

Beauty on the Job: Visual Representation, Bodies, and Canada's Women War Workers,
1939-1945

by

Sarah Van Vugt
B.A. Honours, York University, 2007
M.A., York University, 2008

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the Department of History

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This dissertation analyzes visual representations of Canadian women war workers during the Second World War, examining the intersections of labour, gender, beauty culture, bodies, media, consumer culture, advertising, class, whiteness, and sexuality featured in these images. It argues that without considering each of these themes, it is impossible to fully understand wartime representations of women workers. In examining these intersections, the dissertation highlights the power of visual representations and demonstrates the key roles of beauty culture and heterosexuality in munitions plants. By comparing images of women war workers in nationally-circulated magazines and advertisements, locally-produced newsletters from three southern Ontario war plants, archival photos, and newspaper coverage of the Miss War Worker beauty contest, this study shows that the beautiful woman war worker was a visual icon who symbolized the tensions, worries, and hopes around labour, beauty, and femininity, in wartime as well as in the postwar period, when war workers' presumed next step into white motherhood was of particular importance to the national project. Women workers were constantly encouraged and pressured to engage with beauty culture and participate in self-fashioning. Probing the relationship between how war workers were depicted and what

they experienced points to the power of images as well as the opportunities women had to exercise agency by pushing back against visual ideals as well as by emulating them.

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Introduction

“We Can Do It!” proclaims the image, featuring a young white woman, her dark hair mostly covered by a red kerchief with white polka dots, the sleeve of her blue collared shirt rolled up to show an arm raised, a fist clenched. Today, the Westinghouse poster created by J. Howard Miller in 1942 is the most ubiquitous representation of the woman war worker. An American image, it has become symbolic of feminism and women’s empowerment in the decades since the war. While this image is the most well-known and contains many elements characteristic of the iconic, glamorous “Rosie” imagery that proliferated during the war, ironically, it was not originally intended to carry a feminist message of any kind.¹ Instead, the image, which was part of a series of posters displayed for brief periods in Westinghouse plants, addressed both male and female wartime employees, encouraging them to do all they could for the war effort. In Canada, as large numbers of women joined the waged work force during the Second World War, an iconic, idealized, and beautiful image of the woman war worker became a key part of the wartime visual landscape. Canada had its own version of Rosie the Riveter: Veronica

¹ Note that the J. Howard Miller image was not always considered to be a “Rosie the Riveter” image – art historians consider Norman Rockwell’s cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* to be the true Rosie and suggest that the Miller version was mistakenly called Rosie. See Penny Colman, *Rosie the Riveter: Women Working on the Home Front in World War II* (New York: Crown, 1995), 69-70. However, other historians argue that Miller’s image is a Rosie image – see, for example, Meghan K. Winchell’s discussion of contemporary commercial uses of the Miller image in *Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun: The Story of USO Hostesses During World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 1. For a rigorous analysis of Miller’s image, a detailed comparison with Rockwell’s image, and a discussion of evidence that it was not intended as a feminist image, see James J. Kimble and Lester C. Olson, “Visual Rhetoric Representing Rosie the Riveter: Myth and Misconception in J. Howard Miller’s ‘We Can Do It!’ Poster,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 533-569.

Foster, employee of the John Inglis Company, became ‘Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl’ after appearing in a series of sexy promotional photos.²

In this study, I look closely at visual and textual representations of young, generally single (or certainly childless), white, heterosexual women war workers in Canada during the Second World War and explore ideas about labour, gender, beauty culture, bodies, media, consumer culture, advertising, and sexuality featured in these images.³ I argue that each of these contextual elements is necessary to fully understand wartime representations of Canadian women war workers because, while these images have been studied before, they have been examined in more cursory and compartmentalized ways. I analyze selected photographs, cartoons, drawings, and other visual representations, approaching them as visual texts; that is, to be read with attention to detail, to positioning, to authorship (when possible), to audience, and to overall meaning and impact. Examining images drawn from magazines, newspapers, war plant newsletters, and archival photo records, I unpack the visual discourse and consider differences between image, ideal, and reality, demonstrating that representation and performance are mutually entangled. A comparative perspective is used to analyze the body of images in question. I compare images produced for and consumed by different audiences, beginning with imagery featured in three nationally circulated periodicals and moving to locally-produced imagery from three different southern Ontario war plants. I

² For a closer look at several photos of Foster, see chapter 5 in this dissertation.

³ The iconic figure of the woman war worker was constantly presented as white. However, black women worked in munitions and industrial jobs during the war as well, although in much smaller numbers. See Dionne Brand, *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Women Working in Ontario 1920s to 1950s* (Toronto: Women’s Press, 1991), especially 20-27, as well as chapter 2 in this dissertation.

consider the relationship between these images and information about how some women war workers behaved. While the visual world is the primary focus here, I also connect the meanings and messages contained in representations of women war workers with actions and activities that women workers were encouraged to – and sometimes did – engage in. Exploring the relationship between how war workers were depicted and what they experienced points to both the potential of images to affect behaviour as well as the ability of individuals to exercise agency by pushing back against visual culture and by emulating it.

This dissertation considers a number of questions: what was the visual discourse created around the woman war worker? How were working women's bodies represented, with respect to gender, beauty, skill, patriotism, race, and sexuality? What patterns, meanings, and tensions are present in the images? In what ways were women workers encouraged to reshape their bodies or to perform femininity in order to reflect the visual ideal? How did ideas reflected in war worker imagery intersect with the lives and experiences of women who worked in war plants, or with the lives and experiences of other Canadians who viewed the images? Did workers ever look like the women in the magazines? Given their historical context, what meaning can we take from images of Canadian women war workers?

In visual and textual media, the Canadian woman war worker was regularly represented as a beautiful, feminine, white, and heterosexual person, whose wartime patriotism was expressed in part through her compliance with a binary definition of gender, her engagement with beauty culture, and her acceptance of heterosexuality. This

visual ideal spoke to anxieties about the possibilities for deviance perceived to be made possible and encouraged by women's war work. Women workers were viewed primarily through the lens of their bodies, and their beauty served as a marker of otherness separating them from male coworkers and emphasizing their erotic and reproductive promise. As white women who were explicitly framed as heterosexual, women war workers were drawn into national narratives about race and motherhood in Canada; part of the obsession with beautiful white women war workers stemmed from their perceived role as future mothers of the nation. The representations that reflect these qualities combine to create an iconic figure that connected to and differed from actual woman war workers. War worker imagery both reflected and *created* ideas about women, labour, gender, beauty, race, and sexuality. In other words, images of women war workers contained symbols and messages that were familiar enough to be comprehensible to viewers and readers while also conveying new ideas, steering Canadian society towards particular perspectives.

While there is a significant body of existing literature dealing with women and the Second World War, both in Canada and elsewhere, merging the analytical frameworks of beauty culture, body history, advertising and print media, heterosexuality, and visual analysis has allowed me to sharpen explanations of the visual discourse present in wartime imagery, and analyze the impact of this imagery.⁴ This dissertation, instead of

⁴ Body history takes as its subject the changing, historically specific bodies of those we study, and the processes of embodiment they experienced, in a wide variety of ways. Today, body history encompasses work on health, sexuality, reproduction, age, gender, food, sport, beauty, labour, race, and much more. For more on body history, see for example Lisa Helps, "Body, Power, Desire: Mapping Canadian Body History," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 41, no. 1 (Winter 2007): 126-150; Barbara Duden, "History Beneath the Skin," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 30, no. 1 (1991): 174-190; Kathleen Canning, "The Body as Method? Reflections on the Place of the Body in Gender History," *Gender & History* 11, no. 3 (1999): 499-513; Joy Parr, "Notes for a More Sensuous History of Twentieth Century Canada: The Timely, the Tacit

“filling a gap” by addressing a previously unstudied topic, deepens our understanding of women war workers in Canada. What makes this study unique is its comparative perspective, the engagement with new thematic and theoretical orientations, and the integration of new evidence.

In the following six chapters, I explore the intersections between gender, labour, class, race, sexuality, beauty, and the body, focusing in particular on the visual landscape of Canadian print culture. Chapter 1 explores the historiographical conversations relevant to my research, identifies theory applicable to this dissertation’s themes, and describes my research methods and sources. Chapter 2 provides historical background on women’s work in Canada and details the origins, locations, recruitment strategies, workforce demographics, and products created at the three southern Ontario war plants which are my focus: Defence Industries Limited (DIL), the General Engineering Company (GECO), and DeHavilland Aircraft. In chapter 3, I focus exclusively on the visual landscape, exploring advertising and other imagery that features women war workers from three magazines, *Chatelaine*, *Maclean’s*, and *Saturday Night*. I demonstrate that print culture, and advertising specifically, strongly connected working women’s *bodies* with beauty, femininity, whiteness, and heterosexuality. Making Canada’s ‘womanpower’ pretty framed women’s wartime labour as positive. Ads featuring women war workers used the message of positive, unthreatening white femininity, overt heterosexuality, and beauty to sell consumer products, both to war workers themselves

and the Material Body,” *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 4 (December 2001), 720-745. An excellent examination of the current state of body history in Canada is Jane Nicholas and Patrizia Gentile, “Introduction: Contesting Bodies, Nation, and Canadian History,” in *Contesting Bodies and Nation in Canadian History*, ed. Patrizia Gentile and Jane Nicholas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), especially 6.

and to other Canadian shoppers. This chapter deals solely with representations, providing critical context by detailing Canadian wartime visual discourses.

In chapter 4, I examine the way that beauty culture marched into Canadian factories, both in person and in print. Using war plant newsletters, I show that women workers' bodies were portrayed as powerful yet vulnerable. Newsletter articles, cartoons, and photographs presented women workers' interest in beauty culture as both necessary to maintain their femininity (which they were frequently reminded to monitor and relish) as well as threatening to safe plant operations. Uniforms and safety regulations were perceived to be gendered and challenging for the woman worker, who supposedly chafed at requirements to wear ugly clothing and cover her hair. War plants actively encouraged and facilitated a flourishing beauty culture among their employees, many of whom took an active part in these activities. Yet, looking *too* good could also cause catastrophe: safety cartoons proclaimed that women workers' beauty was distracting, and could lead to accidents. Women might disregard safety rules in order to stay attractive, and men might be too tempted by women's good looks to follow regulations themselves. Evidence suggests that, while some women enjoyed being able to bring beauty into their workplaces, others felt ambivalent, annoyed, or angry about the pressure to be pretty. Whether working women's bodies were presented as threatening or thrilling, newsletters show that they were a constant focus of attention in Canadian war plants.

Chapter 5 demonstrates that the iconic woman war worker was heterosexual, and that women war workers were constantly framed in terms of their sexuality. Drawing on war plant newsletters as well as magazines and archival sources, this chapter explores

heterosexuality as an unavoidable element of war plant culture; marriage and heterosexual romance were consistent themes. This chapter examines pinup culture in the war plant context, how newsletters encouraged flirting among coworkers, the constant visual framing of women workers' bodies as beautiful and appropriate objects of the male gaze, morale-raising as a woman's responsibility, and the foregrounding and celebration of marriages. The powerful emphasis placed on war workers' heterosexuality served both to buttress an image of Canadian society as built upon white, heterosexual families and to downplay and discourage alternatives, from alternate sexualities and gender identities to divergent family structures and wage-earning patterns. Implicated in wartime reproductive nationalism, women workers' whiteness and heterosexuality mattered; wartime imagery presented the ideal, beautiful, white woman war worker as a future wife – and future mother of a white nation. I also consider powerful silences in the archival records, including the potential for transgressive or dangerous sexualities and the likelihood of concealed same-sex relationships. Although some workers described plant romances positively, some even ending in marriage, others remembered wild or risky relationships, harassment, and unwelcome advances, confirming that the uniformly positive view of heterosexuality presented in print culture did not reflect everyone's reality.

The final chapter describes and analyzes Toronto's Miss War Worker contest and the related beauty contests held at munitions plants throughout southern Ontario. These beauty contests, in which women competed wearing their factory uniforms, were intended to prove that war workers were still beautiful and feminine. The contests connected ideas about what a woman war worker should look like with actual workers,

shifting discourses about femininity, beauty, labour, and gender from the printed page to the contest stage. I suggest that war worker beauty contests further solidified perceptions of women war workers as attractive, feminine, and unthreatening to the binary gender order, to heterosexuality, or to whiteness. Women war workers who participated were rewarded, both tangibly and symbolically, for emulating the appearance and gender performance that appeared in ads and other images. In this chapter, war plant newsletters, national newspapers, and archival photographs combine to help tell the story of the Miss War Worker contest – a beauty pageant which powerfully reveals both Canadian society's worries about and expectations for working women's bodies. While there are no oral histories of contest participants, quotes from contestants and winners in wartime newspapers and newsletters can be read carefully for limited, but valuable, evidence about their perspectives.

The glamorous, beautiful woman war worker was a powerful and meaningful icon in the Canadian wartime visual landscape. As an icon of femininity, she served not only to minimize tensions around gender roles during the war, but also to permit – and pressure – women to participate in and enjoy beauty culture, whether they were interested in it or not. The image of the woman war worker helped advertisers to sell both products and ideas, including the idea that beauty culture and war work must go hand in hand. Real women workers engaged with, ignored, and embraced war worker imagery in a variety of ways. In war plants, women workers were encouraged to sign up for beauty classes, to heed advice about keeping their hands soft and their hair shiny, and to appreciate their controversial uniforms. The woman war worker was a heterosexual icon, attracted to men and attractive to them. These qualities made her an integral part of

national progress towards postwar prosperity and stability, in particular as represented by the white heterosexual family. She invaded the wartime visual landscape, her body appearing before the eyes of Canadians in magazines, war plant newsletters, and newspapers, on the streets, in factories, and on pageant stages. I argue that images of the woman war worker contain multiple, sometimes contradictory meanings, and to ignore this multiplicity and complexity is distortive; while we can identify her constitutive parts, we cannot separate them or understand her without all of them. Further, all of these aspects of the iconic image of the woman war worker existed at once, and alongside living women who worked and beautified, or did not. Women's memories about the pressure to combine beauty culture and wartime labour, as well as the silences in archival and oral history records, contribute to a deeper understanding of the visual culture in which this pressure simmered. Images impact and influence people's lives and experiences. While some workers dismissed or resented the expectations that images created and communicated, others, from beauty contest participants to workers who became pinups to Veronica "Ronnie" Foster, Canada's Bren Gun Girl, engaged with, and perhaps even enjoyed, combining beauty and bombs. Reflecting the potential for both pleasure and pressure, the image of the iconic woman war worker tells us a great deal about how Canadian society understood gender, beauty, labour, and bodies during the Second World War.

Chapter 1: Historiography, Theory, and Methods

What role did gender play in wartime? How did ideas about masculinities and femininities shape media, government, and civilian responses to the war? These are weighty questions with which historians have productively grappled. Although to date there has been no focused and thorough study of beauty, labour, gender, sexuality, and the woman war worker, there are significant bodies of work in several areas of historical inquiry that provide crucial insights to support this study. This chapter provides historiographical analysis of existing related literatures, including histories of war on the Canadian home front, women's waged work, war and sexuality, popular and visual culture, and beauty culture. In addition to situating this dissertation historiographically, this chapter also describes the sources and research methods used and briefly highlights relevant theoretical perspectives. Since I argue that connecting several different subtopics is critical to effectively analyzing and understanding the woman worker, the broad exploration of secondary literature that follows provides essential context.

Historiography and Theory

I have built my study on the firm foundation of existing historical work. The study of women's relationship to the Second World War is extensive. Historians have considered the long term implications of women's temporarily expanded labour force participation and increased inclusion in the armed services, as well as home front sacrifices and family tensions. Others have dealt with women and sexuality in wartime, whether transgressive or "safe," as well as increased sexual opportunities that became

available especially to working women.¹ American historians, in particular, have thoroughly debated the impact of the war on women, gender roles, and power. Canadian historians have considered the tensions between supposedly changing gender roles and ideas about masculinity and femininity. While there are differences between the wartime representations and experiences of women in Canada, the United States, Britain, New Zealand, and beyond, there are significant connections as well.

One of the primary questions which has occupied historians of gender and the Second World War is whether the war was, simply put, good for women or not. Did (some) women emerge from the war having gained ground in terms of occupational opportunities, more equal pay, greater social influence, more respect, and more power? Since the effects of women's increased wartime participation in the waged work force have been a major area of sustained inquiry, they merit attention here. Internationally, historians of both British and New Zealand women's wartime experiences agree that there was more continuity than change. Penny Summerfield writes of British women that "...in spite of challenge and expectation of change during the war, continuity with pre-war attitudes and practices towards women was considerable in the areas of both

¹ On transgressive or dangerous women's sexualities, see Amanda Littauer, *Bad Girls: Young Women, Sex, and Rebellion before the Sixties* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Marilyn Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-wackies and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2008). On expectations around appropriate sexuality, see Winchell, *Good Girls, Good Food, Good Fun*. On marriage and love during the war, see Jane Mersky Leder, *Thanks for the Memories: Love, Sex and World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, 2009); Barbara Ladouceur and Phyllis Spence, eds. *Blackouts to Bright Lights: Canadian War Bride Stories* (Vancouver, B.C., Canada: Ronsdale Press, 1995); Ben Wicks, *Promise You'll Take Care of My Daughter: The Remarkable War Brides of World War II* (Toronto: Stoddart, 1992); Carolyn Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots: Canadian Women at War (1939-1945)* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001); Jean Bruce, *Back the Attack!: Canadian Women During the Second World War* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1985).

domestic work and paid employment.”² In her study *The Women’s War*, Deborah Montgomerie reaches strikingly similar conclusions, noting that while the war offered some New Zealand women unprecedented occupational opportunities, these new jobs were understood to be temporary, and wifehood and motherhood were still the expected “career” for all women.³

American historians have grappled with the same questions and have reached complementary conclusions. Karen Anderson’s early study of American women’s wartime waged work in Baltimore, Seattle, and Detroit pushes back against William Chafe’s earlier and widely accepted assertion that the war was a turning point for female empowerment.⁴ Focusing in particular on the ways that women’s wartime labour coexisted with and affected women’s domestic duties and family lives, Anderson acknowledges that there were small erosions in the sex-segregation of jobs.⁵ However, she concludes that shifts towards greater gender equality during the war were neither stable nor predictive: “Although the gap between normative expectations and actual behaviour had widened considerably during the war years, the war generated no ideological or institutional legacy that could aid in resolving the growing contradictions

² Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 1. For a similar conclusion, see Penny Summerfield and Gail Braybon, *Out of the Cage: Women’s Experiences in Two World Wars* (New York: Pandora Press, 1987), 286.

³ Deborah Montgomerie, *The Women’s War: New Zealand Women 1939-1945* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2001), 171.

⁴ This push back is in response to William Chafe’s interpretation of the Second World War as a liberatory watershed for American women. Chafe argues that the war had an unambiguously positive effect on women’s economic position even if there were still inequalities. See William Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 135-136, and 191 in particular. This perspective lingers today, especially outside the academy, where the idea that women gained economic emancipation during the war persists.

⁵ Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women During World War II* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 32.

in women's lives."⁶ Like Anderson, D'Ann Campbell argues that the war did not result in greater freedom for women. Instead, Campbell notes that women's increased wartime opportunities did not connect directly to the future growth of public feminist discourse beginning in the second half of the twentieth century. In other words, although the second wave of feminism was coming, it did not start with the war.⁷ In Campbell's words, "Gender roles – and, even more, gender identities – change in the long, rather than the short term."⁸ Sherna Berger Gluck, in her oral history of Southern California aircraft workers, similarly describes the disappointment of second wave feminists in discovering that their excitement about inspirational moves towards equality during the war was misplaced: "The more we learned about the wartime experience of women, the angrier we became about women's lost chances."⁹ Based on the experiences of those she interviewed, Gluck concludes that it is more important to consider the process of change in women's lives than the exact degree of transformation that occurred during the war.¹⁰ Although she places her study in contrast to Anderson's and Campbell's, her work suggests that many women were not able to capitalize on wartime gains in the aftermath of the conflict (even if the seeds of future change had perhaps been sown). While it deals with propaganda instead of experience, Maureen Honey's study further echoes Anderson,

⁶ Anderson, *Wartime Women*, 178.

⁷ D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 4-5. For a similar conclusion in the Canadian context, see Susanne Klausen, "The Plywood Girls: Women and Gender Ideology at the Port Alberni Plywood Plant, 1942-1991," *Labour/Le Travail* 41 (Spring 1998), 199-235.

⁸ Campbell, *Women at War*, 236.

⁹ Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston, MA: Twayne, 1987), x.

¹⁰ In other words, while wartime experiences were highly influential in the lives of some individual women, the struggle for the liberation of women in America was not the direct result of the war.

Campbell, and Gluck's conclusions about the limited transformative potential of the war, concluding that the focus on women workers' sexuality shows that women's involvement in masculine jobs did not signal meaningful shifts in ideas about gender.¹¹ Wartime change, then, was temporary.

Anderson, Campbell, and Gluck focused on women's experiences as workers on the home front. Other scholars have considered how women came to occupy war jobs in the first place. Both Leila Rupp and Maureen Honey's work explores the process of convincing both the American public and American women themselves that waged work, often in 'masculine' settings, was an appropriate activity for greater numbers of women than ever before. Comparing American and German propaganda images, Rupp explains that "Public images reflect sex roles, but the two concepts are not identical. Sex roles are based on deeply rooted beliefs about male and female nature, while public images are susceptible to rapid change in response to economic need."¹² In the United States, she shows, public images were quickly and purposefully overhauled in order to recruit much needed women workers into industry. While Rupp concentrates on propaganda featuring "housewives-turned-factory-worker[s]," which seemed to be a critical demographic in the American context, images of young, single, childless women workers (a group which are neglected in Rupp's study) dominate the Canadian imagery.¹³

¹¹ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda During World War II* (Amherst: University of Amherst Press, 1984), 114.

¹² Leila Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939-1945* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 4-5.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 143.

