles them around to protect them. While Gloria was terrified and was knocked out by Peter so she would calm down, Marian doesn’t show fear, but rather soaks up the whole ordeal to use in her acting later. Marian’s reaction shocks Jeannie—although she still has the presence of mind to swoon when Peter tells her he’s always wanted her, not Gloria.¹⁴¹

Afterward, Gloria turns over a new leaf and steps aside to allow Peter to be with Jeannie. Marian goes on to win an Oscar. Jeannie reflects on the two women:

All Jeannie knew was that Marian had frightened her and she thought, “People think Gloria is hard and that Marian is just an eager, ambitious kid. But Marian really is the hard one. Gloria is putty compared to her.” For Marian served hard masters—art and ambition.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ Katherine Albert, “It Had to Be You,” *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, April 1945, 60.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Albert, “It Had to Be You.”

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., 91.

The overt messaging in this piece is startling. The women in this story who are not focused on the love of a man and/or willing to sacrifice their career are casually subjected to violence and condemnation from the protagonist of the story. Yet perhaps it's possible to read this story against the grain. While Marian is portrayed as too ambitious and not warm enough, women reading this story could have also seen her as persistent and someone who would not give up on her aspirations—even facing dangerous situations bravely to make them a reality. In the end, maybe they imagined themselves doing the same thing and pursuing their new careers in a new world. The new world that readers of *Photoplay* now faced.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

“I went out and bought War Bonds, and I got into a defense job,

and I went without sugar, and gas and coffee. . . .

Thanks, Hollywood, thanks for showing us the path.

We’ll take it, straight to the finish.”

Dorothy M. Gibbons in Photoplay, October 1943

When picking up an issue of *Photoplay* during the war, a reader might have been searching for a review of the latest film to hit her local theater, hoping to find an entertaining yarn to help pass a few spare minutes, or checking to see what her favorite star had been up to recently. Maybe she found what she sought as she leafed through the pages of the magazine—certainly, however, she was exposed to overt and subtle messaging about womanhood during World War II. This project was conceived to examine what those messages were, as well as how they changed over time, to study how *Photoplay* reinforced and challenged ideas about women’s wartime roles, and to question what can be learned about women readers of *Photoplay* in particular and the historical audience generally. It adds to the body of literature about women, media, and the war by offering an in-depth analysis of one of the most popular fan magazines of the 1940s, a publication that relied on the cooperation of Hollywood and the government to create content benefitting the war effort.

In the pages of *Photoplay* between late-1942 and 1945, the concept of womanhood went through near-constant negotiation and renegotiation as the country dealt with a new reality. Celebrities, editorial staff, and readers themselves engaged in a back and forth as they navigated what these shifting norms meant. Femininity was continuously emphasized, reflecting anxieties and concerns about how to maintain it as new roles were explored. As Marsha Orgeron says, this quite possibly allowed the readers to constantly “negotiate their own identities,” as well.¹ While this study has not been all-inclusive—there were countless fascinating articles left on the cutting room floor, as it were—Carolyn Kitch astutely notes in her study of women’s magazine covers that, while not comprehensive, research like this is a search for patterns that demonstrate meaning.² The meaning attributed to the messages discussed throughout this project encroached on multiple types of content and echoed through the pages of the magazine, to a cumulative effect.

In Chapter 4, this thesis showed that messages to women about romance and love bounced hither and yon for the duration. Behaviors seen as exemplary earlier in the war when boosting the morale of the men heading off to fight was paramount, such as going on war dates, soon became the subject of intense consternation by the writers in *Photoplay*—and likely by the government officials sending frequent recommendations about coverage to magazines nationwide. Stories about the stars’ relationships became larger narratives about wartime romance, whether exalting a shining couple’s happy and swift wartime wedding or lamenting the downfall of a relationship due to mistakes made as a result of the emotions of war. Chapter 5

¹ Orgeron, “You Are Invited to Participate,” 8–9.