Rupp's commitment to the importance of studying images indicates that my work builds on a long legacy of valuing the visual.¹⁴ As she recognizes, images of women alone cannot necessarily tell us about their experiences, and women may not try to "live up to what is expected of them [...] But if they do not, they must generally be aware that their behavior does not correspond to their public image."¹⁵ In other words, images reveal both expectations and understandings. Even if our historical subjects did not accept or emulate how they were portrayed, images announce and disseminate ideas in ways that have powerful consequences. Maureen Honey, whose research also focuses on the role of imagery in the mobilization of women for wartime labour in America, concurs: in her study of propaganda images and fiction in two magazines, she argues that the ways in which women were represented contributed directly to the success of their recruitment for war work. Jane Waller and Michael Vaughan-Rees, studying British women's magazines during the war, begin with the premise that magazines "reflected – and attempted to influence – the roles that women were playing in real life."¹⁶ Even if women workers did not choose to mimic the advertisements that featured them, both they and other readers understood the messages being communicated: "Popular culture must, to some extent, reflect the assumptions, fantasies, and values of consumers in order to be commercially successful."¹⁷ Like cultural theorist Stuart Hall, Honey shows that in order to be successful, media must use a language that can be understood by both creators and

¹⁴ Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 6-7.

¹⁵ Ibid., 6. On how to handle the type of information "experience" provides to historians, see also Joan W. Scott, "The Evidence of Experience," *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (Summer 1991): 773-797.

¹⁶ Jane Waller and Michael Vaughan-Rees, *Women in Wartime: The Role of Women's Magazines 1939-1945* (London: Macdonald Optima, 1987), 6.

¹⁷ Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 10.

viewers.¹⁸ My study relies on this premise as well. Although images cannot tell us everything about the experience of working during the war, they can tell us a great deal about the visual and ideological world in which people lived and moved. In a recently published study, Tawyna Adkins Covert sums this up nicely: “While it cannot be said that images are equivalent to experiences, mass media images allow us to examine prevailing social norms regarding acceptable roles for women in the larger society.”¹⁹ Even in a wartime context less visually saturated than today’s, pictures and popular culture were part of people’s lives, and they had the power to influence behaviour and shape perception.

Increasing scholarly recognition of the powerful role of pictures and popular culture in the history of gender and the Second World War is signalled by more recent American publications. Both Adkins Covert and Melissa McEuen’s research builds on earlier work by Rupp and Honey that highlights photographs, advertising, and print culture as sources key to understanding gender during the war.²⁰ Joanne Meyerowitz’s research on pinup and cheesecake images, sexual boundaries, gender, and audience in the postwar period shows that these themes continue to be relevant outside of wartime.²¹

¹⁸ Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 1-6.

¹⁹ Tawyna Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images: World War II Mobilization of Women Through Magazine Advertising* (Lanham, MD.: Lexington Books, 2011), xi-xiii.

²⁰ Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images*; Melissa A. McEuen, *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011); Leila, Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*; Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*. For another aspect of wartime print culture, see Donna Knaff’s excellent work on comics, cartoons, and graphic art in *Beyond Rosie the Riveter: Women of World War II in American Popular Graphic Art* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012).

²¹ Joanne Meyerowitz, “Women, Cheesecake, and Borderline Material: Responses to Girlie Pictures in the Mid-Twentieth-Century U.S.,” *Journal of Women’s History* 8, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 9-35.

Adkins Covert's study considers government documents alongside advertisements in order to explore the relationship between government, business, and media in mobilizing American women. Approaching this history from a sociological perspective, Adkins Covert concludes that Rosie the Riveter is not just an icon, but "a class-specific, gendered representation of women consciously constructed by government and media officials to redefine acceptable roles for women during a time of political crisis."²² Ultimately, she argues, even though the iconic images of the period might contain transgressive elements, they relied on ideas about the "traditional family" that reduced their sting. Adkins Covert's study underscores the intentionality of wartime images of women; they were designed to produce specific behaviours and associate positive qualities with certain ideas, but, they did not transform understandings of gender.²³ Analyzing 6041 ads does give her study impressive range: the ads have been "coded for company, product, product type, presence and type of war reference, number of men, women, and children in ad, presence of celebrities, and postwar references," and an array of tables comparing each of these ad features is presented. However, counting and categorizing are not ideal methods of analysis of source material that is as narratively dense and visually complex as that which she examined. The limited nature of her corresponding qualitative analysis and lack of attention to continuities in the visual landscape beyond magazines hampers her ability to fully explore the meanings of the advertisements she considers.

In contrast, Melissa McEuen's recent study *Making War, Making Women* approaches advertising in a thorough, perceptive, and qualitative way, dealing

²² Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images*, 149.

²³ *Ibid.*, 156-157.

specifically with American ad images featuring beauty and femininity on the home front. She considers colour cosmetics, the fetishization of legs and hands, hygiene, clothing, and feminine behaviour, all areas that have previously received little scholarly attention. In her elegantly written and well-argued study, McEuen “probes the relationship between gender and patriotic duty, attempting to illuminate the ways in which archetypes of femininity jostled the lives of actual women at a decisive cultural moment in the American past.”²⁴ McEuen aligns herself with generations of historians of women and the Second World War before her, arguing that maintaining ideas about ‘ideal womanhood’ helped to ease tensions arising from what Canadian historian Ruth Roach Pierson calls “wartime jitters over femininity.”²⁵ McEuen builds productively on existing arguments, by moving beyond the idea that advertisements and images are influential but of limited use, since they are not necessarily reflective of reality. McEuen reminds us that real women reacted to ads and images in diverse ways:

...women were wheedled, begged, and adored on one hand, and caricatured, criticized, and discounted on the other. Some women felt overwhelmed, while others were amused. Many found the assorted images to be means of empowerment. A web of subtle hints, direct instructions, and sensational warnings offered them guidance—to take or leave at their own or their nation’s peril.²⁶

Overall, McEuen’s close attention to and description of specific ads, and the powerful visual messages they communicated, connects the study of women and the Second World War solidly with the histories of beauty and the body. However, since her study covers all women on the American home front, war workers are addressed only briefly.

²⁴ McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*, 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 1; Ruth Roach Pierson, “*They’re Still Women After All*”: *The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), 129-168.

²⁶ McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*, 2.

McEuen's study offers a shrewd and rigorous analysis of wartime beauty culture in America.

Canadian historians have also studied the Second World War through a gendered lens, and their work provides an important backdrop for my own. Two collections of primary sources and oral history evidence offer historians glimpses of women's experiences: Jean Bruce's *Back the Attack!* and Carolyn Gossage's *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots* both provide a useful entry into the subject in the Canadian context.²⁷ Because their works sample a broad variety of wartime experiences, though, in-depth analysis is missing. Canadian labour historians, including Joan Sangster, Pamela Sugiman, Susanne Klausen, and Takaia Larsen have explored the experiences of women workers in specific industries other than munitions during the war, revealing both the particular challenges and special opportunities women faced as they were recruited to work in normally male-dominated contexts in unusually large numbers.²⁸ Generally, these historians have focused on women workers' experiences rather than the images that shaped public attitudes towards them. Some, including Sangster and Sugiman in particular, give brief attention to femininity and beauty culture. Although it tackles a

²⁷ Bruce, *Back the Attack!*; Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*.

²⁸ Joan Sangster, "'Queen of the Picket Line': Beauty Contests in the Post-World War II Canadian Labor Movement, 1945-1970," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas* 5, no. 4 (2008): 83-106; Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Postwar Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Pamela Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada, 1937-1979* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994); Klausen, "The Plywood Girls"; Takaia Larsen, "Sowing the Seeds: Women, Work and Memory in Trail, British Columbia During and After the Second World War" (Master's Thesis, University of Victoria, 2007). For women workers in banking and munitions during the First World War, see Kori Street, "Bankers and Bomb Makers: Gender Ideology and Women's Paid Work in Banking and Munitions during the First World War in Canada" (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 2001) and Kori Street, "Patriotic, Not Permanent: Attitudes about Women's Making Bombs and Being Bankers," in *A Sisterhood of Suffering and Service: Women and Girls of Canada and Newfoundland During the First World War*, eds. Sarah Glassford and Amy Shaw (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012).

relatively limited historical question, Emily Spencer's study of Canadian women's appearance in *Chatelaine* magazine during the war also merits recognition and identifies some important themes related to the textual representations of women during the war. Pointing out that Canadian women were encouraged to see maintaining their bodily beauty as their contribution to the war effort (since men were fighting for a future that included attractive women), Spencer argues that, "*Chatelaine's* wartime message was clear: Canadian women should look their best while supporting their men."²⁹ Despite her contention that qualitative methods are appropriate for magazine sources, she fails to describe her own research methodology.³⁰ It is unclear how she chose to sample, select, and study the images and text in *Chatelaine's* wartime issues. Overall, Spencer's single chapter on women workers demonstrates that femininity, rather than "professionalism," was emphasized in *Chatelaine* throughout the war years.³¹ While her study is a useful guide to some important visual themes in wartime Canadian print culture, her attention to women working in the war industry specifically is limited.³²

The signpost study, however, is Ruth Roach Pierson's "*They're Still Women After All*," a book which influenced my thinking about gender, beauty, and war in Canada at an early stage of my own research. In her examination of Canadian women in wartime,

²⁹ Emily Spencer, *Lipstick and High Heels: War, Gender and Popular Culture* (Winnipeg: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007), 2-3.

³⁰ For a paragraph on studies that use qualitative methods well, see Spencer, *Lipstick and High Heels*, 22-23.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

³² For a slightly different approach to advertising images of Canadian women workers in *Chatelaine* during the war, see Heather Molyneaux, "Temporary Heroes 'In the Service of Mars': Women in Uniform, Factories, and the Kitchen During World War II," in *Heroes of Film, Comics and American Culture: Essays on Real and Fictional Defenders of Home*, ed. Lisa M. DeTora (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Company, 2009), 77-95. See also Heather Molyneaux, "The Representation of Women in *Chatelaine* Magazine Advertisements: 1928-1970" (Master's Thesis, University of New Brunswick, 2002), especially chapter 4.

Pierson argues convincingly that, as in America, wartime shifts in ideas about gender were cast aside at the end of the conflict. Further, Pierson demonstrates that much of the wartime tension in home front Canada stemmed from fears about how the recruitment of large numbers of women to work in war industries, as well as in the armed services, could undermine the dominance of patriarchal power. Her study explores Canadian society's discomfort with wartime changes, arguing that women's appearance was a key cause for concern since it might indicate broader transformations: "the fear of the loss of femininity occasioned during the Second World War by the sight of women in uniform or slacks and bandanas betokened a fear of structural changes in the sex/gender system."³³ The concept of "wartime jitters over femininity," the subject of chapter 4 in Pierson's book, kindled my thinking about the centrality of women's *bodies* to public debates about the struggle and sacrifices of war on the home front during and after the conflict, in part because the "jitters over femininity" seemed to be just as much about masculinity, power, and performance. As Pierson shows, Canadians wondered: if women usurped men's roles, either occupational, domestic, or sexual, what would become of men? Would they be forced to take up the domestic roles that women had previously occupied? Would male breadwinner and female homemaker roles be eroded or destroyed?³⁴ These possibilities seemed to be extremely threatening to Canadian society at the time.

Although Pierson focuses on women in the armed forces, and in particular on the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC), she argues that, during the war, ideas about gendered identities, bodies, and sexuality were in flux. As Pierson puts it, "The

³³ Pierson, *They're Still Women*, 20.

³⁴ For more on the theme of transgressive masculinity, see chapter 5 in this dissertation.

preoccupation with preserving women's sexual respectability, like the preoccupation with preserving women's femininity, was triggered by war's destabilizing of gender relations and both reflected and reinforced prevailing definitions of womanhood."³⁵ There is limited evidence in Pierson's work that women in the CWAC were resisting prewar gendered norms or taking advantage of the flexible social conditions of wartime to expand the boundaries of femininity or heterosexuality. The loud public concern about the morality, respectability, femininity, and attractiveness of women in the Canadian armed services, as Pierson argues, dominated the conversation about worrisome wartime sexualities, and yet seemed to have been motivated more by fears about the potential for widespread non-marital sex than its actual existence. There is some evidence in other studies of women war workers' experiences that some women engaged in more or different sexual activity than they might have if not for the war.³⁶ However, as Pierson indicates, literature focusing on women's role in spreading VD focused squarely on civilian sex trade workers, who were not represented as war workers or military women.³⁷ Instead, it seems that the anxieties stemmed from the mere possibility that changes in gendered and sexual behaviour could result from the transformations wrought by wartime, whether those changes were actually occurring or not.³⁸

³⁵ Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 168.

³⁶ Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*; Bruce, *Back the Attack!*; Endicott, "Woman's Place (was) Everywhere." See also Chapter 5 in this dissertation.

³⁷ Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 210.

³⁸ For example, I have not found any evidence that women's masculine-ish wartime working apparel was eroticized *because* it was masculine. It is possible that it was attractive to some, but it is not something I have found. In her work on fashion in wartime Britain, Pat Kirkham argues that even though women's clothing may have shifted to include more masculine elements during the war, this did not result in a lack of femininity. She also maintains that the hypermasculinity of men's military uniforms meant that women's wear could be a little bit more masculine than it had previously been while still differing significantly from men's clothing. Pat Kirkham, "Fashioning the Feminine: Dress, Appearance and Femininity in Wartime

As Jennifer Stephen, historian of the welfare state, puts it in her book on gender, employability, and domesticity during the war years, “The official consensus was that a healthy democracy depended on happy homes.”³⁹ For Pierson, definitions of happy homes depended on the presence of women perceived to be feminine and attractive – and wartime labour was perceived to threaten the existence of those women. While Pierson considers this in terms of jobs (waged work versus domestic work), I am interested in how it affected ideas about women workers’ bodies: if women were no longer “feminine” in appearance, how would that affect the dominance of the gender binary, patriarchy, and heterosexuality? How was feminine appearance defined? What efforts were made to code the female war worker’s body as feminine despite its threatening markers? Although she acknowledges the war worker, Pierson pays more attention to women enlisted in the armed services. Her study, published first in 1986 and reprinted in 1990, did not benefit from the tools of visual analysis and the theoretical orientation towards body history that are now available. The Canadian historiographical landscape is ripe for a nuanced, detailed, and close study of the women war workers who became symbols of the war effort.

Britain,” in *Nationalising Femininity: Culture, Sexuality and British Cinema in the Second World War*, eds. Christine Gledhill and Gillian Swanson (New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), 152-174.

³⁹ Jennifer Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl: Employability, Domesticity, and the Gendering of Canada’s Welfare State, 1939-1947* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 8. Stephen’s book deals primarily with the “psychological, economic and managerial techniques” used to bring women *into* war jobs (including in the armed services), and then to push them back *out* again at the end of the war, in the context of the burgeoning welfare state. Stephen’s argument that a central goal of government policy was a postwar Canada characterized by full male employment and women at home raising families supports my contention about the perceived importance of maintaining women’s femininity and physical attractiveness to heterosexual men – women who were attractive to men would lead to marriages and families. See in particular Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl*, 209.

Despite its widely recognized importance, Pierson's study has not been uniformly accepted. In *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, Jeff Keshen argues that even though there were limits to any expansion of women's rights and opportunities during the war, some valuable progress was still made. Keshen reminds us that women workers *were* praised for their skills and willingness to labour, that many women felt pride in their wartime accomplishments, and that, although some women were pushed out of the waged workforce at the end of the conflict, others chose to leave willingly. Keshen's position is that all of these changes were significant and meaningful: "too much had changed for too many women to permit a return to the antebellum status quo."⁴⁰ I appreciate Keshen's efforts to unearth and celebrate women's wartime accomplishments, and his attempt to provide a more 'balanced' account of their experiences. However, his analysis downplays the tone of condescension in many wartime messages of congratulations to women. Celebrating women's abilities to work "as well as men" and in a temporary timeframe, views that characterized much of the wartime rhetoric around women's work, still suggested that comparing women's skills to men's (with men's abilities as the gold standard) was appropriate, and that women's success was surprising. Further, Keshen's own study notes that male workers might have attempted to sabotage the efforts of their female colleagues. Missing from his analysis is an acknowledgment that women war workers were rarely assigned to precisely the same tasks as male workers. Deskilling, job segmentation, and bio-determinism (the belief that women's bodies, because of their difference from men's bodies, limit what women can do) all influenced the types of tasks

⁴⁰ Jeff Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 146.

women were permitted to take on – something which Keshen’s congratulatory statements about women workers’ contributions to the war effort sweep neatly under the rug.⁴¹

Jennifer Stephen’s work demonstrates very clearly that women were recruited into very specific types of jobs, and that even women “doing men’s work” usually were not.⁴²

Keshen’s arguments about advertisements foregrounding women workers’ femininity and minimizing the impact of war work on existing gender roles also need revising. He maintains that,

Such messages could certainly be viewed as trivializing women’s work by suggesting that women’s feminine traits were more important than their abilities. However, they could also be interpreted as reassuring a woman that she need not sacrifice her sexual appeal by taking on physically demanding, typically male jobs...⁴³

In fact, both sides of his statement are accurate: messages about a woman workers’ ability, nay, *responsibility* to maintain and enhance her sexual appeal *to men* were tied closely to the message that a woman’s feminine traits were more important than her abilities. The wartime visual landscape frequently reminded women that being beautiful and attractive was more important than being highly skilled – in particular because wartime jobs were considered temporary. Keshen seems to be suggesting that these messages could be interpreted in a less oppressive way; instead of undermining women’s skills, perhaps the ads were making new kinds of jobs more approachable and less

⁴¹ For more on bio-determinism, gender, and labour, see Pat Armstrong and Hugh Armstrong, *The Double Ghetto: Canadian Women and Their Segregated Work*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1994), 131.

⁴² Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl*, especially chapter 2 and 56-58. Even when women were praised for doing tasks that had previously been done only or primarily by men, women were rarely encouraged or permitted to continue doing those jobs after the war was over. In other words, women were not generally welcomed to pursue *careers* in the new types of tasks they took on during wartime.

⁴³ Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 151.

intimidating. The problem with this line of argument is that these ads were structured to frame work coded “male” as intimidating to women in the first place. If women’s bodily femininity and attractiveness were not framed as their most valued asset, and if the type of waged work they did was not assumed to powerfully impact their gender identity, then there would be no need to reassure them. Canadians were also reminded through advertisements that exposing a woman’s body to dirt, grime, or rough labour would necessarily masculinize women, dramatically re-gendering their bodies, *unless* protective or restorative measures were taken. Gender roles were constantly conflated with gender identities and gender performance; if a woman “acted” like a man, she would no longer be feminine, and if a man “acted” like a woman, he would no longer be masculine. No space was allowed for new or expanding definitions of femininity or masculinity. Instead, these categories were perceived as fixed, binary, and exclusionary. Instead of “women with rough or greasy hands can still be feminine, if they wish,” the message was “women should wash the grime off, preserve their soft hands, and stay traditionally feminine.” While I appreciate Keshen’s efforts to point out that some women could have (and did) enjoy participating in beauty culture, opting out was not presented as an option for most women.

In fact, Helen Smith and Pamela Wakewich’s earliest article on women war workers, “Beauty and the Helldivers,” suggests that “there is a consistent, mixed message that celebrates women’s war work while at the same time trivializing their work by depicting them as incongruous with the traditionally masculine workplace.”⁴⁴ Smith and

⁴⁴ Helen Smith and Pamela Wakewich, “‘Beauty and the Helldivers’: Representing Women’s Work and Identities in a Warplant Newspaper,” *Labour/Le Travail* 44 (1999), 106.

Wakewich have conducted extensive oral history research with women workers from Canadian Car and Foundry (CanCar) in Fort William, and have published several pieces probing wartime relationships between labour, gender, bodies, health, and representation. Women workers' beauty was important and celebrated, but could also be problematic in terms of safety and efficiency in the workplace. As Smith and Wakewich demonstrate in a recent article, "Regulating Body Boundaries," both Canadian society more broadly and workers at CanCar, specifically, were attentive to and sometimes concerned about the appearance and attractiveness of women war workers.⁴⁵ Smith and Wakewich's most recent publication, "Trans/Forming the Citizen Body in Wartime," engages directly with body history. In this piece, they consider advertisements, cartoons, and oral history, arguing that the home acted as a site where women workers cared for their bodies and their health.⁴⁶ I agree with Smith and Wakewich about the overall meanings women workers might have taken from the wartime visual landscape: "The message to Canadian women during wartime was that the body/work nexus, both in the home and at the war plant, required careful and ongoing monitoring and negotiation."⁴⁷ In "Trans/Forming the Citizen Body," Smith and Wakewich focus on the home as a space in which women 'worked' on bodies (their own and those of others). However, it seems to me that, although Smith and Wakewich focus on health issues in relation to the body, the wartime promotion of women's "health" actually functioned to valorize women's beauty – that is,

⁴⁵ Helen Smith and Pamela Wakewich, "Regulating Body Boundaries and Health During the Second World War: Nationalist Discourse, Media Representations and the Experiences of Canadian Women War Workers," *Gender & History* 24, no.1 (2012), 60-66.

⁴⁶ Helen Smith and Pamela Wakewich, "Trans/forming the Citizen Body in Wartime: National and Local Public Discourse on Women's Bodies and 'Body Work' for Women during World War II," in *Contesting Bodies and Nation in Canadian History*, ed. Patrizia Gentile and Jane Nicholas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 305.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 307.

health and beauty were frequently conflated where women were concerned, and an unattractive woman might have been perceived as unhealthy. Charlotte MacDonald's work on bodies, health, and recreation bears out this argument by showing that empire-oriented groups like the Women's League of Health and Beauty taught women how to exercise in an effort to achieve "inner health and outer radiance."⁴⁸

In a number of ways, my work builds on and benefits from Smith and Wakewich's studies of women at CanCar and in Canadian media. Their extensive oral histories provide crucial evidence about how women felt about their bodies, and about beauty, in the context of their war work. Taken together, their work emphasizes that attention to women's bodies was primarily health and morale-related. Their research also underscores the "mixed messages" about women and work in the media and the constant emphasis on bodies and femininity present in one war plant newsletter. While they do incorporate some national media, in particular from magazine sources, a wider perspective would have allowed them to draw broader conclusions. Still, just as Emily Spencer's analysis of one magazine, *Chatelaine*, provides a helpful, contained case study, Smith and Wakewich's work on CanCar answers some important questions about women's experiences in one community while leaving open other questions, including how far one can generalize from the Can Car experience. My research, which focuses on detailed visual analysis of wartime imagery in a range of national and local sources, and on connecting that imagery with beauty culture and beauty contests at several war plants, complements their work and confirms that the patterns they identified extended to several

⁴⁸ Charlotte MacDonald, *Strong, Beautiful, and Modern: National Fitness in Britain, New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, 1935-1960* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), especially 38. Thanks to Dr. Elizabeth Vibert for drawing my attention to MacDonald's work.

other southern Ontario war plants. My argument that women's bodies were viewed primarily through the lens of beauty, rather than health, sets it apart from this existing work.

Although histories of the body, and of embodied beauty in particular, are still carving out a place in mainstream historiographies, bodies and appearance have long been a concern for North American women, as studies like Joan Jacobs Brumberg's *The Body Project* and Lois Banner's *American Beauty* show.⁴⁹ Body and beauty history are clearly gaining ground, although the Canadian literature is still limited in scope. While Canadian historians have made more modest contributions to the literature, American historians have dealt with a variety of topics, including colour cosmetics, modeling and magazines, plastic surgery and body modification, beauty contests, female beauty entrepreneurs, hair, and race.⁵⁰ Addressing a central theme in the broader literature in the

⁴⁹ Joan Jacobs Brumberg, *The Body Project: An Intimate History of American Girls* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998). Lois Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Knopf, 1983).

⁵⁰ For American beauty culture, see Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York: Henry Holt, 1999). On black beauty culture, see Noliwe M. Rooks, *Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1996); Susannah Walker, *Style & Status: Selling Beauty to African American Women, 1920-1975* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2007); Tiffany Gill, *Beauty Shop Politics: African American Women's Activism in the Beauty Industry* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2010). On beauty culture, workplaces, and weddings, see Vicki Howard, "'At the Curve Exchange': Postwar Beauty Culture and Working Women at Maidenform," in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender and Popular Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2001), 195-216. On modeling and race, see Laila Haidarali, "'The Vampingest Vamp is a Brownskin': Colour, Sex, Beauty and African American Womanhood, 1920-1954" (PhD diss., York University, 2007). On cosmetic and plastic surgery, see Elizabeth Haiken, *Venus Envy: A History of Cosmetic Surgery* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999). On beauty contests in the US, see Sarah Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World: Beauty Pageants and National Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Maxine Craig, *Ain't I a Beauty Queen? Black Women, Beauty, and the Politics of Race* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Christine Yano, *Crowning the Nice Girl: Gender, Ethnicity and Culture in Hawaii's Cherry Blossom Festival* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006); Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, "'Loveliest Daughter of Our Ancient Cathay!': Representations of Ethnic and Gender Identity in the Miss Chinatown U.S.A. Beauty Pageant" in *Beauty and Business: Commerce, Gender, and Culture in Modern America*, ed. Philip Scranton (New York: Routledge, 2001), 278-308; Elwood Watson and Darcy Martin, *There She Is, Miss America: The Politics of Sex, Beauty, and Race in America's Most Famous Pageant* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Rebecca Chiyoko King-O'Riain, *Pure Beauty: Judging Race in Japanese American Beauty Pageants* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press,

U.S. work on race and beauty, historians have explored the ways that whiteness existed as an overall ideal and standard in relation to and in tension with black beauty ideals.⁵¹

Peiss shows that skin whitening and lightening products enjoyed enduring popularity beginning in the nineteenth century, for both white women and women of colour:

For women of European descent, whitening could be absorbed within acceptable skincare routines and assimilated into the ruling beauty ideal, the natural face of white genteel womanhood... For African Americans, the fiction was impossible: Whitening cosmetics, touted as cures for ‘disabling’ African features, reinforced a racialized aesthetic through a makeover that appeared anything but natural.⁵²

In their work on African American women and beauty culture, several historians have argued that black communities created and sustained ideals that were not just about whiteness, but about looking attractive according to beliefs about black beauty – even if those beliefs included a preference for lightness of skin.⁵³ Others

2006). For beauty culture in Canada, see Steve Fielding, “‘The Changing Face of Little Italy’: The Colombo Lodge Queen Pageant and Italian Identity in Trail, British Columbia, 1970-76,” *Urban History Review* 39, no. 1 (Fall, 2010): 45-58; Gentile and Nicholas, *Contesting Bodies and Nation*; Cheryl Krasnick Warsh and Dan Malleck, eds., *Consuming Modernity: Gendered Behaviour and Consumerism Before the Baby Boom* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013); Jane Nicholas, *The Modern Girl: Feminine Modernities, the Body, and Commodities in the 1920s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015); Alison Matte, “‘She’s the Queen of Everyone’s Heart’: Community, Gender, Morality and Sexuality in the ‘Queen Val-Vedette’ and ‘Queen Aurora of the Evergreens’ Beauty Pageants, 1948-1970” (MA thesis, University of Northern British Columbia, 2012); Cheryl Thompson, “Race and Beauty in Canada: Print Culture, Retail, and the Transnational Flow of Products, Images and Ideologies, 1700s to Present,” (PhD Dissertation, McGill University, 2014); Mary Jane Logan McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940-1940* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014); Donica Belisle, “Sexual Spectacles: Women in Canadian Department Store Magazines Between 1920 and 1950,” in *Writing Feminist History: Productive Pasts and New Directions*, eds. Catherine Carstairs and Nancy Janovicek (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 135-158; Patrizia Gentile, “Queen of the Maple Leaf: A History of Beauty Contests in Twentieth-Century Canada” (PhD diss., Queen’s University, 2006); Andrea Eidinger, “What My Mother Taught Me: The Construction of Jewish Womanhood in Montreal, 1945-1980” (PhD diss., University of Victoria, 2011).

⁵¹ Ruth Frankenberg’s definition of whiteness is helpful here: “Whiteness [...] has a set of linked dimensions. First, whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a ‘standpoint,’ a place from which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society. Third, ‘whiteness’ refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually unmarked and unnamed.” Ruth Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 1, quoted in Eidinger, “What My Mother Taught Me,” 136.

⁵² Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 42-43.

⁵³ For more on beauty ideals within the black community that were not necessarily the result of a desire to look or be white, including preferences for lighter skin or smoother hair, see Rooks, *Hair Raising*; Craig,

have shown convincingly that whiteness continued to be broadly associated with ideal, beautiful bodies in twentieth-century America. Focusing in particular on the Second World War, McEuen complicates the picture slightly by linking gender, race and class: “Amid the variety of messages aimed at women regarding an ideal wartime face, a common theme resonates – that the most admirable looks exude an authentic American heritage blending middle- to upper-class life, work and leisure pursuits, and relative ‘whiteness’.”⁵⁴ Extending this theme into the later twentieth century, Banet-Weiser argues that beauty pageants in the United States, and Miss America in particular, continually celebrate and foreground whiteness as a measure of beauty and a national ideal.⁵⁵

In contrast to the developed American literature, there has been little attention to either race or whiteness in Canadian histories of beauty and war work, although this is beginning to change. Offering a nuanced analysis of the relationship between beauty culture among Jewish women in Montreal and whiteness as an ideal, Andrea Eidinge’s recent research points to interesting connections with African American work on beauty by arguing for the existence of internally managed, community-specific beauty ideals

Ain’t I a Beauty Queen; Haidarali, “The Vampingest Vamp is a Brownskin,” especially 22; Walker, *Style and Status*, in particular 8: “The African American beauty industry told black women they could be beautiful, but considerations of race and color shaped the beauty standard promoted and the methods needed to achieve it.”

⁵⁴ McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*, 7-8. McEuen also analyzes a series of Ponds cold cream advertisements which continually foregrounded and praised whiteness, and traced preference for lightness in African American communities. See also 9, 18, and 23-24.

⁵⁵ Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World*, 8-9 and 138.

among Jewish women that were influenced by idealized whiteness but also separate from it.⁵⁶

Also addressing whiteness in the Canadian context, Gentile and Nicholas' recent collection is attentive to the relationship between bodies, gender, race, and nation by including a section which "explicitly documents how racialized bodies mediated not only citizenship, but also confronted the view of the Canadian nation as implicated in a colonial project designed to institutionalize Whiteness as a gendered and racialized corporeal legacy."⁵⁷ As Mariana Valverde has shown in her work on the nineteenth-century social purity movement, this colonial legacy explicitly valued white bodies above racialized others and ranked white women's bodies as particularly important to the life of the Canadian nation because of their "role in biological and social reproduction."⁵⁸ In the late-nineteenth century, the ideal Canadian woman – and mother – was heterosexual, married, and white, a reality which had changed little by the Second World War. The fact that the glamorous, beautiful, and iconic Canadian woman war worker was consistently represented as white speaks to the continuing national goals of framing heterosexuality as compulsory and white motherhood as critically important.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Eidinger, Chapter 3, "Looking Jewish: The Embodiment of Gender, Class, and Ethnicity" in "What My Mother Taught Me," 133-179, especially 146. See also Andrea Eidinger, "Looking Jewish: The Embodiment of Gender, Class, and Ethnicity among Ashkenazi Jewish Women in Montreal, 1945-1980," *Histoire Sociale/Social History* 47, no. 95 (November 2015): 729-746.

⁵⁷ Nicholas and Gentile, "Introduction: Contesting Bodies, Nation, and Canadian History," in *Contesting Bodies and Nation*, 13. See also articles in the collection by Gillian Poulter, Amy Shaw, and Allana C. Lindgren.

⁵⁸ Mariana Valverde, "'When the Mother of the Race is Free': Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism," in *Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History*, eds. Franca Iacovetta and Mariana Valverde (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 3. See also Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, Rev. ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 104.

⁵⁹ For a more substantial exploration of the relationship between whiteness, motherhood, and idealized bodies in the service of the Canadian national project during the war, see chapter 5 in this dissertation.

Like histories of bodies, beauty, and race, studies dealing with beauty, youth, and performance are somewhat limited in Canada. Of particular relevance to this dissertation is work by Patrizia Gentile and Joan Sangster on Canadian beauty contests, and Jane Nicholas' recent and exemplary book on the Modern Girl.⁶⁰ In her revealing dissertation on Canadian beauty contests, "Queen of the Maple Leaf," Gentile aims "to provide a study of the connections between gender, beauty, consumer culture, and nation by analyzing images of Canadian womanhood inscribed on the bodies of beauty queens,"⁶¹ through an exploration of community contests, workplace contests, and the Miss Canada pageant. Gentile's study provides a brief introduction to the Miss War Worker contest.⁶² She describes local plant competitions at the General Engineering Company and, in greater detail, at the John Inglis Company, where she convincingly shows that the contests were conceived by management as part of an effective recruitment strategy.⁶³ While Gentile concludes that Miss War Worker was primarily about "the connections between munitions workers, patriotic duty, and the needs of the wartime nation," she does not fully capture the emphasis on sexuality and bodily attractiveness evident in coverage of the event in Toronto newspapers. My research demonstrates that Miss War Worker was presented alongside the Miss Toronto contest as an exciting public spectacle,

⁶⁰ Gentile, "Queen of the Maple Leaf"; Sangster, "Queen of the Picket Line"; Nicholas, *The Modern Girl*.

⁶¹ Gentile, "Queen of the Maple Leaf," 22.

⁶² Ibid., chapter 4. The section dealing with Miss War Worker and associated contests for munitions workers is found on pages 124-132.

⁶³ The Miss Scarboro contest, held at GEICO, is covered in greater detail in this dissertation's chapter 6. On Inglis, see Gentile, "Queen of the Maple Leaf," 128-130. See also David Sobel and Susan Meurer, *Working at Inglis: The Life and Death of a Canadian Factory* (Toronto: J. Lorimer, 1994), 73-75.

replete with sexual undertones, swimsuits, and all of the drama of a regular beauty contest.⁶⁴

Like sexuality, beauty culture and beauty contests have been simultaneous sites of “pleasure and danger” for women, and studying the history of beauty pageants and beauty culture more broadly requires us to take seriously power, agency, and resistance in a context that is still sometimes perceived to be frivolous or trivial.⁶⁵ I argue that to affirm the potential of beauty culture to be positive and pleasurable does not necessarily minimize its oppressive qualities or coercive tendencies.⁶⁶ Current feminist theoretical scholarship focusing on beauty and the body has shifted towards questions about the discursively constructed and constantly transforming body. While the debate around pleasure/danger is now perceived as dated by some scholars, since the relationship between pleasure and danger has been a major concern for beauty historians, it merits attention here and remains relevant.⁶⁷ Weighing in on a central debate among pageant historians, Gentile presents a clear and nuanced position on whether pageants are, in general, oppressive or empowering: “I do not posit beauty contests as coercive, nor do I

⁶⁴ Gentile, “Queen of the Maple Leaf,” 128. For more on this, see chapter 6 of this dissertation. For the connection between Miss War Worker and swimsuits, see pages 337-340.

⁶⁵ Carol Vance, ed., *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (Boston: Routledge, 1984.); Kathy Peiss and Christina Simmons, eds., *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989).

⁶⁶ For more on the debate around beauty culture and beauty pageants’ oppressive and/or pleasurable facets and the analysis of these topics by feminist historians, see Sangster, “Queen of the Picket Line”; Howard, “At the Curve Exchange”; Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl*.

⁶⁷ Even recently published work, like Nicholas’ *The Modern Girl*, addresses the pleasure/danger debate; see Nicholas, *The Modern Girl*, 9-10. To ignore or minimize the role of the pleasure/danger debate in beauty and beauty contest historiography would be problematic. While theoretical trends have changed, acknowledging and analyzing the empowering/oppressive question, as well as locating myself within the debate, is necessary. Attention to other theoretical models being used today follows later in this chapter.

suggest that women's participation in them is based on freedom of choice...⁶⁸ In her compelling study of gender, body, and consumer culture in the 1920s, which deals with the rise of beauty contests in Canada in relation to a burgeoning visual culture, Jane Nicholas argues, "Beauty contests by real women (who self-selected to perform on their own volition) reveal how individual women took up the messages of modernity, gender, and the body, and subsequently performed them in public."⁶⁹ Yet for some, analyzing beauty contests through the lens of feminist theory can make the accolades given to war workers seem more sinister. In Joan Sangster's work on beauty pageants for working women in Canada, she argues that beauty culture operated primarily as an oppressive force in workplaces, and that we ought not to place too much emphasis on its enjoyable aspects. In her words, "Feminist scholars revelling in the scholarly pleasure of beauty contests run the risk of obscuring beauty culture as the beast it *also* was, of heterosexual regulation, oppression, and exploitation."⁷⁰ Acknowledging the harmful and problematic components of the contests is critical, but arguing that they were overwhelmingly or only oppressive limits our understanding and flattens complexity. Often, women who chose to participate enjoyed some aspects of the experience and disliked other elements of it. This is part of the challenge in assessing beauty contests: they are rarely perceived or experienced as wholly bad or wholly good, and attempting to weigh the advantages and disadvantages and come to a definitive conclusion about their value one way or the other seems impossible, unnecessary, and short-sighted.

⁶⁸ Gentile, "Queen of the Maple Leaf," 23.

⁶⁹ Nicholas, *The Modern Girl*, 123.

⁷⁰ Sangster, "Queen of the Picket Line," 86.

Historians of women's work, beauty, and consumer culture, including Nan Enstad and Kathy Peiss, have questioned the view that engaging with beauty culture or participating in beauty pageants is always only or primarily oppressive. They have revealed some of the ways that North American women productively engaged with beauty culture throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁷¹ Some scholars of beauty pageant history, including Sarah Banet-Weiser, Christine Yano, and Judy Tzu-Chun Wu, among others, show that suggesting beauty contest participants were universally oppressed by their experiences is misleading. Instead, some pageant participants described their contest experiences as positive, enjoyable, and freely chosen.⁷² In her study of the history of Miss America, Banet-Weiser notes: "The production of femininity is one characterized by pleasure, among other things, and the contestants' own accounts of their pleasure and desire when producing themselves as beauty queens should not be written off as mere acquiescence."⁷³ My study shows that minimizing the positive aspects of war worker beauty contests can be equally problematic, because to do so ignores the real benefits women could gain through their participation, ranging from tangible prizes to increased stature with their employer and workplace community to simple pride and pleasure. In other words, as Donica Belisle puts it in her analysis of workplace contests at department stores,

The contestants smiled for the camera not only because the action enhanced their prettiness, but also because they were likely enjoying the

⁷¹ Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure: Working Women, Popular Culture, and Labor Politics at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*; Colleen Ballerino Cohen, Richard Wilk, and Beverly Stoeltje, eds., *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage: Gender, Contests, and Power* (New York: Routledge, 1996). For a more recent engagement with this debate, see Nicholas, *The Modern Girl*, 9.

⁷² Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl*; Yano, *Crowning the Nice Girl*; Tzu-Chun Wu, "Loveliest Daughter of Our Ancient Cathay!"

⁷³ Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl*, 12.

feeling of sun on their bodies, the camaraderie of friends, and the esteem of their co-workers, who were no doubt in the audience.⁷⁴

Just because beauty culture *can be* and often is confining and problematic does not mean that pleasure or genuine self-fashioning is not also, and even simultaneously, a product. It is particularly important to keep this in mind when considering women's experiences, choices, and decisions around participation in beauty culture, especially in contrast with media and prescriptive literature, which are often more clearly problematic because they offer few real benefits and provide scarcer opportunities for women to exercise agency or to resist. This dissertation highlights the potential for pleasure in beauty culture while recognizing the opportunities for harassment, discomfort, and isolation it simultaneously created.

Despite the attention beauty scholars have given to the pleasure/danger debate, other theoretical concepts with which to approach histories of beauty and the body have emerged. The most useful of these is the concept of "embodiment." Reflecting on body history, Kathleen Canning suggests that "the notion of *embodiment* may be the most promising outcome" of debates about the place of the body in the discipline of history.⁷⁵ In an early but instructive survey of Canadian body history, Lisa Helps calls for "conceiving the body as something that is always becoming and... understanding this becoming in relation to other bodies."⁷⁶ This description of bodies becoming, constantly changing, is particularly helpful in moving away from presentist views of bodies, or

⁷⁴ Belisle, "Sexual Spectacles," 151.

⁷⁵ Canning, "The Body as Method?," 505.

⁷⁶ Helps, "Body, Power, Desire," 128. Helps describes this view of the body as informed by the work of Gilles Deleuze.

perspectives that see the body as stable across time and space. Representing a more nuanced vision of Canadian body history, Patrizia Gentile and Jane Nicholas, editors of a critical collection of work on the body in Canada, define the body as a conflicted, shifting battleground: “As contested spaces, bodies are constructed historically and inscribed with political, social, and cultural meanings. In turn, these meanings shape historical conceptualizations of nation, gender, race, class, age, and sexuality... bodies are a product of, and part of, the process of history.”⁷⁷ Their collection focuses in particular on the way that bodies intersect with the idea of the nation, and how individual bodies are used to make meaning about social bodies. Shifting the concept slightly in her work on monstrous bodies, American Studies scholar Heike Steinhoff describes the “transforming body”:

On the one hand... bodies are no longer perceived as stable and biologically fixed entities, but as increasingly malleable and dynamic... On the other hand, this construction of the body as always ‘transforming’ has a transformative effect on other cultural discourses and discursive boundaries, including cultural categorizations such as beauty, gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity and age.⁷⁸

The constantly changing body, then, also contributes to changing culture and society. The concept of embodiment is critical for the development of more sophisticated theorizing and analyses in the field of body history.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Gentile and Nicholas, *Contesting Bodies*, 3-4. For another reference to “body as battleground,” see Heike Steinhoff, *Transforming Bodies: Makeovers and Monstrosities in American Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 6, citing Barbara Kruger.

⁷⁸ Steinhoff, *Transforming Bodies*, 4.

⁷⁹ The development of theory specific to body history helps stop the field from being viewed as a shallow trend, a collection of research centered on a certain topic but lacking analytical depth.

Theorizing the body and the process of embodiment also leads to a consideration of the relationship between discourse and materiality, and questioning of the operation of power in relation to the body. Historians interested in these questions have relied most often on Foucault's decentralized conception of power and on Butler's theory of performativity. The impact of Butler's text *Gender Trouble* on beauty and body historians has been significant. Butler writes:

Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*. The effect of gender is produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.⁸⁰

Although not all beauty and body historians build their research on the concept of performativity, Butler's view of gender as performative has informed the work of Gentile and Nicholas, and Banet-Weiser, which in turn has contributed to my understanding of histories of gendered behaviour and bodies.⁸¹ It is important to balance discursive understandings of gender and bodies with attention to the material body as well. In her work on medical understandings of women's bodies in Canada, Wendy Mitchinson reminds us that "Our understanding of bodies may be constructed, but the pain and distress bodies can cause and experience are real. The material body is more than gender."⁸² I would contend that it is important to

⁸⁰ Emphasis in original. Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 179. See also Butler, *Gender Trouble*, quoted in Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World*, 89-90.

⁸¹ Gentile and Nicholas, *Contesting Bodies and Nation*, 7; Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl in the World*, 89-90.

⁸² Wendy Mitchinson, *Body Failure: Medical Views of Women, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).

acknowledge and be mindful of both discursive and materialist approaches to body history.⁸³

Along with Butler's concept of performativity, many historians of beauty and the body rely on Foucault's definition of power in their work, seeing power as "...relational and multiple, a decentralized web of force relations that produces and normalizes bodies."⁸⁴ This diffuse view of power, the idea that "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere," should also be historicized.⁸⁵ Daniel Rodgers' intellectual history of late twentieth-century America identifies the shift to Foucauldian perspectives on power as one part of a broader trend towards "fractured" knowledges in the period from the 1970s to the end of the twentieth century.⁸⁶ This dissertation suggests instances where diffuse and relational power relations operated. War worker beauty contests provide one compelling example. In the course of the contests, some power clearly rested with the organizers and judges, who defined beauty norms, enforced rules, and awarded both favour and substantial prizes to participants. The large audiences, by far outnumbering women participating in the contest, held significant power in their anonymity, gaze, and ability to judge and enjoy the appearance of women's bodies. Yet, contest participants also held power: they commanded attention, decided how to display their bodies, and enjoyed praise and

⁸³ I find Canning's conclusion helpful; see Canning, *The Body as Method?*, 510: "I also hope that the body histories I have outlined... make clear the merits of charting the connections and convergences of the material and the discursive that make bodies such difficult objects of historical analysis and such intriguing sites of memory, agency, and subjectivity." See also Helps, "Body, Power, Desire," 131.

⁸⁴ Steinhoff, *Transforming Bodies*, 21. See also Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 92.

⁸⁵ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 93.

⁸⁶ Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Age of Fracture* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2011), in particular Chapter 3, "The Search for Power," and 102-110.

respect. Even the women's coworkers gained subtle rewards from the prestige accorded to their workplace because of the beauty and success of their delegates. Beauty contests like Miss War Worker are just one instance where diffused power can be located. It is also worth noting that both women's potential pleasure as participants and the danger of oppression exist simultaneously in this model, making the empowerment/oppression approach compatible with the Foucauldian view of power.