² Carolyn L Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 182–83.

took a closer look at the women who waited while the men served and examined the conflation of domesticity, making-do, and managing emotions with the war effort on the whole. Celebrities became a mouthpiece for the government's rationing initiatives and offered a deluge of tips and advice for the women "left behind" on the homefront. The content encouraged women to embrace independence, and while loneliness was framed as a common and understandable wartime condition, it was also considered detrimental to the war effort because it pulled women's focus from the important war work and service they were called to do.

As the men returned home, gender roles were once again thrown into question. Chapter 6 examined how *Photoplay* treated women who were working, volunteering, or contributing to the war effort outside of the home. The celebrities gracing the pages of the magazine were used to inspire women to sign up for service, volunteer work, or the job market or were highlighted as role models for readers. As working women themselves, these actresses were powerful role models, and, as the war came to a close, their varying degrees of domesticity created a different type of forum in a media landscape replete with messages for women to retreat to the home in preparation for men's return.

All of these chapters, importantly, highlighted messages that encouraged women to place the country's, the servicemen's, their family's needs above their own. It was no less than their patriotic duty. At the same time, however, there were many instances that allowed women to consider their own desires and encouraged their agency. Oftentimes, these texts carried more than one message, encouraging independence and a zest for the new way of things while at the same time weaving that independence and zest into the existing fabric of traditional roles and values or emphasizing the temporary nature of this new way, acceptable only for the duration. As the messages fluctuated from issue to issue—even from story to story within the same issue or

line to line within the same story—they mirrored the tumult experienced by women on the homefront, many of whom were thrown into new situations both upsetting and exciting. Likewise, they offer a lens through which we can see the tightrope walk the government and the media were performing in an attempt to harness womanpower in all its forms while preserving a perceived “American” way of life to which the fighting men could return after the war ended.

In describing the goings-on of famous actresses, *Photoplay* created Hollywood versions of the ideal wartime woman. The stars in the 38 issues studied were cast in one of their most critical roles to date—that of exemplary homefront soldiers. Or, in some cases, her opposite—the woman who failed to help the cause. This coverage, however, was not framed as playacting or fantasy, but rather as authentic looks behind the Hollywood curtain and in direct appeal to the reader.³ Actors were positioned as friends or sages, ready to dispense advice. They served as ciphers, onto which women could project their own experiences. They acted as town criers writ large, alerting women of the latest threats facing them and the country, and offering strategies for responding. Or they themselves became the examples—critically, overwhelmingly homogenous examples in terms of race—via thought and deed lauded by the magazine, or via missteps the magazine censured.

At times, it’s clear that the star’s cultural currency was used to emphasize certain messages. Career-gal Rosalind Russell was the one defending the equality of women against a man who insisted they belonged in the home. Pin-ups Anne Gwynne and Ann Sheridan expounded on the proper ways to impress a date. Plucky and brave Maureen O’Hara wrote, essentially, about keeping calm and carrying on in the face of fear. Onscreen personas were

³ For more about the authenticity crafted in celebrity coverage, see Barbas, *Movie Crazy*.

extended to the page, “personalizing” celebrities’ wartime messages and making them more resonant.

The coverage of the stars set forth ever-changing boundaries and became a space where women could wrestle with the anxieties and insecurities resulting from the war. A sisterhood of sorts, encompassing both the stars and the readers of *Photoplay*, formed on many of the magazines pages. All of these constructs of the stars served to reinforce certain ideals, values, and norms while reinforcing Hollywood’s place in wartime culture. Hollywood answered the government’s call during World War II to help sell the war to citizens on the homefront using star power. This project has shown that *Photoplay* likewise picked up the “phone” to spread the word about how women could step up for the war effort.

APPENDIX

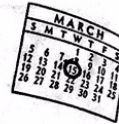


Figure 1. Hollywood personalities advise women on how to engage with servicemen, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1943, 54-55.



Figure 2. Gene Kelly shows Betsy Blair how to weatherproof for the winter, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, January 1944, 86.

Here's Your Chance!



—to find out, in a few minutes, how to do
one of the biggest things for your country;
to smash that personal income-tax bugaboo;
and to help bring your man back home!