Like studies of bodies and beauty culture, studies of popular and consumer culture have occasionally been treated as marginal in historical scholarship, in part because of their association with frivolity and pleasure, and because of perceptions that these fields are under-theorized. Fortunately, with the rise of social and cultural history, these subjects have gained greater legitimacy. For example, Jill Lepore's outstanding work on the history of Wonder Woman shows that the study of comics requires extensive research and theoretical acumen.⁸⁷ Canadian historians, for their part, have demonstrated that histories of consumer and popular culture can tell us a great deal about social and gender histories. Steve Penfold's entertaining and thoughtful study of the donut and Karen Dubinsky's lively examination of North American tourist mecca Niagara Falls, for example, are both quirky and readable as well as well-researched and revealing.⁸⁸ As historians like Nan Enstad have shown, "consumer culture is serious and material business."⁸⁹ Convincingly combining a consideration of such 'serious' subjects as class,

⁸⁷ Jill Lepore, *The Secret History of Wonder Woman* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014).

⁸⁸ Steve Penfold, *The Donut: A Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008); Karen Dubinsky, *The Second Greatest Disappointment: Honeymooning and Tourism at Niagara Falls* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1999).

⁸⁹ Enstad, *Ladies of Labour*, 6.

political organizing, and strike action with analysis of women's desire for and consumption of fashion (especially hats and high heeled shoes), fiction, and film, Enstad's work transformed perspectives on gender, identity, and class consciousness by showing that commodities like dime novels played a major role in working women's experiences and understandings of themselves as labourers. Further, Enstad's explanation of subjectivity dovetails with the view of bodies as "always becoming"; for Enstad, subjectivity is

the particular way that an individual becomes a social person, part and product of the corner of the world she or he inhabits. Subjectivity is thus related to the concepts 'self' and 'identity,' with a crucial distinction: subjectivity emphasizes a *process* of becoming that is never completed. It is based on the premise that *who one is* is neither essential nor fixed, but is continually shaped and reshaped in human social exchange.⁹⁰

Writing about working women's relationships with popular media, Enstad shows that women's subjectivities continued to dynamically change and develop throughout their lives through their engagement with these popular texts.

For the purposes of this study, I consider several aspects of popular and consumer culture: the roles and messages of magazine advertisements; magazines themselves as consumer products; the relationship between ads that sell both ideas and products and the people who purchase, use, and view those products; and the purchase and use of consumer beauty products as part of women's patriotic duty. My work builds on the excellent foundation laid by scholars of Canadian consumer culture, and in particular, women's place in it. Valerie Korinek's exemplary study of *Chatelaine* magazine in the 1950s and 1960s reminds us that readers participate actively in constructing a magazine's

⁹⁰ Enstad, *Ladies of Labour*, 13.

meaning, that consuming popular culture involves exercising agency, and that cultural products like women's magazines are often simultaneously pleasurable to consume and oppressive in nature.⁹¹ Donica Belisle's work on the growth of department stores and shopping culture in the decades leading up to the Second World War shows that the history of consumer culture is a rich and complex field, and that selling, shopping, and buying were increasingly integral to Canadian women's lives between the 1890s and 1940s.⁹² Finally, Graham Broad's recent book *A Small Price to Pay* provides much needed proof that,

as adworkers themselves acknowledged with pride, wartime advertising did more than merely hawk goods: it carried and transmitted a cultural ideal. [...] It advanced an unambiguously modern and secular worldview in which the 'good life' of health, happiness, social status, prosperity, and political freedom could be secured through personal consumption and material progress.⁹³

Retailers and advertisers, Broad shows, strategically told Canadians that their dollars could buy either victory or defeat. In this dissertation, I argue that Broad's crucial concept of married women as "patriotic consumers" extends beyond housewives shopping for groceries: young, single women, especially war workers, were told that they must purchase and use a wide variety of cosmetics and other beauty products in order to patriotically maintain their femininity, something which women were explicitly told that

⁹¹ Valerie Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 8, 11-12, and 13.

⁹² Donica Belisle, *Retail Nation: Department Stores and the Making of Modern Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011); Belisle, "Sexual Spectacles." See also Katrina Srigley on women's clothing buying during the Depression (as part of self-fashioning): Katrina Srigley, "Clothing Stories: Consumption, Identity and Desire in Depression-Era Toronto," *Journal of Women's History* 19, no.1 (Spring 2007): 82-104. In the United States, see Susan Porter Benson, *Counter Cultures: Saleswomen, Managers, and Customers in American Department Stores, 1890-1940* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986).

⁹³ Graham Broad, *A Small Price to Pay: Consumer Culture on the Canadian Home Front, 1939-1945* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 89.

men were “fighting for.”⁹⁴ Broad argues that women’s wartime purchases of items like food and clothing were intended to protect the health of families and to boost the economy. As I will demonstrate, vigilant purchasing of beauty products was also framed as a step towards protecting the femininity of women’s bodies and the dominance of heterosexuality. Feminine beauty was not painted as a luxury commodity, but as an absolute wartime necessity.⁹⁵

Sources and Methods

While beauty products were “necessary” for women during the war, women were necessary for the smooth functioning of industry and the continued success of the war economy. The iconic woman war worker was a munitions worker, and women were recruited to work in plants making everything from vital ammunition to planes to guns. This study focuses on three companies, producing munitions and airplanes, that employed large numbers of women, and for which substantial, detailed archival records exist: Defence Industries Limited (DIL), a shell filling plant located on expropriated lakeshore farmland in a part of Pickering Township, Ontario, that became known as Ajax; GECO, or the General Engineering Company, which produced fuses in Scarborough, Ontario; and DeHavilland Aircraft, a Toronto airplane factory, making Mosquito combat aircraft. DIL was the largest of the three, employing primarily women but also men, and at its height boasted a workforce of over 9000, many of whom lived on

⁹⁴ Broad, *A Small Price to Pay*; see in particular Chapter 1, “Mrs. Consumer”, especially 24-25, and Chapter 4, “Advertising to Win the War and Secure the Future” – especially pages 101-103. For men fighting for women’s beauty, see Spencer, *Lipstick and High Heels*, 2.

⁹⁵ See Broad, *Small Price to Pay*, 194-195, for a summary of his position on women and patriotic consumption.

the plant compound in gender-segregated housing.⁹⁶ GECO was also built on government-expropriated land, along a stretch of Eglinton Avenue in Scarborough that came to be known as the “Golden Mile of Industry.”⁹⁷ While DIL filled and finished shells, GECO filled “fuzes [sic], primers, tubes and tracers.”⁹⁸ GECO employed over 6000 people at its peak, during the summer of 1942, and around seventy percent of the overall workforce were women.⁹⁹ In contrast to DIL and GECO, DeHavilland Aircraft existed prior to the Second World War. However, a second and larger plant was built in 1940 to accommodate increasing demands; during the war, DeHavilland built several types of aircraft in Toronto. About one third of the seven thousand people DeHavilland employed at Downsview during the war were women.¹⁰⁰ DIL, GECO, and DeHavilland offer a unique and invaluable window into the world of women’s wartime munitions work in Canada, because women were a significant portion of their workforce, and because each company regularly published a detailed employee newsletter, preserved in historical archives.

⁹⁶ Ken Smith, *Ajax: The War Years, 1939/45* (Oshawa, ON: K. Smith, 1989), 4. See also Archie McDonald, ed., *A Town Called Ajax* (Ajax, ON: Ajax Historical Board, 1995), 34-36. DIL is often mistakenly referred to as being in Pickering – although the town grew up in what was “Pickering Township,” Ajax and Pickering became separate municipalities.

⁹⁷ Barbara Dickson, *Bomb Girls: Trading Aprons for Ammo* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2015), 31 and 251.

⁹⁸ For DIL see McDonald, *A Town Called Ajax*; for GECO see “Introduction,” Typescript *The Story of Scarboro/Canada 1941 to 1945 Inclusive*, Allied War Corporation Project No. 4, Fonds 2, Series 1243, Subseries 5, File 1, Toronto City Archives; ‘Introduction, Article 1’, Employee handbook, Fonds 2, Series 1243, Subseries 5, File 1, Toronto City Archives.

⁹⁹ This number includes both GECO and Inspection staff. Numbers of women workers were even higher in other periods: “During the Summer of 1943, when several hundred part time workers were engaged, women formed almost 75 per cent of the total staff, while in the filling shops proper, women constituted as high as 85 to 95 per cent of the labour used.” See “Employment” section, “The Story of Scarboro – Canada,” General Engineering Company (Canada) Fonds, F 2028, box 5, folder F-2082-1-1-18, Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO).

¹⁰⁰ Fred Hotson, *De Havilland in Canada* (Toronto: Canav Books, 1999); Fred Hotson, *The De Havilland Canada Story* (Toronto: Canav Books, 1983).

Because the visual realm is central to both beauty culture and advertising, visual sources are at the heart of this study. It was the cover of a local war plant newsletter featuring DIL war worker beauty queen Irene Brayley which first sparked the undergraduate research paper that eventually led me to this work. Several types of visual and textual sources served as the primary body of source material. First, three different series of war plant newsletters, locally published and disseminated, were consulted: DIL's *The Commando*, GECO's *The Fusilier*, and DeHavilland Aircraft's *The Mosquito*.¹⁰¹ All published issues of *The Commando*, which appeared roughly every two weeks from July 1, 1942 to April 24, 1943, and then monthly until July 1945, were consulted.¹⁰² Copies of *The Fusilier*, which was published roughly every two weeks from March 1942 to July 1945, were consulted as available.¹⁰³ Issues of DeHavilland's *The Mosquito* published between February 1942 and December 1944 were also consulted.¹⁰⁴ Newsletters were published under the supervision of management and employers; the intended audience was plant employees. For example, the cover page of each issue of *The Fusilier* carried the subtitle, "Issued in the interests of employees by the General

¹⁰¹ The war plant newsletter was an extremely common wartime publication. Other companies which also had such internal papers include Small Arms, whose paper was *Fore Sight*, the John Inglis Company, whose paper was *The Shotgun*, and Canadian Car and Foundry, whose paper was *The Aircrafter*.

¹⁰² All issues of *The Commando* are available online, at www.pada.ca, the Pickering Ajax Digital Portal. Hard copies were also consulted in person at the Ajax City archives. In total, 41 issues of the newsletter, generally between 8-10 pages long each, were published.

¹⁰³ Issues of *The Fusilier* were consulted at the Toronto City archives (Fonds 2, Series 1243, Subseries 5, File 2) as well as at the Archives of Ontario (General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder 2082-1-1-11). Although the newsletter was published from March 1942 to July 1945, not all issues were preserved. All available issues were consulted; generally, these newsletters were 8 pages long.

¹⁰⁴ Issues of *The Mosquito* were consulted at the Archives of Ontario (Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, files F 4531-25-2-1 to F 4531-25-2-6). The newsletter was first published in February, 1942; volume and issue numbers continued in order until December 1944. At some point in 1944, the newsletter began a new volume/issue numbering system.

Engineering Company (Canada) Limited, Purveyors of head-aches for axis assassins.”¹⁰⁵

Considering managerial oversight is important: newsletters frequently included safety reminders and positive news about the plant’s production record, but did not normally publish critiques of management or exposés about problems in the plants. Although company-produced, I do not consider these newsletters to be too top down to be useful. Employees participated, to varying degrees, in the production of the papers, for example, by writing articles and posing for photographs. According to at least two former workers, they were popular sources of information and widely-read.¹⁰⁶

War plant newsletter sources were used with care. They undoubtedly reflect only some aspects of war plant life, mediated as they were by editors and supervisors. However, their popularity and consistent presence in plants make them an important source of information about how war plant leadership and communities wanted to see themselves represented, how they saw themselves, and the kind of representations of war plant life that war workers themselves were exposed to. All three newsletters published a variety of content, including news about plant production and technical aspects of the company’s products, information about recreational programs and sports scores, photos and illustrations, safety reminders and tips, editorial content dealing with the challenges of war and with morale, and “line news” columns which generally contained gossip, congratulations on various life events, and inside jokes. Two out of three newsletters experimented with columns aimed specifically at women readers: *The Commando*’s

¹⁰⁵ See for example *The Mosquito*, vol. 1, no. 1, February 1942, 1, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, folder F 4531-25-2-1, AO.

¹⁰⁶ Louise Johnson, interview with author, May 26, 2014, Ajax, Ontario, and Hughena Kennedy, interview with author, May 30th 2014, Courtice, Ontario. Hughena’s photo appeared in *The Commando* and she was very proud. For Hughena’s published photograph, see *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 7, November 20, 1942, 5.

“Powder Puffs” and *The Mosquito*’s “The Feminine Angle.” War plant newsletters allowed plant employees, even though under supervision, to write about their experiences and communicate directly to their coworkers. The newsletters also contain invaluable photographs and other images connected to wartime labour and life on the home front. Because these sources were consistently produced, and in significant volume, they provide a trove of rich material for researchers.

This study uses a second group of routinely produced, visually saturated sources: magazines. All issues of *Chatelaine*, *Maclean’s*, and *Saturday Night* published between 1939 and 1945 were consulted for this study, in hardcopy and in their original colour. Magazines were read in chronological order from earliest to latest date of publication. Since this study seeks to answer questions about the meanings and impact of visual discourse, viewing the magazines on paper and in colour was an advantage.¹⁰⁷ In order to compare the way in which war workers were portrayed, I selected three Canadian periodicals with slightly different content, tone, and audience. *Chatelaine*, a middle-class women’s magazine, included everything from recipes and fashion features to marital advice and commentary on current events.¹⁰⁸ *Maclean’s*, a general interest magazine, covered the war at home and abroad as well as other news stories.¹⁰⁹ *Saturday Night*, with

¹⁰⁷ All copies of *Chatelaine*, *Maclean’s*, and *Saturday Night* consulted at the Greater Victoria Public Library, Central Branch.

¹⁰⁸ For more on the history of *Chatelaine* in the twentieth century, see Korinek, *Roughing it in the Suburbs*, and Emily Spencer, *Lipstick and High Heels*.

¹⁰⁹ For more on the history of *Maclean’s*, see Susan Bland, “Henrietta the Homemaker and Rosie the Riveter: Images of Women in Advertising in *Maclean’s* Magazine, 1939-1950,” *Atlantis* 8, no. 2 (1983): 61-84. For the history of magazines in twentieth-century Canada, see Noel Barbour, *Those Amazing People! The Story of the Canadian Magazine Industry, 1778-1967* (Toronto: Crucible Press, 1982).

a slightly more upper-class tone, also published news, features on Canadians at home and abroad, and more.

Consulting all issues of these magazines (1939-1945), I identified images and articles dealing with war workers, women, wartime labour, fashion and beauty, and attitudes towards gender more generally. Looking at the content featuring war workers in their original printed context (where they were located on the page, within the magazine, in their relative sizes, colours, etc.) revealed how publishers intended them to be seen, and how readers would have encountered them. All three publications were widely read during the war, and included considerable uniquely Canadian content – even though much American advertising certainly appeared.¹¹⁰ As consumer products themselves, magazines engaged readers on a variety of levels, selling ideas and images along with tangible consumables. Magazines were particularly appropriate sources for this study because of their highly visual nature, their concentrated Canadian content, and their broad reach. While war plant newsletters' readership was generally restricted to a local audience, the magazines used in this study circulated across the country. Comparing imagery from local and national sources has allowed me to analyze patterns, trends, and gaps in the war worker imagery that Canadians were exposed to.

Newspapers were also consulted for this study, and like the selected magazines, they included broader perspectives than war plant newsletters. The *Toronto Star* and

¹¹⁰ According to Graham Broad, "With more than 200,000 subscribers and probably twice as many readers, *Chatelaine* was the sacred temple of mass consumption for hundreds of thousands of Canadian women." Broad, *Small Price to Pay*, 24. According to Susan Bland, "The circulation of Maclean's magazine in 1940 was 270,261." Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker," 65. See also Bland on *Maclean's* representing a Canadian way of life despite American ad content.

Globe and Mail were selected for the proximity of their city of publication, Toronto, to the war plants I studied most closely, as well as for their wide reach in terms of readership. Both the *Star* and the *Globe and Mail* were consulted online and searched using date-specific parameters (limited to the period between 1939 and 1945) and key words.¹¹¹ As news publications, these two sources included fewer, but still valuable, images. Newspapers were a particularly rich source of photographs of and opinions related to Toronto's Miss War Worker contest, held annually between 1942 and 1944. Letters to the editor expressing ideas about how war workers should behave and be treated were revelatory, and advertising featuring war workers appeared as well. Overall, newspaper source material helped to complement and support evidence from other sources, confirming that women war workers were on the minds and before the eyes of Canadians.

Archival sources, frequently visual, proved critical for this study. Local, city, and provincial archives provided photographs, plant records, employee handbooks, staff listings, and more to further enrich the source base. I conducted research at the Town of Ajax Archives, Toronto City Archives, and Ontario Archives, work which yielded unique and helpful items. For example, a series of photographs of female GECO employees posing as pinups for GECO's newsletter connected cheesecake-style imagery of war workers with women actually labouring in the plants. A quilt made from the bandanas of DIL workers showed the lasting value of perhaps the most recognizable symbol of the woman war worker's uniform. Photographs of the Miss Toronto contest, from the early

¹¹¹ See appendix for list of keywords.

twentieth century to the decades after the Second World War, provided key context for the Miss War Worker contests.

While this dissertation deals with the history of women, work, war, beauty, and the body, it also seeks to foreground visual history and visual sources. Photographs, drawings, cartoons, paintings, illustrations, and advertisements are all central to this study; analysis of visual representations of war workers would not be possible without such sources. In order to answer questions about messages and meanings disseminated in a historically specific visual landscape, one must rely on visual sources. This dissertation also argues that visual sources and visual history must be taken as seriously and treated with as much analytical rigor as written and other types of sources. Despite the intensely image-saturated culture we live in today, and although there is broad awareness of contemporary photography's frequent digital manipulation, historical photographs are frequently used to "illustrate" monographs without any explanation or analysis. By featuring photographs and other images as decoration, and by offering scanty captions and little to contextualize this visual content, historians tacitly encourage readers to approach visual sources uncritically.¹¹² Using images as historical sources without considering them with a close and analytical eye trains readers to treat images as "unmediated windows" to the past.¹¹³

¹¹² See Carol Williams, *Framing the West: Race, Gender, and the Photographic Frontier in the Pacific Northwest* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 27. Williams' book rejects "the simplistic equation between truth and the photograph." Monographs that include images without integrating them, and without at least mentioning the source and context of the image (if possible, when and where it was taken, by whom, of whom, and why) train readers to understand photographs as uncomplicated illustrative material rather than highly complex, staged, and constructed texts with authors and audiences, reflecting power relations and with histories of their own.

¹¹³ For more on photographs as unmediated windows in problematic contexts (museums in particular), see Elizabeth Edwards and Matt Mead, "Absent Histories and Absent Images: Photographs, Museums and the Colonial Past," *Museum and Society* 11, no. 1 (March 2013): 21. In the introduction to her book, Carol

In her excellent work on the role of photography in the colonization of the Pacific Northwest, Carol Williams shows that looking at, framing, and creating images is a powerful process. Here historians can find evidence about relationships, dominance, negotiation, and more. Her book convincingly demonstrates that, in the case of colonial photographers capturing images of Indigenous peoples, “looking was not an innocent act. Photographs, as a consequence, are primary historical sources useful in unveiling the fluctuating state of agency and disempowerment.”¹¹⁴ While Williams focuses on photographs as evidence of power relationships and as tools for colonizers, her approach to photographs as created sources whose authorial intent matters is instructive, and should be extended to other types of visual source material. Visual sources, like written sources, are intentionally produced, and in consulting them, we must ask a number of questions. Who created this image, and why? How and when was it created or produced? Who was the intended audience, and who actually saw it or might have seen it? In their engaging and unique collection, Carol Payne and Andrea Kunard asked further productive and challenging questions about the role of photographs in Canadian history:

How have photographs contributed to visualizing the ‘imagined community’ in Canada? In what ways does the narration of photographic images in the media or through exhibitions often shape our understanding of the past? And how do photographs that have been used in the broader project of memory work link past and present?¹¹⁵

Payne calls this “Photographic indexicality - the conventional understanding of photography’s existence as a seemingly unmediated imprint of its referent...” – Carol Payne, *The Official Picture: The National Film Board of Canada’s Still Photography Division and the Image of Canada, 1941-1971* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013), 12.

¹¹⁴ Williams, *Framing the West*, 8. See also Payne, *The Official Picture*, for more on using photographs as historical sources and the challenges and significances thereof.

¹¹⁵ Carol Payne and Andrea Kunard, eds., *The Cultural Work of Photography in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2011). For an application of many of these questions to the National Film Board of Canada’s Still Photography Division, see Payne, *The Official Picture*. On important differences between

In order to answer some of these questions, and to identify others, a method is needed for approaching visual evidence in a thorough and detail-oriented way.

Instead of using images as cheerful set decoration to support words, the historian's dominant, venerated resource and tool, I argue that we must address visual sources with their constructed nature, intent, and interpretation in mind. While the rich landscape of cultural theory can provide a variety of frameworks for visual analysis, it is also possible to deal with visual sources thoroughly and thoughtfully using a more empirical approach. For example, while their studies are older, both Maureen Honey and Leila Rupp's classic explorations of gender in wartime imagery answer important questions about images without relying heavily on theory.¹¹⁶ More recently, Donna Knaff's study of wartime graphic art and Melissa McEuen's exemplary work on home front beauty culture have demonstrated that direct examinations of visual sources which prioritize detailed description, the viewpoints of historical readers, and the intentions of image creators can yield complex and powerful insights.¹¹⁷ Both Knaff and McEuen's work shows that images other than photographs (graphic art, advertisements, posters, comics, etc.) played a huge and unique role in shaping North American visual culture during the war, in part because these types of images could communicate in special ways. Writing about the role of cartoons in the Second World War, Knaff explains that "They broached subjects that were unfamiliar, painful, or awkward; they made those subjects

photographs, "distinguished by [their] referent," and other types of images, see McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*, 86.

¹¹⁶ Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*; Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*.

¹¹⁷ Knaff, *Beyond Rosie the Riveter*; McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*.

accessible or agreeable by their friendly, informal style of image and text; and they conveyed information that both official and unofficial sources considered important.”¹¹⁸ Knaff further points out that non-photographic visual sources like cartoons and comics could be (and frequently were) funny, helping both children and adults to understand and deal with stressful and challenging situations, which were unavoidable during wartime. Despite this, comics and cartoons also dealt with serious subject matter and, like advertisements, used the combination of image and text to communicate with readers. In McEuen’s work on advertising images, we have a second example of the method historians can use when analyzing complex constructed visual imagery other than photographs. McEuen, like Knaff, deals with compound images that include drawings or visual representations as well as text, by attending to composition, colour, framing, line, and movement, as well as placement, size, and content of text.¹¹⁹ Drawing on the methods used by these historians, I approach non-photographic visual sources with the layered nature of these visual texts, as well as their authorship, audience, construction, appearance, visual style, and messages in mind.

Historian of visibility and the body Elspeth Brown’s simple, useful, and concise guidelines for “reading the visual record” provided a launching point for my own visual analysis methodology.¹²⁰ Brown suggests and describes three stages to follow in exploring images, description, deduction, and speculation, as well as listing diverse

¹¹⁸ Knaff, *Beyond Rosie the Riveter*, 15.

¹¹⁹ For just one example, see McEuen’s discussion of hands in advertisements in her Chapter 2, “Tender Hands and Average Legs: Shaping Disparate Extremities,” especially 61-66.

¹²⁰ Elspeth Brown, “Reading the Visual Record,” in *Looking for America: An Historical Introduction to the Visual in American Studies, 1900-2000*, ed. Ardis Cameron (Oxford: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 362-370.

questions that ought to be asked of the image being studied and about oneself as a viewer. In examining and analyzing photographs and other images, I argue that careful description is a critical stage in understanding and communicating effectively. In Brown's words, "The first step to analyzing an image and its historically contingent meanings is to *see* the image. Viewers have a tendency to quickly process visual information into cultural meanings which may, or may not, be warranted by the visual evidence."¹²¹ In this dissertation, I give significant attention to describing the details of the images I use as evidence. As suggested in Brown's guidelines, my approach to *seeing* images as a researcher begins with considering the content of the image, including subject matter, colour, line, light, composition, how the eye moves around the image, and any text that might appear or be superimposed; text is particularly relevant in the case of advertising images. I also consider how I have encountered the image; for example, as an archival document, as a photograph, printed in a newsletter, etc. Anything I can find out or deduce about audience, author, and intent further influences my interpretation. Attentiveness to my position as a viewer helps to clarify which ideas emerge from my own biases and position – I approach my subject as a young, middle-class, white, heterosexual, married, Canadian woman. It is important to keep one's subjectivity in mind throughout the process of reading visual sources, since "We don't all, in fact, see the same things, nor draw the same meanings from what we see; history, politics and culture inform every aspect of seeing and interpretation."¹²² Visual details matter, they are not obvious, and they require close reading to uncover fully. Further, looking closely

¹²¹ Brown, "Reading the Visual Record," 362.

¹²² Ibid., 363. On subjectivity while reading images, see also *ibid.*, 367.

at images and describing them carefully can be a productive reminder that images are meticulously and intentionally constructed texts; considering what meaning a particular detail may have held for the image's author can help lead to a more nuanced understanding of the image. Finally, connecting and comparing individual images with a broad body of other visual primary sources, as well as insight from the historiographical record, helps to clarify their meanings and messages.

In this dissertation, I consider images of women war workers both individually and as an interconnected group which formed part of the wartime home front visual landscape. When groups of images exhibit consistent visual themes and elements, they become easier for viewers to quickly recognize and decode, and they gain cultural power. By identifying frequently repeated features in images of women war workers, it is possible to understand more fully how viewers were being encouraged to (and assumed, by their creators, to) view war workers themselves. In fact, working out the visual language used in wartime images featuring war workers, a central goal of this study, relies on the existence of a visual discourse mutually intelligible to readers and creators of images. People looking at magazines, reading newspapers, and attending war worker beauty pageants needed a set of common cultural meanings, a visual "language," in order to communicate. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall puts it, "...culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and 'making sense' of the world, in broadly similar ways."¹²³ Advertisements, photographs, cartoons, drawings, and other representations of women war workers communicated messages

¹²³ Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 2.

about gender, beauty, bodies, labour, and sexuality that viewers, at the very least, were able to decode.

Finally, although this study focuses on visual history and on representation, it is also important to acknowledge and probe the complex relationship between image and experience. As Jane Nicholas aptly argues in her study of Canada's 'Modern Girl',

It is a truism that the historian has to be careful moving from prescriptive sources to lived experience... The fact that these sources [magazines] may be deemed 'prescriptive' does not mean, however, that we are doomed to study only what has been sometimes dismissed as secondary to the real business of Canadian history. There is...a decisive connection between images of women and female identities in the modern visual economy.¹²⁴

In order to confirm and complicate some of the narratives contained in photos, advertisements, drawings, and other images of Canadian women war workers, I include, where possible, the perspectives of women who actually donned the kerchief and walked the factory floor. Oral history is an excellent way to gain access to information about the perspectives and experiences of our historical subjects. In this study, oral history sources range from audio and video material available in archives or online to oral history-based research published by other historians to interviews I have conducted myself.¹²⁵ These sources help to contextualize the imagery that is my main focus; oral history sources suggest that the visual narratives I explore were sometimes reflections of women's lives, and sometimes very unlike them.

¹²⁴ Nicholas, *The Modern Girl*, 18-19, citing Liz Conor, *The Spectacular Modern Woman: Feminine Visibility in the 1920s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004). For more on the value of prescriptive images as historical sources, see McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*, 2.

¹²⁵ Audio and video sources used in this dissertation range from audio recordings of interviews with war workers conducted by other researchers held in archives to video recorded interview clips available online at sites like www.warstory.ca.

In making use of oral history, I was influenced by existing oral histories by feminist historians and those studying gender. Often, the voices of those in less powerful groups, including women, have been left out of the written – and visual – historical record. Oral history is a powerful tool for reinserting those voices and experiences into our understanding of the past. Further, it can allow women to exercise some agency, choosing the types of stories they wish to tell about themselves and their lives.¹²⁶ Oral histories connected both to the Second World War and to women’s labouring lives contributed to my own thinking around oral historical work. W.A.B. Douglas and Brereton Greenhous’ *Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War* provided an early example of how the stories of those who experienced the war could be told in their own words.¹²⁷ Carolyn Gossage’s *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots* helped me to understand the ways that enlisted Canadian women’s experiences were not captured in many general histories of Canada’s involvement in the war, and to consider the ways in which narrators could suggest new research questions and new ways of understanding events and experiences.¹²⁸ Work chronicling the lives of war brides demonstrated the ways that the stories of individuals can both connect to and diverge from broader, more general narratives.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ For example, excellent oral history work has been done on the history of gender and migration, which helps to illustrate the power of oral history to “take back” historical narratives that have been ignored, obscured, or shouted down by the louder written record. See for example Donna Gabaccia, *From the Other Side: Women, Gender, and Immigrant Life in the U.S., 1820-1990* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994) and Brand, *No Burden to Carry*. Also see Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1994), 11-12.

¹²⁷ W.A.B. Douglas & Brereton Greenhous, *Out of the Shadows: Canada in the Second World War* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1996).

¹²⁸ Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*.

¹²⁹ Ladouceur and Spence, *Blackouts to Bright Lights*; Wicks, *Promise You’ll Take Care of My Daughter*; in America, see Leder, *Thanks For the Memories*; Kendra Horosko, “Deliciously Detailed Narratives: The Use of Food in Stories of British War Brides” (Master’s thesis, University of Victoria, 2007). The stories of war brides also reminded me that women’s experiences of the Second World War connect to their lives

Labour historians dealing with women's experience of work also influenced my research process and the conception of this project: the best studies integrate a wide variety of "traditional" historical sources (written documents and records) with "newer" types of materials, including oral history, media, and more. When this dissertation began as a seminar paper, Joy Parr's *The Gender of Breadwinners* served as an inspiration and a model for how to answer questions about people's lives with diverse sources including, but not limited to, interviews.¹³⁰ Joan Sangster's *Earning Respect* and Pam Sugiman's *Labour's Dilemma* both influenced my approach as well, by reminding me that experience is often missing from the written historical record.¹³¹ Finally, Valerie Yow's thorough and instructive *Recording Oral History* sharpened my understanding of the oral historical process and helped me to think through the role interviews could play in a project like this one. Like Yow, I approached oral history with no illusions about my own objectivity, but rather embracing my subjective relationship to the research and the story.¹³² Oral history evidence fits into my study because of its qualitative research orientation. My research questions are best answered by looking closely and

both before and after the war - in other words, the effects of wartime on Canada's women, and on Canada's perception of its women, lasted long into peacetime.

¹³⁰ Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). Parr's study shows particularly well how different kinds of questions and answers are appropriate for different types of source material – not that one type of source is superior to others, just that they allow historians to address different things. Using different types of sources in combination allows for more complex narratives. Thanks are due to Dr. William Westfall for assigning Parr's text to undergraduates at York University and encouraging students to develop original research from it.

¹³¹ Joan Sangster, *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-town Ontario, 1920-1960* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*.

¹³² Yow, *Recording Oral History*, 2: "We cannot – and do not wish to – pretend to complete objectivity." Also, *ibid.*, 7 on awareness of bias instead of denial of bias. I encountered my interviewees as a young, cis, female, married, heterosexual, childless, white, middle-class graduate student who grew up in Ajax, Ontario, mindful of both the overlaps and the gaps between our positions and experiences.

comparatively at the visual record. This study is primarily an exploration of visual narratives and representation, and was not designed as an interview-based project. Instead, oral history provided a way to confirm, challenge, and complicate conclusions reached based on my archival evidence, complementary to my main source base.

There are few war workers still alive today, and of those, many are advanced in age and some are ill. For these reasons, opportunities to speak in person with women who worked in war plants are limited.¹³³ While the two interviews I conducted do not provide enough oral history data for me to draw any definitive conclusions, the stories of these women are highly valuable and are complemented by a substantial range of interviews done by others over the last few decades. There is significant existing source material to draw on: oral interviews that have been videotaped, audio-recorded, and transcribed by others confirm that the experiences of women war workers were complex and diverse, but share meaningful connections. I integrate evidence from collections of video and audio interviews with women and men who lived and worked at war plants, including over thirty interview clips related to DIL, and a group of recordings featuring brief stories from women who worked at the Norman Slater Company, Small Arms Limited, DIL, National Steel Car, Victory Aircraft, and John Inglis. I have also mined many secondary sources for relevant oral history evidence, integrating insights revealed by informants to other historians into my own work.¹³⁴ Most important among those existing studies is the

¹³³ After two years of advertising for interviewees who had worked in war plants in southern Ontario, I have interviewed two former war workers. The two interview participants who replied to my advertisements each met with me once, for slightly more than one hour each. With their consent, audio of our interviews was recorded and transcribed. Interviews took place in the participants' homes, and interview participants were able to pause or stop the interview at any time.

¹³⁴ See Ajax Public Library's Digital Archive, online, at www.images.ourontario.ca/ajax/search, for interviews with Louise Johnson, Ken Smith, Stan Landymore, Kelly Bowan, Cecil Robinson, Art McCartney, Donna Anderchuck, Alex Russell, and Dave Claringbold on different aspects of working and living at DIL.

work of Pamela Smith and Helen Wakewich, whose oral history project at CanCar addresses experience directly, making a much needed contribution to the field. Further archival audio and visual resources, including archival NFB promotional videos and recordings of CBC radio programs, help to round out the documentation on women war workers' experiences.

As this chapter has shown, an effective analysis of the image of the woman war worker in Canada must bring together, draw from, and build on a wide selection of literatures, sources, and theoretical perspectives. Close analysis and detailed description of visual sources, informed by excellent studies by historians of photography, advertising, and graphic art, along with insights from oral history, structured the research process. Exploring and analyzing historiographies of different historical sub-domains is particularly important to my research, because I argue that the figure of the woman war worker cannot be accurately understood if viewed narrowly. While historians have taken up elements of the woman war worker's story, addressing her constituent parts separately is not enough. Instead, context from histories of labour, gender, beauty culture, beauty contests, the body, popular and consumer culture, sexuality, advertising, and visibility is

Although not all are directly related to women workers' experiences, these interviews provide a sense of life at the plant not communicated through other sources. For interviews with employees at other plants, see: www.warstory.ca, with Vi Connolly, Pauline Harris, Linda Wigley, Louise Johnson, Queenie Curnoe, Tish McSwain, Mary Mouti, and Kay Rylko. See also work by Smith and Wakewich, who interviewed thirty-eight women workers from Canadian Car and Foundry. For a description of their project, see Helen Smith and Pamela Wakewich, "The Politics of 'Selective' Memory: Re-Visioning Canadian Women's Wartime Work in the Public Record," *Oral History* 34, no. 2 (2006): 56-68. For work based primarily on oral history that has been extremely useful, see Klausen, "The Plywood Girls"; Valerie Endicott, "Woman's Place(was) Everywhere: A Study of Women Who Worked in Aircraft Production in Toronto during the Second World War" (Master's thesis, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1991); Larsen, "Sowing the Seeds"; Ellen Scheinberg, "The Tale of Tessie the Textile Worker: Female Textile Workers in Cornwall during World War II," *Labour/Le Travail* 33 (Spring 1994): 153-186.

critical for making sense of the glamorous woman war worker, as the following chapters show.

Chapter 2: “Interesting Facts for Canadian Women About a Real War Job”: Background and Context

While visual representations of Canadian women war workers are the subject of this study, they must be placed in historical context in order to be meaningful. To understand images of women war workers, it is important to know something about the history of the plants where women worked, the jobs they performed, and the routines of factory life. This chapter provides context for the following four chapters by briefly connecting women’s wartime labour with the broader history of women’s waged work in Canada, and then describing in greater detail the three war plants, Defence Industries Limited (DIL), the General Engineering Company (GECO), and DeHavilland Aircraft, whose newsletters and records provide such important source material for this study.

In the public imagination, the Second World War is often still understood as a symbolic and emancipatory watershed for Canadian women. The idea that the war was the moment when women began to work outside the home, proved their worth as workers, and gained equality with men still lingers. This despite substantial research that questions or directly counters this narrative, showing instead that wartime changes in women’s workforce participation were, in many ways, limited, temporary, and preceded by a long history of women’s waged and industrial work.¹ It is certainly true that

¹ Anecdotally, most of the undergraduate history students I have encountered in Canadian history courses are stunned to find out that women lost their high paying wartime jobs and were expected to give up their positions for returning veterans in 1945. On the lack of direct relationship between women’s work experiences during the Second World War and the later rise of second wave feminism, see Susanne Klausen, “The Plywood Girls: Women and Gender Ideology at the Port Alberni Plywood Plant, 1942-1991,” *Labour/Le Travail* 41 (Spring 1998), 199-235. Klausen concludes that the employment of large numbers of women at ALPLY during the war did influence later generations of women, but that the war workers themselves did not question the gendered division of labour or become engaged in feminism more generally because of their wartime work. For discussion of literature dealing with the war’s effect on women’s place in the workforce, see chapter 1 of this dissertation.

women's position as waged workers was different during the war, but the extent and nature of that change is more limited than is often recognized. The positioning of the Second World War as the moment when women began to work outside the home is problematic; extensive research documents the diverse contexts in which women in Canada worked for pay long before the war.²

In nineteenth-century Canada, women laboured as domestic servants, midwives, school teachers, nurses, and in other occupations generally coded as feminine. Some mainly working-class women also worked in factories and other contexts coded as masculine, but usually still in industries framed as appropriate for women because of their presumed connection with the domestic sphere: textiles, garment work, and food production, for example.³ Women had worked in industrial environments long before the Second World War. In rare cases, women even enjoyed preferred status in their industrial jobs. Joy Parr, for example, documents the dominant role played by women in the operations of Penman's knitting mill in Paris, Ontario in the late nineteenth century. In

² Alison Prentice et al., *Canadian Women, A History* (Toronto: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1988); see chapter 3, "Carders of Wool, Drawers of Water: Women's Work in British North America," 65-84.

³ The history of Canadian women's labour, waged and unwaged, during both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is extensive. See, for example, Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995); on businesswomen, see Peter Baskerville, *A Silent Revolution? Gender and Wealth in English Canada, 1860-1930* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008); on midwives, see Wendy Mitchinson, *Giving Birth in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); on the history of pay inequity in Canada, see Ruth Frager and Carmela Patrias, *Discounted Labour: Women Workers in Canada, 1870-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005); on factory workers, see Susan Trofimenkoff, "One Hundred and Two Muffled Voices: Canada's Industrial Women in the 1880s" in *Canadian Working-Class History: Selected Readings*, eds. Laurel Sefton MacDowell and Ian Radforth (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1992), 191-203; Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1993); Bettina Bradbury, "Women and Wage Labour in a Period of Transition: Montreal, 1861-1881," *Histoire sociale/Social History* 17, no. 33 (May 1984): 115-132; Marjorie Cohen, *Women's Work, Markets and Economic Development in Nineteenth Century Ontario* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988); Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*.

the late 1880s, Penman's even employed more women than men.⁴ In late nineteenth-century Montreal, women (especially young women) worked in industrial settings including "collar factories and shoe factories and as packers, printers, typesetters, pressfeeders, paperbox makers, dressmakers, shoemakers, and cigar makers."⁵ Although there were far fewer women performing waged work in industrial settings than there were men, and even though the jobs open to women were vastly more limited, there were women to be found among the ranks of industrial labour in Canada before the dawn of the twentieth century.

Women continued to participate in both waged work and industry during the twentieth century. While neither of the World Wars marked the beginning of women's presence in the workforce, both conflicts did necessitate greater employment of women. During the First World War, women's rate of participation in the workforce, as well as the diversity of jobs in which they were employed, increased. Kori Street's research highlights banking and munitions work as key areas of growth.⁶ However, Street points out that the increase in such jobs for women was temporary, as well as restricted geographically to manufacturing centres in Ontario and Quebec. Her research also shows that, in addition to being influenced by age and marital status, "Women's wartime participation varied according to their class and where they lived."⁷ In some ways, the First World War offered a small-scale preview of the attitudes and outcomes women workers would experience during the Second World War since, as Street concludes about

⁴ Parr, *Gender of Breadwinners*, 15.

⁵ Bradbury, *Working Families*, 134.

⁶ Street, "Patriotic, Not Permanent"; see also Street, "Bankers and Bomb Makers."

⁷ Street, "Patriotic, Not Permanent," 149.

the earlier conflict, women were “kept firmly in their place ideologically, even as those same women moved out of their accustomed physical spaces and into the workplaces of men.”⁸

Despite the consistent belief that women were not, and should not be, workers in the same ways that men were, historians have documented women’s continuing presence in the waged workforce and in industrial workplaces during the interwar period. Veronica Strong-Boag’s *The New Day Recalled* highlights the slow but steady increase of women in the workforce between 1921 and 1941, as well as noting the widening class gulf in women’s jobs, with very different occupational options open to working-class and middle-class women. This was particularly evident in the growth of “pink-collar” jobs; these were feminized jobs, frequently badly paid, but deemed morally appropriate for young, often middle-class women in the years prior to marriage.⁹ During the Depression, with jobs scarcer than ever for all wage-seekers, women were scapegoated for their presence in the workforce.¹⁰ Women workers were criticized for taking jobs from men, a result of the unrealistic and yet persistent breadwinner wage ideal that framed men as the

⁸ Street, “Patriotic, Not Permanent,” 167.

⁹ Pink-collar jobs included, for example, teaching and nursing, as well as titles like stenographer, secretary, and salesclerk. Part of what distinguished pink-collar work was its clean and respectable nature; this type of work generally took place in clean, well-lit and safe environments, meaning that women workers’ respectability was not compromised through their labour. Pink-collar work also frequently involved a hierarchy in which male managers supervised and controlled female employees – doctors and nurses, principals and teachers, bank managers and female clerks. For more on pink-collar work in Canada, see Veronica Strong-Boag, *The New Day Recalled: Lives of Girls and Women in English Canada, 1919-1939* (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988), chapter 2; and especially Graham S. Lowe, *Women in the Administrative Revolution: The Feminization of Clerical Work* (Cambridge: Polity, 1987). For the increase in women’s labour force participation from 15.45% in 1921 to 19.85% in 1941, see Lowe, *Administrative Revolution*, 43. For blue-collar versus pink-collar jobs, see Lowe, *Administrative Revolution*, 53. For more on the ghettoization of women’s labour in the early twentieth century, see Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History*, 127-131.

¹⁰ See for example Prentice et al., *Canadian Women: A History*, chapter 9, “New opportunities, old obstacles, women in the corporate economy, 1918-1939,” 218-239.

only people with a true right to earn wages.¹¹ Despite this, women's jobs and women's wages helped to sustain many families during the economic crisis.

The desperate working climate of the Depression shaped many women's attitudes towards war work. While the expanded types of work available and looser restrictions around women's jobs during the Second World War may have been bonuses, many women who had been underemployed during the 1930s took up war work and were grateful for the regular and more generous paycheque. While many women who worked for pay during the war found jobs in traditionally female domains, the iconic war worker was a factory worker, and women started to be accepted into, and then recruited for, factory jobs that had been previously closed to them, in areas outside of the previously acceptable domains including textiles, garments, and food. Women's participation in "hard" industry, for example in auto plants, aircraft manufacturing, and gun, bomb, and ammunition production, was decidedly new.

Active registration of Canadian women by the National Selective Service Women's Division (NSSWD) and recruitment of women into war jobs, including those in munitions, increased significantly during and after 1942. By that time, the available pool of employable men had largely been exhausted, and women were increasingly viewed as the solution to the labour shortage. In a speech on August 19, 1942, Prime Minister Mackenzie King described the need to mobilize "womanpower":

¹¹ Women, in contrast, were often seen as earning money for luxuries rather than necessities even though they might be primary earners. See, for example, Katrina Strigley, *Breadwinning Daughters: Young Working Women in a Depression-Era City, 1929-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010). Barbara K. Latham and Roberta J. Puzdro, eds., *Not Just Pin Money: Selected Essays on the History of Women's Work in British Columbia* (Victoria: Camosun College, 1984); the title and theme of this text highlights this point as well.