THEY'RE doing this:



LAST year Marjorie Reynolds made a trip to Alaska to entertain our soldiers. Marjorie learned a lot from that trip. "After seeing what I did in Alaska, I would pay my full income tax in March even if I had to scrimp on basic living expenses. Nothing we can do will ever replace one day in the lives of those boys. Each day we delay on the tax adds one day more to the time they will be coming home. I want my husband, Lt. Jack Reynolds, to come home soon. Seeing the weapons and supplies our money buys makes me feel sure that paying my taxes on time helps in a small way. For each small tax adds up to a lot and I feel that I am being a good home-front American."

\$

ANNE BAXTER, too, feels strongly about paying her income taxes. They have no chance to sneak up on her for she is aware of the necessity to plan for them. "You see, my salary has always been budgeted. I have a small allowance for gasoline, lunches and things like that and another one for clothes. To meet the increased income tax, I cut down on my clothes allowance and raised my tax fund."

"Working in a picture with Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan, who lost five sons in the Navy in one battle, taught me that money is nothing. What can it mean beside the loss of five sons? The more I pay the better I like it!"



\$



SERGEANT LOUIS BUSCH is Janet Blair's personal reason for wanting to pay her income tax in time. He's stationed at Santa Ana and gets home to see his wife once a week.

"I know I'm lucky to have him near by," says Janet, "but I want to bring him home for good. The only way I, or any other American, can bring our husbands and brothers and sweethearts home as soon as possible is to buy all the War Bonds we can and to pay our taxes."

"I'd like a bigger apartment, but I'm not moving. Instead, I've figured out how much more rent I'd have to pay for a larger place. Every month I put the difference between that rent and what I pay now into my Tax Day fund."

YOU'LL want to know this:

WHO must file an income tax return this year?

Fifty million of us, including ten million taxpayers who have never filed a return before. Every single person whose total income in 1943 was \$500 or more. Every husband or wife, either of whose individual income was \$624 or more. Every husband and wife whose combined total incomes were \$1,200 or more. Every individual who paid or owed a tax on 1942 income. If your salary is liable to the withholding tax, you must still file a return, because you must get your books straight with Uncle Sam for 1943, and you must estimate your income for 1944 and the taxes on it.

WHEN must the return be filed?

On or before the 15th of March, 1944. But Uncle Sam says—please file before that date if you possibly can. Do it early!

WHERE can you get help in making out your tax return?

You'll get a statement from the government showing the amount of your 1943 tax, and the payments made on it and a sheet of instructions to aid you. You'll get a statement from your employer showing your earnings and the amount of tax paid under the withholding tax system. Deputy collectors will make field tours of plants, offices and shops to assist you in making up your return. Accountants and lawyers have been asked to volunteer their services, and they will be posted in banks, school houses and post offices to help you. Be sure, if you need help, to get it from one of these sources.

Figure 3. The stars talk about paying their income taxes, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, March 1944, 72.



Figure 4. Judy Garland poses as a “crop corps girl,” from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1943, cover image.