How, it will be asked, is the total available manpower for war purposes being increased? The employment of women who have not previously been employed increases the total manpower resources. Apart from the new generation of young men available each year, the total manpower for all essential needs can be increased only by increasing the employment of women. Women are now replacing men in many essential civilian occupations, in some almost entirely. Women are undertaking many of the tasks in war production. Women are also replacing men in many of the duties in the armed forces. In all cases, the men replaced are being released for heavier or more hazardous duties.¹²

Appeals for women to register with the NSSWD began to appear in magazines in 1942.

For example, a piece authored by and featuring the image of NSSWD's Director

Fraudena Eaton appeared in *Chatelaine* in September 1942, asking women to enter the paid workforce:

More women—women who have never worked before—women who have retired from office routine, from schools, from hospitals must come back out of their homes if we are to keep up our vital wartime production.¹³

Eaton's heartfelt and strongly worded message and the Prime Minister's explanation of labour needs provide important context for the emergence and consolidation of imagery featuring the woman war worker in the visual, print landscape. Both Eaton and Mackenzie King's statements suggest that the war workers being recruited were primarily middle class – “women who have never worked before” – as well as those who had perhaps worked for a time in an acceptably feminine job before “retiring” from waged work to have children and run a home. While middle-class women, including those with children, were eventually recruited into the wartime workforce, these recruitment statements fail to acknowledge the reality that a large number of war jobs were filled by

¹² William Lyon Mackenzie King, “National Selective Service Broadcast, August 19, 1942,” in *Canada and the War: Manpower and a Total War Effort* (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1942), <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/2/4/h4-4078-e.html>.

¹³ Fraudena (Mrs. Rex) Eaton, “Women: You are Needed!” *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 36.

working-class women, and that many women who might not have worked for wages otherwise did so during the Depression in order to help their families survive without male earners. This meant that the group of previously employed women transitioning into war work was larger than it might have been at another time. The more common public narrative during the war, that women were patriotically and temporarily taking up waged work for the first time in order to support their country, did not match the complexities of reality. Existing oral histories suggest that most women who worked in war plants had previous work experience – including some in industrial settings.¹⁴

While some industries, like textiles, had employed women workers in factories before the Second World War, the move of women into war jobs in facilities producing explosives, guns, planes, and other war materials was, indeed, a departure from tradition. The nature of production in these plants, which created goods that were much more difficult to associate with women's "inherent" abilities and knowledge, made it more difficult to justify women's employment there. Yet, the simultaneous decrease of available male workers and the rapidly growing need for industrial labour meant that women filled the ranks of these new and growing munitions plants. In the three plants which are the focus of this study, DIL, GECCO, and DeHavilland, women made up between one third and nearly three quarters of the workforce.¹⁵

¹⁴ See, for example, Endicott, "Woman's Place (was) Everywhere."

¹⁵ DIL: 9000 employees at its peak, most were women. For DIL, see McDonald, *A Town Called Ajax*. GECCO: 6000 employees at its peak, over 70% were women at that time. For GECCO, see "Introduction," Typescript *The Story of Scarborough/Canada 1941 to 1945 Inclusive*, Allied War Corporation Project No. 4, Fonds 2, Series 1243, Subseries 5, File 1, Toronto City Archives; 'Introduction, Article 1', Employee handbook, Fonds 2, Series 1243, Subseries 5, File 1, Toronto City Archives. In DeHavilland's Downsview facility, there were 7000 employees at its peak, and about one third were women. For DeHavilland, see Hotson, *De Havilland in Canada* and Hotson, *The De Havilland Canada Story*.

At Pickering Township's Defence Industries Limited, a shell-filling facility located along the shore of Lake Ontario in what would become the town of Ajax, women were the primary workforce. Once completed, the plant was extremely large: over twenty-eight hundred acres of farmland was expropriated from eighteen families and transformed into a production facility that included women's and men's residences, a cafeteria, administration and office buildings, a post office, a bank, a recreation centre, a sewage disposal plant, a steam plant, laboratories, a hospital, a hair salon, and storage for completed ammunition.¹⁶ DIL's production took place in three shifts on four assembly lines, and the earliest employees were drawn from surrounding areas, including several thousand, mostly men, from General Motors in nearby Oshawa.¹⁷

Despite the availability of GM workers, recruitment of sufficient numbers of local women was challenging, because of competition from other war plants in central Ontario and Toronto. To solve this problem, DIL hiring staff, including Cecil Robinson and Margaret E. Murray, travelled to both the Maritime and Prairie provinces to personally invite and select women to come to DIL.¹⁸ Many women recruited from other provinces travelled to Ontario by train and bus in groups, some with female relatives or local friends. DIL's newsletter, *The Commando*, reported excitedly on the coming of larger groups, with photos of the new arrivals and descriptions like: "A carload of beautiful

¹⁶ McDonald, *A Town Called Ajax*, 25-26. Major construction at DIL was complete by December 1941. See McDonald, 33.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

¹⁸ On Murray's impression of these migrants, see "Murray Meanders and Sheppard Serenades," *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 3, August 5, 1942, 5.

Maritimers photographed on their first day at Ajax” and “Westerners Come to Ajax.”¹⁹ While local employees commuted to the plant, some via chartered buses revealingly nicknamed “cattle cars,” recruits from farther afield could live at the plant in gender-segregated dorm facilities. Staffed by “housemother” chaperones and located within the plant’s protective barbed wire fence, each of the twenty-one women’s residences could host one hundred workers.²⁰

Although employee records were destroyed at the end of the war, DIL’s newsletter and other archival documents reveal a good deal about the women who worked there. Workers were overwhelmingly white and many, especially women, were single – or, if married, childless. Revealing the assumed importance of marital status, *The Commando* generally specified whether people were married or not when mentioning or quoting them. The high number of marriages reported by the newsletter adds to the impression that the majority of women workers were single when they arrived at DIL, though there are occasional references to war widows, and workers with absent, enlisted spouses.²¹ As the war progressed, many of DIL’s single female employees married; while some continued to work after marriage, others did not.²² Further, women living in the residences at DIL did not bring children with them to the plant since, despite the many other amenities the compound boasted, there was no childcare.

¹⁹ “Maritimers Smile for the Commando,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 1, July 1, 1942, 3; “Westerners Come to Ajax,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 6, October 24, 1942, 5.

²⁰ McDonald, *Town Called Ajax*, 34.

²¹ See for example “Westerners Come to Ajax,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 6, October 24, 1942, 5, which profiles war widow Joyce Paterson, age twenty-two. She is presented as a symbol of patriotism rather than a young, grieving woman in need of a job.

²² For an expanded look at how marriage is presented in war plant newsletters, see chapter 5 on heterosexuality.

The age of workers is more difficult to assess, but plant regulations required that workers be over the age of sixteen or have “special permission of the Management.”²³ The plant did employ some older workers with substantial domestic responsibilities; for example, one issue of *The Commando* profiles Anne Ferguson, “Practical Patriot,” a housewife with six children aged six to fifteen, working on Line no. 1 in the Luting Room, who also volunteered for the Red Cross and “still [did] her own preserving.”²⁴ The newsletter firmly frames Ferguson, and others like her, as motivated by patriotism alone, minimizing alternative motives like increased income or interest in the work.²⁵ Celebrating Ferguson’s double (or triple) day of work, including waged labour, domestic labour, and volunteer work as exemplary, the piece even mentions the possibility of Ferguson hiring “an older woman... as a part time housekeeper” to allow her work at DIL to continue. Despite being briefly spotlighted in the company publication, women with children like Ferguson were rarely the subject of war plant news.²⁶

Newsletter reporting suggests that most of the workforce were in their late teens or early twenties, and most had at least some previous work experience. Women workers drawn from across the country had been “clerks from city offices, housewives, shop girls,

²³ General and Special Rules, Defence Industries Limited Shell Filling Plant, Employee Hand Book, 1941, 6, Pickering-Ajax Digital Archive, www.pada.ca.

²⁴ “Anne Ferguson, Practical Patriot,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 5, September 28, 1942, 1; “Double Life for Victory,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 5, September 28, 1942, 5.

²⁵ “Quiet folk, most of them, they don’t have much to say about why they’re here. Sure, some of them need the job, but that’s not the only reason. Many of them gave up quite a bit to do what they’re doing today; but, they aren’t the kind of people who tag their reason with a name.” “Anne Ferguson, Practical Patriot,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 5, September 28, 1942, 1.

²⁶ Despite the lack of childcare, DIL’s shift-based workflow did provide some opportunities for mothers to work. Louise Johnson remembers a family where the parents worked alternate shifts at DIL to make sure at least one parent was available for childcare; it is possible that other families followed this practice as well. Louise Johnson, interview with author, May 26, 2014, Ajax, Ontario.

factory helpers and recent high school graduates.”²⁷ Placing women workers at DIL on the class spectrum is challenging because many had a variety of jobs and experiences at different levels before and even during their time at DIL. Louise Johnson, for example, grew up helping out on a Saskatchewan farm, worked as a mother’s helper and at a hospital during the Depression, and then was employed at DIL. She worked on the line until the end of the war, taking a typing course in the evenings (as well as working simultaneously as an apple-picker), and was eventually transferred from her assembly line job to a clerical position because of her new skills, finishing out the war by typing her own quit slip. After the war, her husband preferred that she remain outside of the waged workforce.²⁸ Other women joined, left, and rejoined the ranks at DIL during the war, leaving to be with family, to try other types of jobs, to manage a household and children, or to enlist in the armed services. Without any information about women workers’ family backgrounds or occupational histories, it is difficult to make any conclusive statements about the class of workers at DIL. However, there are a few hints about women workers’ class status. Women who were featured in DIL’s newsletter, *The Commando*, tended to be of either working-class or rural backgrounds; large groups of women recruited from the Prairies and Maritimes, for example, were profiled in sizeable articles and often came from farming families or had work experience.²⁹ The work of

²⁷ “Girls in Residence Year Plan Club,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 11, February 1, 1943, 5.

²⁸ Louise Johnson, interview with author, May 26, 2014, Ajax, Ontario.

²⁹ See for example Doris A. Wallace, “We Meet the Westerners,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 6, October 24, 1942, 5: “A few days ago I called on the 98 girls in residence 732 who have travelled 2,000 miles from Saskatoon to lend us a hand with our war work in Ajax. They are a friendly and hearty group, some fresh from school, some formerly employed in domestic or clerical work, and others who are young married women with husbands on active service with Canada’s armed forces.” The article mentions that the author had learned some facts about farming in the Prairies from the new arrivals as well.

other historians bears out this claim. Several have suggested that a large number of women in other industries were from working-class or rural backgrounds.³⁰

Once a worker had completed a medical examination, RCMP background check, and three-day long briefing process, she went to work on one of DIL's lines (or in one of the other jobs available to women – inspector, secretary, nurse, guard, cafeteria worker, etc.).³¹ Lines were staffed in three shifts, twenty-four hours per day, six days per week.³² All employees entering the plant were inspected and subject to search to prevent contraband, like matches or alcohol, from being brought in.³³ DIL's assembly lines included "Cap & Det," where percussion caps and detonators were assembled, and lead azide was produced, and Pellet and Tracer, where "gunpowder, magnesium and RDX, a specially compounded form of TNT, were used" in 40mm shells and in pellets. Lines 2, 3, and 4 produced a variety of shells of different calibres: Line 2 handled trench mortars as well as 25-pound shells, Line 3 produced 3.7 calibre anti-aircraft shells, and Line 4 manufactured 2lb, 4lb, and 6lb anti-tank shells.³⁴ Generally, male employees took on work that demanded more strength or acted as foremen or supervisors. Individual women's daily tasks included, for example, screening and mixing gunpowder, measuring out a number of small grains of explosive behind a protective glass wall, weighing or bundling cordite (another explosive), cleaning shells and casings prior to assembly, or

³⁰ See Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*; Larsen, "Sowing the Seeds"; Klausen, "Plywood Girls," 206-207; Smith and Wakewich, "The Politics of Selective Memory," 60.

³¹ McDonald, *Town Called Ajax*, 29.

³² Louise Johnson, interview with author, May 26, 2014, Ajax, Ontario.

³³ General and Special Rules, Defence Industries Limited Shell Filling Plant, Employee Hand Book, 1941, 7-8, Pickering-Ajax Digital Archive, www.pada.ca.

³⁴ McDonald, *Town Called Ajax*, 36-39.

painting and stenciling essential information onto completed shells. Many of the materials used in production were volatile and dangerous, and occasionally small explosions that resulted in injury occurred, but as a local history concludes: “Although the work was highly stressful, the greatest danger was always boredom.”³⁵ Work processes were usually broken down into simple, repetitive tasks, like weighing explosives on a scale that simply had a fill line, rather than actual measurements. In one worker’s opinion: “It took no skill actually. It was very boring.”³⁶ Whether work at DIL required skill or not, it occupied thousands of women over the course of the war.

Although it did not boast the same live-in population as DIL, in many other ways, the General Engineering Company was a similar operation. Located on Eglinton Avenue in Toronto and created specifically to serve wartime ammunition needs, “Scarboro was to enable Canada to fill initiators needed to equip heavy ammunition of all types for British and Allied Armies and to make an ever-expanding Canadian Navy, Army and Air Force more self-sufficient than ever before.”³⁷ Originally, the plan was for GECO, the fuse filling facility, to be included as part of DIL’s larger shell filling plant somewhere in the Toronto area. However, the space available in Pickering Township was not sufficient for both facilities; the solution was to have DIL focus on filling shells and producing caps and detonators in Ajax, leaving GECO to fill fuses at another site.³⁸ Like at DIL,

³⁵ McDonald, *Town Called Ajax*, 37. Although explosions and injuries were rare, there was at least one example of a woman worker losing a finger because of an explosion at DIL.

³⁶ Louise Johnson interview, *Ajax: The War Years*, VHS, directed by Ken Smith, MacLean Hunter Cable TV, 1993.

³⁷ “Scarboro” and “GECO” both served as shorthand for the company, which was also called “Allied War Supplies Corporation Project No. 24.” See “The Story of Scarboro – Canada,” “The Background of ‘Scarboro,’” 1, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 5, folder F 2082-1-1-18, AO.

³⁸ “The Story of Scarboro – Canada,” “The Background of ‘Scarboro,’” 3, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 5, folder F 2082-1-1-18, AO.

farmland was expropriated for the factory: 357.85 acres were acquired for the GECO site from seven owners.³⁹ Organization, planning, and construction of buildings and facilities took place in early 1941, with limited production beginning in July and then expanding.⁴⁰

As early as May 4, 1941, a separate Women's Employment Section, headed by Women's Personnel Director Grace Hyndman, processed thousands of job applications.⁴¹ Perhaps because the plant was, from the start, consciously designed for a majority female workforce, it received a great deal of attention from prospective employees. Before active recruitment began, over twelve thousand women applied to work at GECO. According to a GECO created history of the plant,

In place of the roar and grime of machines, Scarboro was filled with the voices of the women operators who worked and sang in surroundings that matched the quiet and cleanliness of their own homes. To the care taken in the original selection of these women, their subsequent training, and the extent to which every phase of their welfare was considered while they were on the job, can be attributed much of the atmosphere which made Scarboro unusual among war plants.⁴²

This accommodating attitude is very apparent in one archival document, a booklet providing "Interesting Facts for Canadian Women About a Real War Job." The booklet, which would be a perfect tool for recruiting additional workers, highlighted the features that made GECO particularly woman-friendly, including its safety record, the availability of 'rest pauses,' provision and laundering of uniforms, cafeteria and canteen, free medical

³⁹ "The Story of Scarboro – Canada," "The Background of 'Scarboro,'" 5, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 5, folder F 2082-1-1-18, AO.

⁴⁰ "The Story of Scarboro/Canada, 1941-1945 Inclusive" and "Chronology," Fonds 2, Series 1243, Subseries 5, File 1, Toronto City Archives.

⁴¹ "The Story of Scarboro – Canada," "Organization," 1, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 5, folder F 2082-1-1-18, AO.

⁴² "The Story of Scarboro – Canada," "Employment," General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 5, folder F 2082-1-1-18, AO.

examinations, and recreational facilities. The booklet further emphasized the cleanliness, quiet, and comfortable nature of work spaces, which included “special lighting and air-conditioning,” as well as the availability of spaces for women’s personal grooming. One photo showing rows of wash basins was captioned “Splendid facilities for personal daintiness, plenty of basins, showers and towels provided.”⁴³ In fact, because of the highly volatile nature of chemicals used in the plant, workers were required to wear plant-provided and laundered uniforms and undergarments as well as special shoes; they were to leave their normal clothing in designated change houses at the plant before beginning work.

Despite the special attention given to women’s needs and the initially enthusiastic response to GECO’s hiring efforts, by September 1942, the company was required to hire through the National Selective Service. The company tried to recruit in the West and resorted to direct advertising and widespread use of part-time employees to solve its staffing problems. By 1944, when the labour shortage worsened, additional recruiting strategies included passing out referral cards to employees, publishing a “GECO News” leaflet, further recruiting trips both in Ontario and in western Canada, and advertising in print and on the radio.⁴⁴

⁴³ “Employment Data – March 1943 Scarboro” booklet, Fonds 2, Series 1243, Subseries 5, File 1, Toronto City Archives.

⁴⁴ The *Toronto Star* provided substantial coverage through stories about the need for ammunition and the availability of jobs. Billboards and even displays in grocery stores and other retail outlets supplemented print advertising. “The Story of Scarboro – Canada,” “Employment,” General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 5, folder F 2082-1-1-18, AO. Both Patrizia Gentile’s dissertation and chapter 6 of this study also show that participation in the Miss War Worker contest was viewed as a recruitment strategy as well.

Once women had become part of the GECO workforce, a wide variety of jobs and tasks were available to them. The recruitment booklet lists “hand operations,” including brush work, break-down and assembly of fuses, packing and unpacking, gauging, and tools, as well as “machine operations” done specifically by women, using an array of machines: air drill, drill press, lever press, burring-over machine, automatic presses, facing and lipping machines, dental burring machines, reamer machine, fly press, spinning machine, power sewing machine, and vibrator filling machine.⁴⁵ Women also worked in many of the less industrial areas of the plant, including as change house attendants, personnel staff, and as office, cafeteria, and medical staff. GECO provided a wide variety of jobs to large numbers of women during the war, and offered substantial benefits and perks to their employees, from recreational facilities and leisure programs to space for victory gardens.

The plant was staffed primarily by women, a substantial proportion of whom were married. Between 67 and 75 percent of all employees were women, and 64 percent of all female employees were (or had been) married.⁴⁶ In January 1943, when an employment survey was undertaken, of the total 3086 women working at GECO, 24 percent were under 25 years old, 29 percent were between 26 and 35, 34 percent were between 36 and 45, and 13 percent were over 46.⁴⁷ Previous domains of work listed for women

⁴⁵ “Employment Data – March 1943 Scarborough” booklet, Fonds 2, Series 1243, Subseries 5, File 1, Toronto City Archives. Stamping, crimping, and tensioning are also listed.

⁴⁶ “The Story of Scarborough – Canada,” General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 5, folder F 2082-1-1-18, AO.

⁴⁷ “History of Scarborough, Canada 1941-1945,” “Labour Statistics – Survey of Employee Ages,” General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 5, folder “History of Scarborough, Canada 1941-1945,” AO. These numbers were given for the number of employees on payroll, on January 30, 1943. The total number of both male and female employees at this time was 4576.

employees included industrial hand, industrial machine, domestic, domestic and factory, domestic and academic, stenographer, salesclerk, waitress, teacher, nurse, hairdresser, miscellaneous, and “no experience.” While a small number of female employees had completed some type of higher education, most women workers at GECO, whether full time or part time, had completed only public school.⁴⁸ Statistics compiled by GECO showed that for full-time employees, for every 100 women, there were an average of 79.3 children; for part-time female employees, there were an average of 132.37 children per 100 women.⁴⁹ The workforce at GECO, then, was not only made up of mostly women, but also in large part of women who had previously worked for pay, and of married women, with children, of an average age of thirty-five. This substantial difference from DIL’s workforce can be attributed to the much higher proportion of part time jobs created at GECO designed to specifically attract older, married women with children. Furthermore, the availability of two day nurseries nearby allowed more women in this demographic to take up war work. In fact, GECO’s newsletter, *The Fusilier*, ran a two-page spread entitled “Happy, Healthy and Safe,” which promoted the local day nurseries in the July 31, 1943 edition, reassuring readers that children were being well-cared for, fed healthy meals, and provided with weekly medical checkups.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ These occupations were listed in a table including statistics for 10086 full time female employees, and 1470 part-time employees. Although it was not specified, these numbers appear to represent all women employed over the course of the entire lifetime of the plant as there were never so many employees at GECO at once. “History of Scarborough, Canada 1941-1945,” “Statistics – Women Employed,” General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 5, folder “History of Scarborough, Canada 1941-1945,” AO.

⁴⁹ “History of Scarborough, Canada 1941-1945,” “Children Involved in the Employment of Women,” General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 5, folder “History of Scarborough, Canada 1941-1945,” AO.

⁵⁰ “Healthy, Happy and Safe,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 9, July 31, 1944, 4-5 & 7, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO. The closest nurseries were at Dentonia Park on Dawes Road and at 125 Rose Avenue, “in the Parliament and Danforth District.” The article also mentioned that two additional nurseries that would serve GECO employees were likely to open if demand continued.

While the vast majority of both male and female GECO employees who appeared in archival photographs and in the company newsletter were or passed for white, there were a few exceptions.⁵¹ In one series of photographs, white and black women in casual skirts and dresses dance together in a bright room with a jukebox in the background.⁵² Several other photos of GECO manufacturing processes included black female workers working on the tip lacquering line.⁵³ Two photos in the pinups series analyzed in chapter 5 in this dissertation also feature a black woman: both photos show her seated indoors, smiling widely, wearing a light-coloured, short-sleeved blouse with a bow on the front, and a medium toned skirt. In one photo, she holds open a book in her lap.⁵⁴ This woman's inclusion in the pinup photo series implies that she was deemed to be attractive and worthy of positive attention. All of these photographs of black women at GECO reveal that, although few in number, there were some black employees.

Perhaps the most powerful evidence of the acceptance of at least some black employees at the plant is the cover image on the January 24, 1944 edition of *The Fusilier*. The full page image shows two young black children, one in a white dress and one in a white shirt and light pants, seated and both looking away from the camera, holding spoons and small bowls, eating what might be cake or ice cream. On page three of the

⁵¹ In one history of GECO, employees are referred to as "Predominantly Anglo-Saxon in origin." "The Story of Scarboro – Canada," "Employment," General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 5, folder F 2082-1-1-18, AO.

⁵² Series of 4 photographs, uncaptioned, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 730, folder F 2082-1-2-3.1, AO.

⁵³ See photos captioned "General view of tip lacquering line" and "View of operators traying up based bullets ready for tip lacquering," General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, Box 730, folder F 2082-1-2-2.4, AO.

⁵⁴ Photographs, uncaptioned, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, Box 731, folder F 2082-1-2-7, AO.

newsletter, the children and context are identified: two-year old Barry Trotman and 14-month old Fern Escoe, both children of female employees, were photographed at the company's children's Christmas party. The newsletter's description explains the choice of photo thus: "Every so often we run across a picture that's front page material, and that means it's outstanding...Like any good picture, it requires no explanation – it speaks for itself."⁵⁵ Featuring this photo on the cover of the company newsletter suggests that the presence of black employees was well-known and not perceived to be particularly problematic. Instead, it shows that black employees and their children were invited to and participated in plant social activities, and that they were included in archival records. This is not to say that black employees did not also face discrimination, racism, or other challenges getting and keeping employment at GECO. However, the presence of any non-white people in the company's archival records is significant because of their absence in the records of DIL and DeHavilland.

As Dionne Brand points out in *No Burden to Carry: Narratives of Black Working Women in Ontario 1920s-1950s*, the 1940s saw new work opportunities for black women in Canada, especially in terms of the growing availability of positions in fields other than domestic work: "the war effort released Black women from the racialized, segregated, female employment that for them was domestic work and marked their entry into industrial labour and clerical work."⁵⁶ Brand also points out that black women faced

⁵⁵ *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 21, January 24, 1944, 1 and 3, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2028, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO. Barry is the son of Mrs. Grace Trotman, Shop 39-F, and Fern is the daughter of Mrs. Edythe Escoe, Shop 39-E. The original photo, along with a second shot of the same children from a slightly different angle, is in General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2028, box 731, folder F 2082-1-2-12, AO.

⁵⁶ Brand, *No Burden to Carry*, 20.

racism in their wartime jobs, and were sometimes assigned more dangerous work than their white counterparts. Like white women, however, black women war workers were more motivated by economic need than patriotism.⁵⁷ Despite this evidence that there *were* black women war workers in Canada, the idealized image of the Canadian woman war worker remained steadfastly white, and none of the advertising or other visual materials I encountered featured black women war workers. Not everyone's experiences were reflected in the visual record.

First established in Canada in 1928, DeHavilland Aircraft, originally the producer of "The Moth" planes, also employed a significant number of women war workers.⁵⁸ While DeHavilland existed prior to the Second World War, the effects of the war were dramatic. The company expanded significantly during the conflict in order to supply planes for use overseas, growing from 195 employees in 1939 to a peak of almost 7000 staff by the fall of 1944.⁵⁹ Wartime production took place at DeHavilland's Downsview facility on Sheppard Avenue in Toronto, and focused on filling an order for "400 Canadian-built Mosquitos."⁶⁰ The Downsview plant, surrounded by rural land, was an ideal spot for building and testing planes, and consisted of a series of long buildings called "bays" filled with "planes at different stages of production."⁶¹ The need for staff meant that "A massive hiring program was begun – almost everyone who applied

⁵⁷ For black women's absence from recruitment campaigns and their interest in war work from a practical rather than a patriotic perspective, see Brand, *No Burden to Carry*, 21-22. For black women war workers being assigned more dangerous tasks, see *ibid.*, 25-26.

⁵⁸ Hotson, *The De Havilland Canada Story*, 17.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 59 and 85. Note that several thousand employees were then laid off in 1945, as contracts were completed: *ibid.*, 88.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁶¹ Endicott, "Woman's Place(was) Everywhere," 58.

received a try, from musicians to carpenters, piano tuners and school teachers.”⁶² Prior to the war, some women had been employed in DeHavilland’s fabric shop, and along with riveting, it continued to be an area of female labour concentration during the war. Women also:

welded, inspected and worked in the machine shop on lathes, drills and other machines. They could also be found doing electrical continuity jobs on the instrument panels. Women were not found in the drop hammer shop, the tool and die shop, final assembly and the paint shop.⁶³

While men and women worked alongside one another, they tended to be assigned different tasks, and were provided with much different types and amounts of training. According to Valerie Endicott’s oral history-based study of women aircraft industry workers at both DeHavilland and Victory Aircraft, these jobs involved varying skill levels and different abilities and types of experience. While some women needed several weeks of training in special courses for their positions, others were given repetitive tasks that they found boring. Still, she notes that even less challenging tasks could be fulfilling: “judging from the testimonies of the interviewees, much of their work involved skill and responsibility despite the fact that jobs were broken down to lessen the degree of training required.”⁶⁴

Although Endicott acknowledges that because of her small sample size of eighteen interviewees, her study cannot be counted as representative, her work on aircraft workers provides valuable information about the female workforce at

⁶² Hotson, *The De Havilland Story*, 63.

⁶³ Endicott, “Woman’s Place(was) Everywhere,” 59.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 95.

DeHavilland and at Victory Aircraft. Her interviewees, all aircraft workers during the war, were working-class women (with only one exception), and those who worked at DeHavilland had previously held jobs in domestic service, waitressing, hairdressing, sewing in the clothing industry, electrical assembling, and x-ray packing. In fact, Endicott concludes that, despite media strongly inferring that middle-class women made up the bulk of new wartime workers, “the vast majority of women who sought jobs in the war industries were already in the labour force.”⁶⁵ Her study also suggests that DeHavilland and Victory Aircraft preferred to hire younger women and unmarried women.⁶⁶ Despite this, the pages of virtually every issue of DeHavilland’s newsletter, *The Mosquito*, regularly reported on the marriages of their employees, and featured many references to employees with the title “Mrs.” The proportion of married female employees is not known, but it seems that DeHavilland did hire married women and continue to employ women after marriage. Although neither Endicott’s work nor archival records from DeHavilland make any overt statements about the racial background of the workforce, photographs featured in *The Mosquito* do not suggest the presence of workers of colour. Rather, employees whose photographs appeared in the newsletter appear to be or pass for white. This could indicate either the absence of non-white employees, or their erasure from the published archival record.

⁶⁵ Endicott, “Woman’s Place(was) Everywhere,” 44.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 46. Of the eighteen women in Endicott’s study, at the start of the war, 9 were under 25 and single, 5 were over 25 and single, 3 were married, and one was a working single mother. See *ibid.*, 42.

Before taking up positions at DeHavilland, women were interviewed, photographed, fingerprinted, and questioned about any past criminal activity.⁶⁷ Work days lasted about ten hours, with two ten-minute breaks (a concession added during the war, primarily for women) and a thirty-minute lunch. Endicott's interviewees did not recall the kind of morale-boosting amenities present at other female-dominated war plants, like recreational facilities or plant-hosted dances, though they did mention the existence of separate women's bathroom facilities and a canteen. Interestingly, this oral history evidence suggesting that little existed in the way of socializing at the plant contrasts with newsletter coverage of recreation at DeHavilland, which included soccer, tennis, riding, softball (in which the DH team competed against other plant teams in the War Industry League), and "house league."⁶⁸ Further, while other plants employed morality-policing staff like female matrons and housemothers, DeHavilland's only staff of this type were female guards who "regulate[d] the too frequent or lengthy visits to the washroom."⁶⁹ DeHavilland, having not been created specifically for the war and with the particular needs and restrictions of a majority female workforce in mind, contrasts in some ways with larger and more temporary facilities like GECO and DIL. While DeHavilland employed a substantial number of women during the war, it was less oriented towards catering specifically to female employees.

⁶⁷ Endicott, "Woman's Place(was) Everywhere," 46.

⁶⁸ Jack Dane, "Recreation Club," *The Mosquito*, vol. 1 no. 6, July 1942, 8, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, folder F 4531-25-2-1, AO.

⁶⁹ Endicott, "Woman's Place(was) Everywhere," 50-52. According to Smith and Wakewich, similar women regulated the CanCar plant washrooms. See Smith and Wakewich, "Regulating Body Boundaries," 62.

Although a thorough, close examination of Canadian war plants is sorely needed, this dissertation can provide only snapshots of a few factories. The histories of each of the three war plants featured in this study provide critical context for the discussion of representations of war workers in the following four chapters. At DIL, GECO, and DeHavilland, women made up a major part of the wartime industrial workforce. While there were important exceptions, women workers at these plants tended to be white and young, and to have previous experience working for wages. Most women workers at DIL and DeHavilland did not have children, but a substantial proportion of workers at GECO did. While DIL drew heavily on the available workforce outside of Ontario, GECO and DeHavilland workers were more likely to be Ontarians. These women, employed in industrial contexts and sporting the iconic coveralls and bandanas, came to represent not only women's wartime work, but also powerful ideas about gender, labour, sexuality, bodies, and class. Approaching visual representations of women war workers with an awareness of the specific origins of factories and their recruiting activities, labour processes, and workforce demographics allows for a more nuanced analysis of those representations, because they contain both some reflection of lived experiences as well as optimistic, idealized, aspirational, or moralizing messages. The remainder of this dissertation probes those representations for meaning, contributes insights into their impact on women working in these plants, and identifies areas where women's experiences connected to or contrasted with war worker imagery.

Chapter 3: “As Pretty a Pair of Hands as Ever Monkeyed a Wrench”: Advertising and Print Culture

In the black and white photograph, three white women sit, each with legs crossed at the knee, having their hair done, while a fourth white woman adjusts curlers attached to what appears to be a hot wave machine. The beautician is likely Winnie Heyd, proprietor of Defence Industries Limited’s local hair salon, which catered primarily to women workers at the plant. Two women in the photo are reading magazines while they wait for their hair to set; for one of the two, the periodical of choice is *Chatelaine* – specifically, the July 1942 issue, its cover bright with summer flowers collected in a simple vase. Although it is possible that the photograph was staged (considering that it was published alongside an article on women war workers in the magazine itself), the likelihood that Heyd’s patrons had access to popular, Canadian reading material including *Chatelaine* is extremely high. As this photo suggests, women consumed magazines, beauty culture, and messages about gender, labour, and bodies during the Second World War. In fact, many Canadians not employed in war plants were also consistently exposed to print culture featuring remarkably stable and revealing visual portrayals of women war workers. This chapter explores images and advertisements that appeared in Canadian wartime magazines, focusing exclusively on how women workers were visually represented in print media and what meanings can be extracted from those representations.¹

¹ I have not uncovered substantial oral history, diary, letter, or other evidence, which would allow me to speak to how women reacted to wartime print culture featuring war workers, so unlike other parts of this dissertation which include some attention to experience, this chapter deals exclusively with images, meaning, and representation.

Print culture, because of its saturated visual nature, gives historians a particularly exciting way to “see” the world as our historical subjects did, and to learn about changing values and ideas, as well as the ways those values and ideas were communicated. Throughout the period of the Second World War and, in particular during and after 1942, advertising and magazine print culture in Canada reinforced the association of women war workers’ bodies with physical beauty and femininity, qualities that framed those bodies as simultaneously powerful, vulnerable, and deserving of protection. Through this association with beauty and femininity, images of women war workers’ bodies were used to sell an impressive variety of consumer products and simultaneously encouraged Canadians to view women’s war work as positive, praiseworthy, and compatible with existing gender and heterosexual norms.

My analysis builds on the work of Canadian, American, and British historians who have considered a wide variety of wartime advertising directed at and featuring women war workers. Despite some shortcomings in existing studies, including limited scope and occasional lack of connection to the broader wartime visual landscape, there is also work which amply demonstrates the potential of this area of inquiry. In their highly visual volume, Jane Waller and Michael Vaughan-Rees explore the relationship between women’s magazines in the UK and women’s wartime roles. Identifying key themes in their chosen publications, including women at work, women and men, and beauty and fashion, as well as highlighting recurring advertising slogans and rhetorical strategies, Waller and Vaughan-Rees’ study demonstrates that where war workers were concerned, the British print media was both similar to and different from North American print culture. Like Leila Rupp and Maureen Honey (among others) in their U.S.-focused

studies, Waller and Vaughan-Rees emphasize the important role of magazine ads in recruiting women into war work, a theme that is less prevalent in the Canadian historiography.² The importance of women's bodies remaining beautiful on the job is a consistent theme in Waller and Vaughan-Rees' volume, in American studies produced by Melissa McEuen and Tawyna Adkins Covert, and in work by Canadian scholars.³ While a number of Canadian historians have suggested that femininity was emphasized in ads featuring women war workers, thus far treatments of this topic have been rather cursory. In contrast, this dissertation explores how and why advertisers communicated with women workers and other consumers, and examines the types of products sold, connecting Canadian ad images with broader visual tropes about women war workers internationally.⁴ My study buttresses and expands on arguments made in Emily Spencer's book on war-related feminization in *Chatelaine*, in Heather Molyneaux's article-length analysis of ad images in the same magazine, and in Susan Bland's look at *Maclean's* during the war years, by comparing the two publications and incorporating material from *Saturday Night*.⁵ Bland's sample of issues of *Maclean's* is small, but her conclusion that

² Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, see, for example, 94-96; Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, 110; Waller and Vaughan-Rees, *Women in Wartime*, chapter 4.

³ Waller and Vaughan-Rees, *Women in Wartime*; McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*; Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images*; Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*; Spencer, *Lipstick and High Heels*; Smith and Wakewich, "Beauty and the Helldivers"; Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*.

⁴ Studies that briefly mention ad images include Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*; Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*; and Broad's recent and otherwise excellent study of home front consumer culture, *A Small Price to Pay*, which pays substantial attention to homemakers and the "Mrs. Consumer" message, but surprisingly little to femininity, beauty culture, and cosmetics. Yvonne Mathews-Klein's study is also useful, providing visually compelling evidence about gender, beauty, bodies, but it covers a slightly different time period, focuses more on film and stills than advertising, and deals more with gender ideals than beauty specifically. See Yvonne Mathews-Klein, "How They Saw Us: Images of Women in National Film Board Films of the 1940s and 1950s," *Atlantis* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1979): 20-33. Smith and Wakewich briefly mention some ad images in "Regulating Body Boundaries" and "Trans/forming the Citizen Body," but their research focuses more on oral history than on visual analysis.

⁵ Molyneaux, "Temporary Heroes"; Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker."

advertisers' attitudes towards women remained stable despite the transformations wrought by war is borne out even further in my work – advertisers insisted that women workers' beauty was not just desirable, but critically important.⁶ Molyneaux suggests that war workers might have been the focus of attention in *Chatelaine* because they were harder than other female wartime figures to connect to traditional feminine imagery. Her observation is apt but perhaps too cautious. Women war workers were often hyper-feminized, glamourized, and sexualized in wartime print culture, precisely because any hint of female masculinity was perceived to threaten the existing gender order and the power of patriarchy in Canadian society.⁷

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which the figure of the woman war worker appeared in print culture during the Second World War. In order to follow the emergence and analyze the proliferation of woman war worker imagery, I consulted all issues of *Chatelaine*, *Saturday Night*, and *Maclean's* magazines published between 1939 and 1945. These publications were selected intentionally as they catered to different readerships. Launched in March 1928, women's publication *Chatelaine* generally reflected middle-class ideals despite having an audience that included working-class people as well. In her book *Roughing it In the Suburbs*, which focuses on *Chatelaine* in the two decades after the war, Valerie Korinek reminds us that slightly later in the twentieth century, "there were repeated tensions in the readership community over representations of the ideal Canadian women, which, more often than not, provided

⁶ Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker," 84.

⁷ Molyneaux, "Temporary Heroes," 78.

readers with images of white, middle-class, urban women.”⁸ *Chatelaine* tended to convey a mixed message about the class of war workers. Some coverage presumed that the magazine’s audience was wealthier; for example, the April 1942 issue contained a piece by Helen G. Campbell entitled “My Maid’s Gone Into Munitions,” providing readers with tips on how to keep house and entertain without domestic help.⁹ Many women did leave domestic service for better paying jobs in munitions or other war-related industries. At the same time, from 1942 on, *Chatelaine* regularly addressed readers with the assumption that they might themselves be war workers, offering everything from worker-oriented beauty instructions, fashion tips, and meal plans, to news stories on women war workers. Further, the magazine assumed (as did *Maclean’s* and *Saturday Night*) that readers had disposable income available to spend on a wide variety of commodities, including beauty products. Certainly, the magazine had a wide reach - Graham Broad puts *Chatelaine*’s subscribership at over 200,000 and suggests the number of readers could have been closer to 400,000.¹⁰

Unlike *Chatelaine*, *Saturday Night* and *Maclean’s* did not fall under the umbrella of “women’s magazines” – instead, they were designed for and read by both men and

⁸ Korinek’s research also shows that in the time period she studied, the 1950s and 1960s, “*Chatelaine* had a mass, national audience of women and men, from both working-class and middle-class backgrounds.” Korinek, *Roughing it in the Suburbs*, 24. See also 33-34 for the beginnings of *Chatelaine* magazine.

⁹ Helen G. Campbell, “My Maid’s Gone Into Munitions,” *Chatelaine*, April 1942, 65-66. It is worth noting that this article appeared fairly early in the context of the campaign to recruit women into war work. For a biographical account of the experience of losing domestic employees and struggling to manage an upper-middle-class household, see Mary F. Williamson and Tom Sharp, eds., *Just a Larger Family: Letters of Marie Williamson From the Canadian Home Front, 1940-1944* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 2011). Mrs. Williamson wrote frequently about the difficulty of getting and keeping domestic help, especially because of the variety of jobs and higher wages available to women during the war.

¹⁰ According to Broad, “With more than 200,000 subscribers and probably twice as many readers, *Chatelaine* was the sacred temple of mass consumption for hundreds of thousands of Canadian women.” Broad, *Small Price to Pay*, 24. Korinek cites *Chatelaine*’s annual circulation in 1950 at 378,866; Korinek, *Roughing it in the Suburbs*, 35.

women, and featured stories and advertisements geared toward both sexes.¹¹ Both also contained a significant amount of news-oriented content, and while *Maclean's* aimed for a middle-class audience, *Saturday Night's* tone occasionally suggested a wealthier target group.¹² *Maclean's* was published twice per month during the 1940s, and *Saturday Night* was published weekly, allowing both magazines to provide coverage of recent news more effectively than a monthly publication. *Saturday Night* even featured a newspaper-like front page, with a headline and cover stories, rather than a more traditional single image dominated cover. Like *Chatelaine*, *Maclean's* was widely read. Susan Bland puts the 1940 circulation at 270, 261.¹³ Between 1939 and 1945, *Saturday Night* and *Chatelaine* both cost ten cents, and *Maclean's* cost five cents until the May 1, 1943 edition when the price doubled to ten cents.¹⁴

Throughout the period of the Second World War, all three publications included articles and advertisements aimed at and viewed by Canadians, even though many products advertised were American.¹⁵ Although each magazine and its advertisers had a

¹¹ Both *Maclean's* and *Saturday Night* included columns specifically for women, and advertising geared to either women, men, or both. *Maclean's* and *Saturday Night* contained ads for products to be used by men that did not appear in *Chatelaine* at all – for example, ads for men's hair solution like Vitalis, or men's corsets like The Bracer. There was a limited amount of advertising material that appeared in all three publications at different times.

¹² An example of the type of material that suggested a slightly wealthier audience is the type of vacations advertised – *Saturday Night* featured cruises and overseas destinations, especially during the earlier part of the war, while *Maclean's* tended to promote domestic spots like Montreal or Victoria. There are also articles in *Saturday Night* on how to deal with one's employees, assuming that readers were not themselves employees.

¹³ Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker," 65. Bland argues that *Maclean's* was a "general news magazine" and was "probably directed at a middle class audience." See also Broad, *Small Price to Pay*, 51, who puts *Maclean's* 1939 subscribership at 260,000.

¹⁴ Prices for all three magazines are drawn from the price listed on the cover of the publication.

¹⁵ For an argument that, despite the presence of American advertising, the content can be analyzed through a Canadian lens, see Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker," 65: "...the advertising being analyzed here was directed at Canadian women and represents the norms of advertisers, and indirectly the aspirations being defined for Canadian women."

target audience in mind, people far outside the intended readership inevitably saw, skimmed, and read the publications. For example, although *Chatelaine* was unambiguously aimed at women, men may have encountered it in waiting rooms, in stores, or even in their own homes if a female relative purchased or read it. Although all three publications were written for adults, children and youth might flip through them or at least see magazine covers in a variety of public or private settings. This more realistic breadth of exposure matters, because it meant that images and messages in popular print media like these magazines could penetrate and have an impact far beyond their targeted demographics or formal subscribership.

Print advertisements could similarly have a much more powerful impact than simply selling products and helping to subsidize magazine publication. Even though the primary goal of advertisers was to sell their product (or at least promote positive associations with their company), advertisements sell ideas and values as well as merchandise.¹⁶ In wartime, governments often influence and control ad content in order to communicate with citizens.¹⁷ Historians have long debated the dominant purpose and effect of ads, aside from encouraging consumers to make purchases: were they to *stimulate* or to *reflect* desires and values? In fact, advertising constantly fills both of those

¹⁶ Later in the war, when some commercial products became unavailable for domestic consumers, advertisements reminded readers that the companies were patriotic and would resume selling to Canadians at the end of the war. These ads sometimes veered farther from traditional advertising by not featuring products for sale or including them as only a secondary theme.

¹⁷ In Canada, see Broad, *A Small Price to Pay*. In the United States during the Second World War, the Office of War Information (OWI) played a major role in shaping wartime advertising to reflect its chosen messages and ideals. For more on the OWI's role in coordinating propaganda during the war, see Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images*, chapter 3, "Government Policy, the War Advertising Council, and the Mobilization of Women," 53-90.

roles.¹⁸ During the Second World War, Canadian print media and advertising told Canadians which soap and cereal and appliances to buy, as well as how to manage their finances, how to treat members of the armed forces, how to be good wartime citizens, and how to be manly and womanly during the stress and chaos of war. Overwhelmingly, media messages about gendered behaviour during wartime encouraged Canadians to continue to see gender as binary (masculinity and femininity were the only recognizable gender choices, and they were in opposition to one another), and to see gender as connected to the maintenance of heterosexuality as the cultural standard of social and sexual behaviour.¹⁹ Advertising also contained classed messages about how to perform gender in a respectable way, in particular by purchasing and using consumer products.