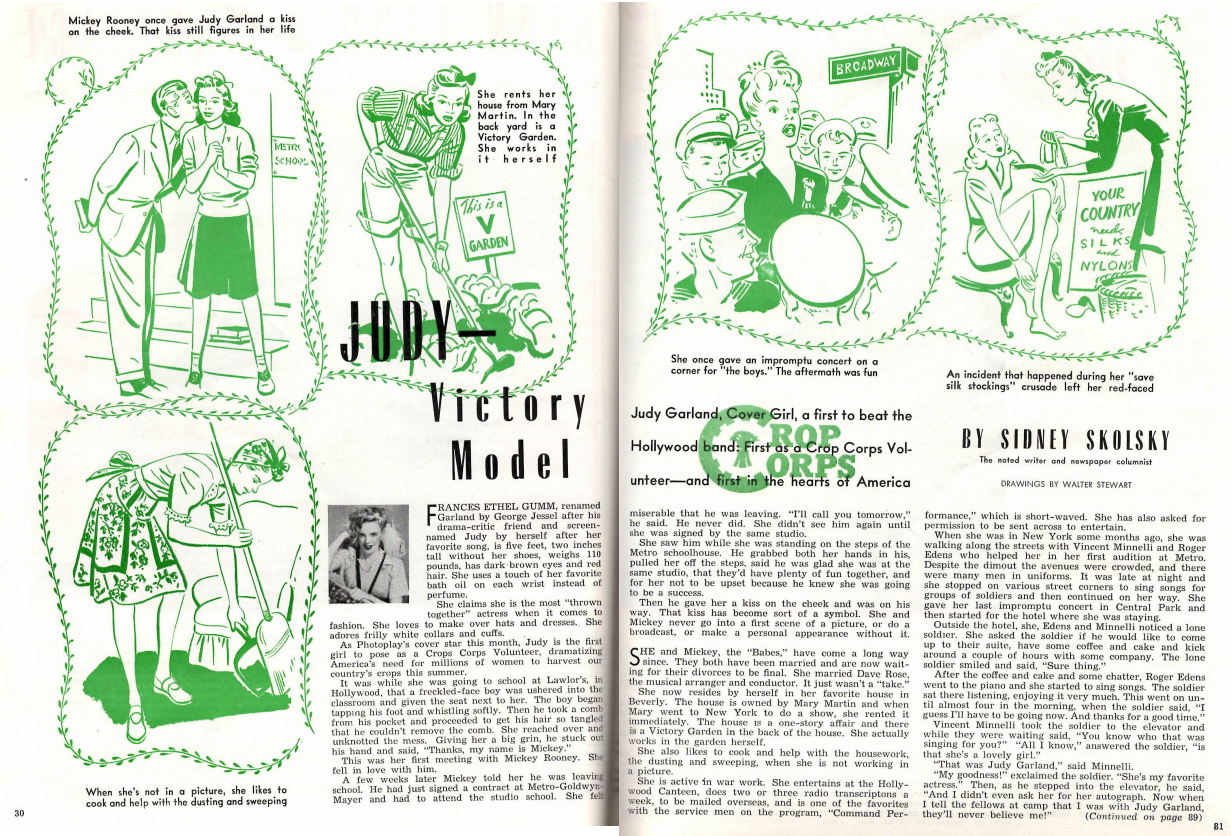


Figure 5. Cartoons of Judy Garland performing wartime work, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1943, 30-31.



Figure 6. Olivia de Havilland poses as a war worker, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, September 1943, cover image.



Figure 7. Deanna Durbin holds war bonds, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, October 1942, cover image.



Figure 8. Janet Blair puts money in the bank, with a war bonds poster in the background, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, August 1943, cover image.

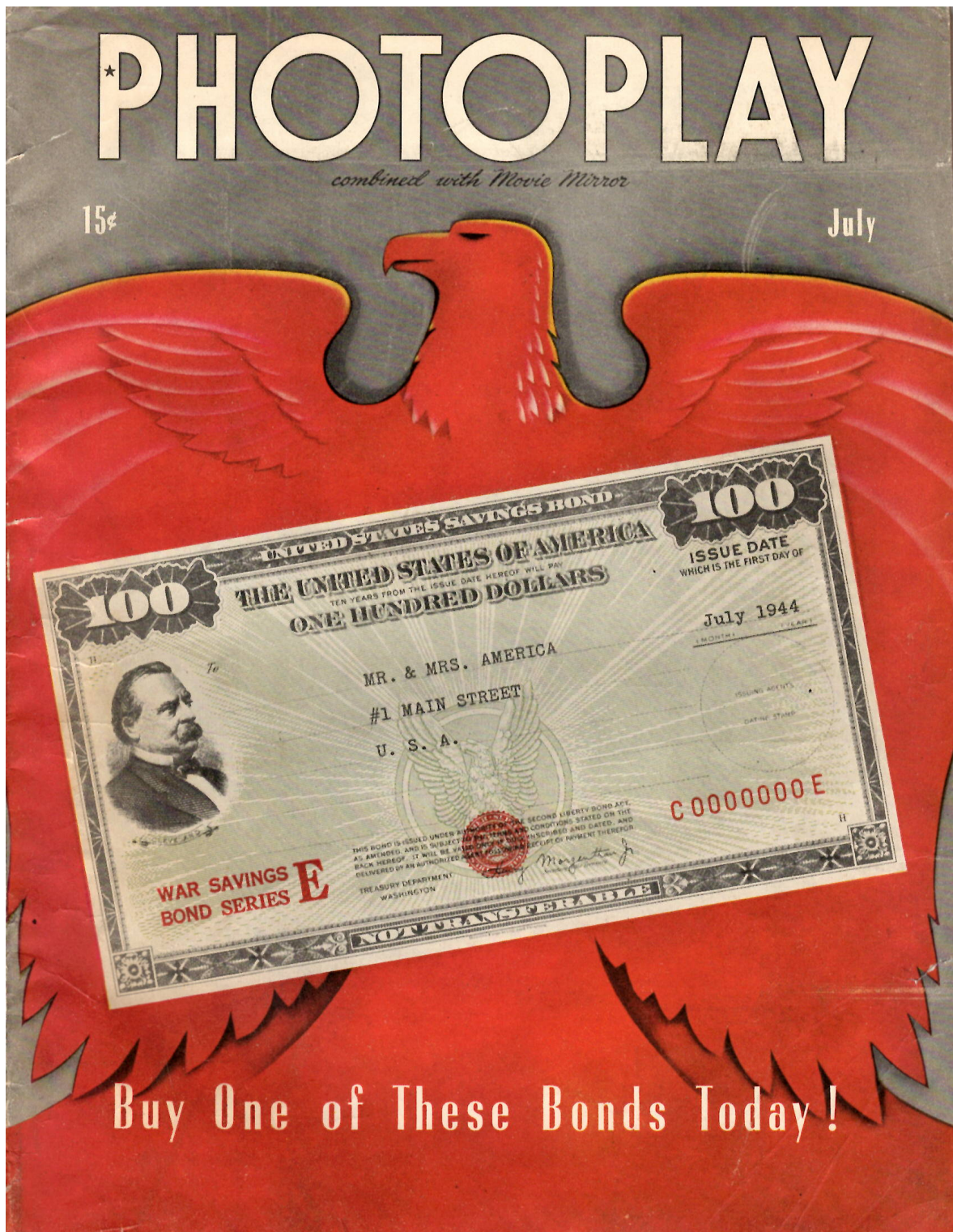


Figure 9. War bonds are the star of this cover, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, July 1944, cover image.

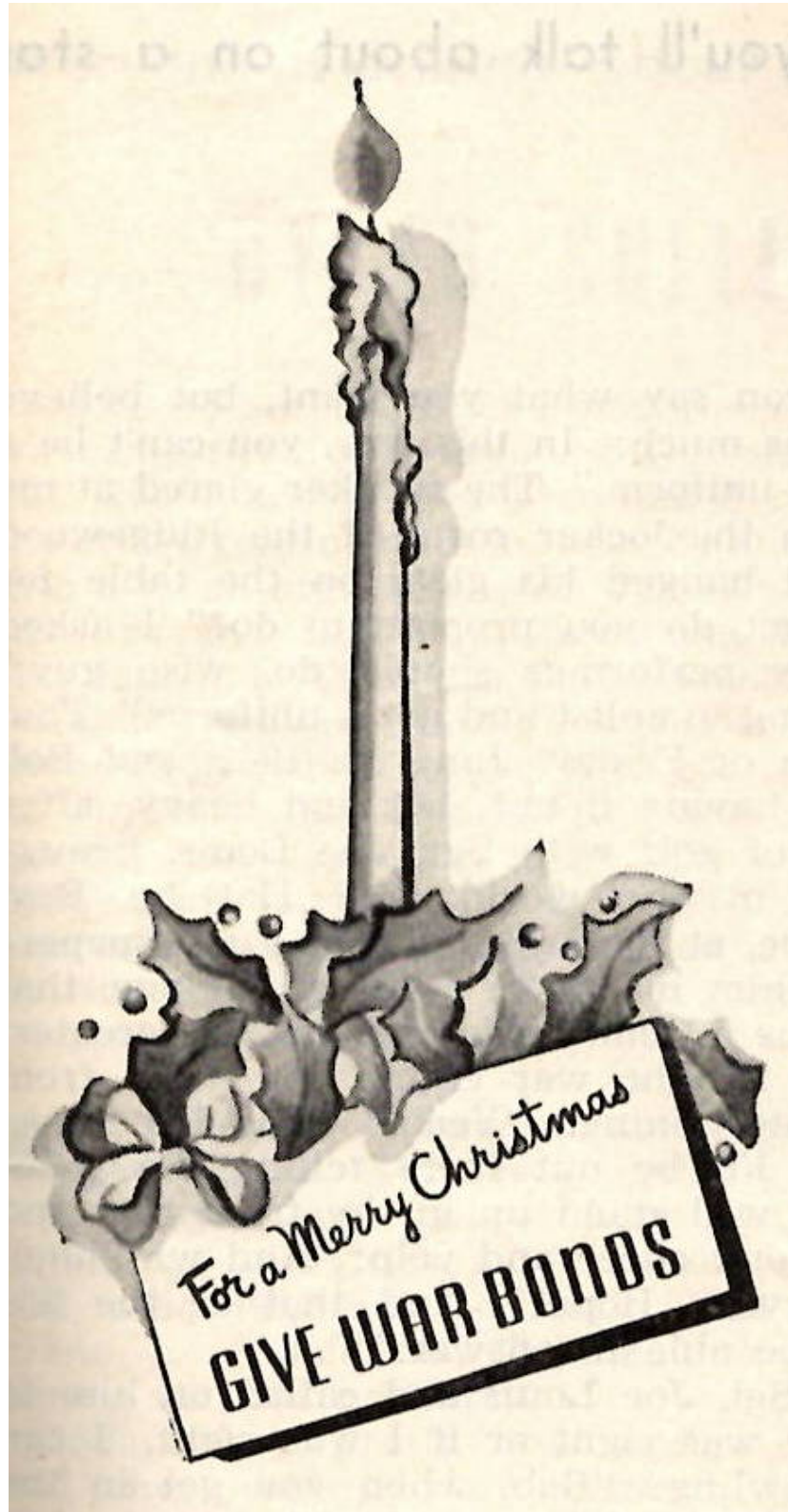


Figure 10. Illustration included with editor's letter, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, December 1943, 27.

\$10.00 PRIZE
Buy More Bonds

BETTE DAVIS'S wonderful work at the Hollywood Canteen has brought joy to many a service man.

Unusual abilities of Hollywood actors and actresses have been used for the entertainment of men at Army camps all over the nation.

You can thank the stars for their efforts on Bond drives by putting ten percent of your pay envelope into Bonds.

Men are giving their lives for you; what are you doing for them?

Only the best in entertainment is good enough for the American soldier, sailor and Marine.

Remember Pearl Harbor!

Every Hollywood personality is doing his part. Are you?

Bob Hope is a perfect example of Hollywood effort.

Only you, and you, and you, can win this war.

Now is the time to join Hollywood in helping your husbands, brothers and sweethearts win the war.

Dorothy Lamour has, perhaps, done more than any other woman in the sale of Bonds.

Sign a pledge today for more Bonds.

Naomi Levinson,
Kilgore, Tex.

Figure 11. A letter from a reader encourages others to buy bonds, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, April 1943, 14.



Picture of a lady doing the right thing: Joan Crawford sorting her waste paper for salvage

Figure 11. Joan Crawford sorts paper, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, February 1944, 72.

CAL YORK'S *Inside Stuff*



**From hand to mouth: Grownup
Shirley Temple helps bolster service
man's morale at Joan Crawford's home**

Figure 12. Shirley Temple spoonfeeds a serviceman, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, November 1944, 10.



Figure 13. Carole Landis collects clothes for children, from *Photoplay-Movie Mirror*, February 1944, 93.

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