For Canadian women, print media encouraged the continued performance of roles perceived to be feminine. Canadian women were praised for and encouraged to hone their domestic skills, their womanly appeal, and their motherly care.²⁰ Women were also cautiously shepherded towards taking up new tasks and activities *in the service of the war effort*, and only for the duration. Many of the war-related responsibilities women were told to shoulder were still unambiguously perceived as traditionally feminine: thrifty and

¹⁸ Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994); Broad, *A Small Price to Pay*; Korinek, *Roughing it in the Suburbs*; Spencer, *Lipstick and High Heels*; McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*; Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images*; Waller and Vaughan-Rees, *Women in Wartime*. Bland, “Henrietta the Homemaker,” 64, on advertisers moving from describing products to selling values.

¹⁹ Although, as Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, and Paul Jackson have shown, wartime also provided a variety of opportunities for the exploration and flourishing of same-sex desire and sexuality, the extremely high rate of marriage and high birth rates meant that many Canadians were participating in public expressions of heterosexuality. Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 69; Paul Jackson, *One of the Boys: Homosexuality in the Military in World War II* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004). See also Winchell, *Good Girls, Good Food*; Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-wackies*.

²⁰ See, for example, Bland on the roles portrayed in ads in *Maclean’s* magazine – she identifies four major types of women targeted by and portrayed in ads; Bland, “Henrietta the Homemaker.”

efficient homemaking, entertaining male members of the armed forces, and nursing are good examples.²¹ Newly permissible activities, or activities in which a broader spectrum of women were invited to participate, often still had a feminine cast to them in some way. Advertising that featured images and descriptions of women war workers provided both subtle and overt messages about the supposedly “natural” and highly valuable femininity of women war workers’ bodies, and the importance of protecting that femininity from the potentially masculinizing effects of war jobs. Further, attempts were often made to nudge wartime work that was clearly not traditionally feminine into more acceptable territory. For example, many tasks done by women workers in factories were likened to domestic tasks. According to one photo caption in *Chatelaine*, “As easily as you darn a sock, this aircraft worker repairs an engine nacelle.”²² The overall effect was to portray women, and especially women workers, to be as feminine as possible, while still showing them participating patriotically in war-related activities. The constant visual connections between women war workers’ bodies, femininity, and physical beauty, aside from selling products, told Canadians to value attractive gendered bodies, heterosexuality, consumerism, and a lifestyle in which women’s war work was patriotic and temporary.

In this chapter, I examine several different types of advertising and magazine content featuring women war workers. First, I look at ads in which images of attractive female war workers were used to sell products not related to beauty. This type of content reinforced the idea that women war workers could and should look a certain way, and

²¹ See Broad on “Mrs. Consumer” rhetoric, which encouraged housewives to use their existing shopping and budgeting skills to support the war; Broad, *A Small Price to Pay*.

²² For photo caption, see “Women Take Over,” *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 8. For more on using the language of feminine domesticity to frame women’s war work, see Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl*, 61, citing *Maclean’s* writer Thelma LeCoq, “Woman Power,” *Maclean’s*, June 15, 1942, 11.

created a positive association between a product or company and an attractive female figure. This type of imagery further framed the attractive female war worker as a consumer herself, able and expected to purchase and use goods and services with the money she earned and presumably controlled, perhaps while her husband or fiancé was away at war.

Next, I examine magazines themselves as consumer products. Magazines sell themselves in part through their appearance, visual appeal, and editorial content. Magazine *covers* also play a crucial role in attracting the eye of customers and appealing to new potential purchasers. Covers provide a key opportunity to communicate magazine content and values to subscribers and casual viewers alike. I consider several magazine covers featuring women war workers, as well as the significance of placing an image of a war worker in such a critical location.

Finally, I examine advertising which sold products designed to maintain or enhance the femininity of women's bodies. These ads were aimed either at women in general and simply featured a woman war worker as an attractive and aspirational figure, OR were aimed at women war workers in particular as consumers of beauty products who needed special help to be as physically attractive, and consequently feminine, as possible. Many of the ads aimed directly at women war workers as consumers of beauty products targeted specific body parts perceived to be threatened by the nature of rougher wartime jobs not usually undertaken by middle-class white women – the hands, skin, face, and figure are areas of particular focus. These ads presumed that women workers did not work in industrial or rough jobs before the war; instead, it was assumed that war

jobs presented a new and problematic threat to their bodies, simultaneously entrenching assumptions about the class status or class aspirations of readers. By suggesting that women's bodies had previously been unaffected by their work, ads presumed middle-class status – women either did not work or worked in jobs that did not directly impact their bodies or their performance of femininity in the same way that industrial work would.²³ Many products also aimed to erase the impact of work on women's bodies, maintaining the illusion of feminine bodies as they might look and feel had they remained outside the waged workforce (as they would have if, for example, a male breadwinner earned enough to provide for their family), and had they existed primarily for the purpose of attracting and pleasing heterosexual men. This message, that women's bodies ideally appear feminine and do not bear the signs of participation in masculine, waged labour, reminded viewers that women as workers were unattractive to men and that women and their bodies ought ideally not to work at all – and if they did work, it should be in pink-collar jobs that allowed them to remain clean, beautiful, and modest. Women, then, faced not only the burdens of wartime waged work and domestic work, but were also expected to take on beauty work on a regular basis, spending time, effort, energy, and money to present their bodies in a certain way.²⁴

²³ Smith and Wakewich highlight this aspect of advertising: “During the war, advertising campaigns were designed specifically to target the female war plant worker with a storyline depicting her masculine work as damaging to her feminine body and, therefore, requiring restorative products and the leisured home time in which to apply them.” Smith and Wakewich, “Trans/forming the Citizen Body,” 312. While they do highlight the role of consumer products in this process, they also strongly emphasize the home as a space where women were responsible for caring for and producing their own bodies and those of their families.

²⁴ In a way, this beauty work and body maintenance functioned as a third arena of work, making for a possible “triple day” of labour. Many women worked a “double day” already, taking on both paid labour and unpaid domestic work at home. Other historians have suggested the “triple” element as well, in reference to different types of labour taken on by women, including emotional and caring work. In another example, the agricultural labour done by farm women constitutes their triple burden. See Diana Lynn Pedersen, *Changing Women, Changing History: A Bibliography of the History of Women in Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 205.

Taken as a whole, advertising and editorial images of women war workers in *Chatelaine*, *Maclean's*, and *Saturday Night* magazines during the Second World War communicated powerful messages about work, femininity, and women's ideal bodies. Magazine images of women workers idealized whiteness and rarely even acknowledged the existence of the bodies of women of colour. These images suggest that women war workers' bodies could and should be presented in a way that was feminine and attractive to men, regardless of the roughness or masculinity of wartime work they might perform. These images also suggested that the *labour* of making women's bodies appear feminine and attractive should be evident on women's bodies, which were otherwise vulnerable to displaying evidence of work done for pay. While women were encouraged to take up waged labour in service of the war effort, working women and Canadian society more broadly were strongly encouraged to view such work as temporary – and to expect the effects of such work *not* to have visible or long lasting effects on women's femininity or heterosexual appeal. Rather, advertising clearly and directly told all Canadian women that they owed their country, and Canadian men, physical beauty. Through slogans like “The brave deserve the fairest,” “Make up minutes mean morale,” “Beauty answers the Bugle,” and “Your country needs your loveliness,” looking attractive was framed as a central element of Canadian women's patriotism.²⁵

²⁵ “The Brave Deserve the Fairest,” Dorel, *Saturday Night*, October 3, 1942, 22; “Make up Minutes Mean Morale,” Yardley, *Saturday Night*, February 27, 1943, 28; “Beauty Answers the Bugle,” Harriet Hubbard Ayer, *Saturday Night*, March 6, 1943, 28; “Your Country Needs Your Loveliness,” Vita-Ray, *Saturday Night*, March 13, 1943, 22. Note that these ads are not aimed particularly at war workers, but at Canadian women in general.

The combined effect of these ads was to reveal working women's bodies to be both especially vulnerable and especially powerful. Women's bodies were expected to look and feel feminine and attractive, and these qualities could easily be threatened by dirt, grime, or simply taking part in rough work. However, the importance placed on women's femininity and physical beauty suggests that people feared potentially detrimental results if female war workers simply focused on their waged labour and allowed their bodies to change or to look and feel different as a result of work - there could be disastrous disruptions to the patriarchal gender system if women became masculine. Women war workers' bodies, then, were perceived to be simultaneously powerful and delicate.

Whether magazine ads featuring women war workers sold beauty products or not, they consistently sold an identifiable "war worker image," as well as the association of a particular activity, war work, with beautiful and feminine physical appearance. Both Canadians and Americans could identify and understand the figure of the woman war worker used in advertisements, on magazine covers, and in editorial features because the idea of the woman war worker existed in the collective cultural consciousness. The figure of the "woman war worker" in North American print culture boasted a number of very consistent characteristics that made her recognizable, reassuring, and iconic. She became, in fact, a visual icon, a "type" that could be used effectively to represent a particular group and specific ideas.

Although it has become shorthand for all North American war workers, the name 'Rosie the Riveter' first existed as a song title. Written by Redd Evans and John Jacob

Loeb in 1942, the song lyrics suggest that the idea of Rosie as a woman doing patriotic war work in an industrial setting (in contrast to more leisured or moneyed women) was crystallizing:

While other girls attend a favorite cocktail bar,
Sipping dry martinis, munching caviar;
There's a girl who's really putting them to shame,
Rosie is her name.

All the day long, whether rain or shine,
She's part of the assembly line,
She's making history working for victory,
Rosie, Rosie, Rosie, Rosie, Rosie, Rosie, the riveter.²⁶

Even though the vast majority of women who took on paid labour were not riveters, the name stuck. American scholars, including Leila Rupp, Maureen Honey, Tanya Adkins Covert, and Melissa McEuen, have traced the penetration of Rosie imagery in U.S. recruiting propaganda, demonstrating that through the Office of War Information (OWI) and in co-operation with business, the public was intentionally bombarded with positive visual depictions of housewives becoming war workers and adopting the double day. In Rupp's words,

It was a tremendous change for Rosie the Riveter, who was always a housewife in the public image, to leave behind her peaceful home existence and take up riveting, but everyone understood that it was only for the duration. Rosie was still primarily a wife and mother, and her factory job could be viewed as an extension of these duties.²⁷

²⁶ Colman, *Rosie the Riveter*, 15.

²⁷ Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*, 138. The idea that American imagery and mobilization propaganda framed women workers as housewives is also suggested in Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*, chapter 4, and in Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images*. According to Adkins Covert, for example, American women "[were portrayed] in unconventional and potentially stereotype-challenging ways, but they were couched within a traditional script that defined womanhood primarily in terms of traditional family responsibilities. Rosie riveted not because it was her duty as an American, but because doing so hastened the return of husbands, fathers, and sons." Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images*, 149.

While family was still a theme in Canadian imagery, women war workers were less likely to be framed as already married or as mothers.

Although neither qualifies strictly as an “advertising image,” two American versions of Rosie are particularly important in tracing the significance of the icon.²⁸ Both Norman Rockwell’s cover of the May 29, 1943 edition of the *Saturday Evening Post* and J. Howard Miller’s “We Can Do It!” poster, created for Westinghouse, represented key moments in the legacy of Rosie imagery. Rockwell’s image of Rosie mattered because, as Melissa Dabakis ably argues, it reflected tensions in the shifting cultural understanding of gender and labour during the war. Rockwell’s Rosie bore some traces of the glamorous woman war worker, but also significantly diverged from the pattern. Although she wore coveralls, a blouse, and pinned-on buttons, the bandana, which may have been the most potent war worker signifier, was missing. She had some feminine elements, including her round, childlike face, and the lace handkerchief and compact peeking out of her pocket, but lacked the hourglass figure, delicate body, and sexualized gender presentation of most Rosies. Instead, Rockwell’s Rosie was muscular and powerful, with a huge riveting gun across her lap and a copy of *Mein Kampf* under her feet. This image was packed with symbols, but also brimming with contradiction; in Dabakis’ words, “Both complicitous with and resistant to dominant wartime constructions of femininity, Rockwell’s *Rosie the Riveter* embodied contemporary renegotiations of gender on the home front.”²⁹ Although

²⁸ Note that some historians only label Rockwell’s image “Rosie the Riveter” and consider all other images of women war workers to be separate, while others recognize that the overlap and consistency between war worker images led to “Rosie” being culturally intelligible as a name for any woman war worker or woman war worker image.

²⁹ Melissa Dabakis, “Norman Rockwell’s *Rosie the Riveter* and the discourses of wartime womanhood,” in *Gender and American History since 1890*, ed. Barbara Melosh (New York: Routledge, 1993), 201.

this image circulated as a magazine cover rather than an advertisement, it contributed to the wartime visual landscape, in particular because of Rockwell's powerful position as a producer of cultural images, and the wide audience of the *Post*.

Rockwell's Rosie was more representative of the struggle to make sense of women's participation in heavy industry during the war, but J. Howard Miller's "We Can Do It!" poster unquestionably has the most powerful legacy. Miller's art exemplified the iconic, glamorous woman war worker who became a stable symbol of prescriptive gender ideals for war workers, even though his image did not become popular or widely known during the war. Commissioned to create a series of posters for Westinghouse, Miller visited and observed women war workers before designing his now famous image. White, young, and feminine, his Rosie was undeniably beautiful: long lashes, shaped eyebrows, full pink lips, and high cheekbones told the viewer that women workers were attractive.³⁰ Her gaze confronted the viewer directly, and there was a hint of a smile, although she did not show her teeth; her expression was confident and self-assured. The key war worker signifiers of blue collared work shirt, lapel button, and kerchief (red with white polka dots – colours that made the image patriotic as well as compelling) completed her look, a dark curl of hair spilling from the top of the kerchief. Posing with one arm flexed, fist held high, and sleeve rolled up (with one conspicuously red-polished nail visible), the figure was strong as well as pretty.³¹ The war worker was drawn on a yellow background, providing excellent contrast for the dark navy bubble that dominated

³⁰ She also conspicuously wore makeup: "Cosmetics affirm her femininity, including mascara, eyebrow liner, a hint of lipstick, and fingernail polish on one well-manicured fingernail." Kimble and Olson, "Visual Rhetoric Representing Rosie," 539.

³¹ Dabakis argues that strength is the key quality of this image, making it evocative of the strength/beauty, masculine/feminine tensions as well. See Dabakis, "Norman Rockwell's *Rosie*," 199.

the top of the poster – a speech bubble which read, in chunky, bright white letters, “We Can Do It!” Although the image has been widely viewed and thoroughly co-opted in the years since the war, primarily to express feminist ideas about women’s strength, ability, and solidarity, the message in 1942 was not likely to have been intended to be quite so revolutionary – and it was not seen by anyone outside of the Westinghouse plants where it briefly hung.³² At the time, the “we” was Westinghouse employees, rather than women as a broader social group, even if there were many female workers at the company, and even if women were a particular cultural focus at that moment.³³ The glamour of the image undermined its potential as a boundary-breaking piece of art, although it is certainly possible to imagine a wide variety of ways war workers could have interpreted it. The iconic woman in Miller’s poster was still white, young, and beautiful, all qualities which meshed with existing ideas about gender, labour, appearance, and ability. Compared to Rockwell’s Rosie, Miller’s version clearly connected more to the war worker imagery dominating the wartime visual landscape, because it suggested that women workers were glamorous and feminine even if they were also strong. Rockwell’s image, in contrast, underscored worries about the masculinizing effect of work on women’s bodies by making the woman’s body more mannish, instead of by

³² For more on the complex legacy of the Westinghouse image, including its use in the second wave feminist movement, see “Epilogue: ‘These Girls Are Strong – Bind Them Securely!’ World War II Images of Women in the Postwar World,” in Knaff, *Beyond Rosie the Riveter*, 163-175. Knaff refers to Westinghouse’s image as “perhaps the most reclaimed World War II image of a woman.” Knaff, *Beyond Rosie the Riveter*, 171. Kimble and Olson confirm that the poster hung in Westinghouse facilities for two weeks; Kimble and Olson, “Visual Rhetoric Representing Rosie,” 547.

³³ Kimble and Olson, “Visual Rhetoric Representing Rosie,” 550. See also William L. Bird, Jr. and Harry R. Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998).

hyperfeminizing it. Although both types of image existed in the wartime visual landscape, the glamorous war worker dominated, especially in advertising.³⁴

Although the most famous image of a war worker was American, Canadian media generally contained the same visual tropes, although there were a few distinctions.³⁵

While the glamorous, beautiful woman war worker laboured on both sides of the border, U.S. scholars' work suggests that in America, there was strong emphasis on recruiting *housewives* into the workforce, and therefore more attention paid to young *married* women. In Canada, while young married women were certainly part of the visual narrative, heterosexuality and patriotism, rather than marital status, were more likely to be highlighted. Images of young *single* women were very common in advertising and, in the sources I consulted, recruitment *into* war work was less of a dominant theme. Heterosexuality, however, was a constant; many women workers in ad images mentioned a romantic relationship or communicated their desire to attract a boyfriend or to please a fiancé.

Canadian magazines featured iconic war worker imagery with consistent visual elements. The glamorous woman war worker of the magazines was nearly always young, white, and beautiful. She consistently wore a bandana over her hair, frequently with one curl (more often dark than blonde) escaping at the front. The bandana was the most potent and common visual element that indicated "war worker." The woman war worker

³⁴ Knaff, "Epilogue." Knaff expands on the tensions around gender roles and female masculinity in wartime graphic art. The "mannish war worker" was more likely to appear in cartoons than in ads.

³⁵ There were also differences in the ways that patriotism was expressed in the U.S. and Canada – predictably, Canadian media featured attention to supporting Britain and the empire in a different way, because of Canada's continuing political and social connections to the Queen.

had smooth skin and feminine facial features (thin shaped eyebrows, full lips, noticeable eyelashes). She was not likely to have wrinkles or blemishes, but often wore subtle makeup. The woman war worker either wore a tailored jumpsuit or, more commonly, a blouse or shirt, usually short sleeved and light in colour, underneath a pair of tailored overalls, often blue or darker in colour. The overalls or blouse might feature a pin or button, sometimes with the image of a child (intended to signal a woman's status as a mother). In images that included both male and female war workers, women's uniforms differed in fit from men's – more tailored to show an hourglass shape or at least a narrow waist, and male workers never wore bandanas, though they did occasionally sport caps.³⁶

The figure of the woman war worker, then, was an identifiable, consistent, and meaningful image or visual signal in wartime Canadian print culture. The attractive woman war worker figure sometimes stood in for normally anonymous beauties placed in advertisements to sell products and to associate positive qualities with those products (even when there was very little or no relationship between the attractive female figure and the product in question).³⁷ It is important to note that pretty war workers used to dress up advertisements were far from the only female figures in magazine advertisements; ads also featured other beautiful female wartime figures, including nurses, women in the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWACS), women in the

³⁶ While women were the iconic war workers, there were images of male war workers too. These were fewer in number and tended to be contained in ads for industries or products where the work environment would be hot and dangerous, the work heavy and challenging. Male workers tended to be represented as either older (and therefore, the reader could intuit, unqualified for military service), or as hypermasculine, brawny, and powerful. For examples of muscular male war workers, see ads for Anaconda copper and brass in *Maclean's*. “Ads usually portrayed male civilians as too old or even too important (as in the case of research scientists) for military service.” Broad, *A Small Price to Pay*, 103. For more on portrayals of men as workers, see Broad, *A Small Price to Pay*, 103-106.

³⁷ A wide variety of advertisements use this strategy of placing an attractive person, usually a woman, in an ad simply to “dress it up.”

Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS or "Wrens"), and patriotic homemakers, as well as women with no particular wartime connection. As the war progressed, images of war workers became more common, especially during and after 1942. Despite the increasing presence of women war workers in the visual landscape, ads featuring non-wartime women were still the most common, appealing to the broadest possible audience, while those showing war workers or other wartime figures were a significant minority.³⁸ Even though she was a minority, the woman war worker became an easily recognizable visual "type." Just as Canadians understood a man in uniform as a soldier, sailor, or airman, or a woman in an all-white dress, stockings, and hat as a nurse, a woman bearing the visual markers listed above was read as "war worker."³⁹ The "iconic" war worker was a munitions or factory worker – perhaps because those types of jobs posed the greatest threat and risk to women's ability to look and be perceived as feminine and beautiful, or because they contributed the most tangibly to the war, providing bombs, shells, guns, or similar tools of war. According to Heather Molyneaux, "Images of female factory workers are more difficult to associate with traditionally feminine roles; perhaps for this reason, these women received the most attention in the media."⁴⁰ Much more than workers in traditionally feminine roles, like nurses or administrative workers, women war workers were feared to pose a significant threat to the gender binary and patriarchal dominance, so they were a primary site of tensions and were hyper-feminized and glamourized as a result.

³⁸ For an example of a quantitative breakdown of the type of female imagery used in advertising in *Maclean's* magazine – including but not limited to war workers – see Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker."

³⁹ This, despite the fact that many women who took up paid work during the war worked in acceptably "feminine" jobs – teaching, secretarial/office, nursing, etc.

⁴⁰ See Molyneaux, "Temporary Heroes," 78.

During the war, advertisements for products not related to beauty or the body, but which still featured women war worker imagery, strengthened the narrow view of women war workers as young, white, and beautiful, while trading on their attractiveness and patriotic appeal to promote purchasing. Food products mobilized the war worker image, sometimes claiming to promote health, but strongly reinforcing the idea that, for women, health included beauty. Other ads promoted typewriters, insurance, cash registers, or companies producing a variety of items, like General Electric or Westinghouse. Some companies, like Westinghouse, placed ads in magazines simply to remind consumers of their existence, despite the temporary unavailability of their products (because of lack of raw materials or conversion to production of war goods), to raise their own profile and to create positive and patriotic associations around their company name. Including an attractive female war worker helped to make such advertisements more appealing, and created a recognizable and meaningful visual symbol in the minds of both war workers and other Canadians.

A Westinghouse ad, which ran in *Saturday Night* magazine on October 17, 1942, reflected these trends particularly well (see figure 1).⁴¹ Under the headline “Ask her why it’s called THE ‘HOME FRONT,’” the ad featured a black and white illustration: a large and complex looking piece of industrial machinery, without a clear purpose but with many wheels and moving parts, stands as tall as a woman in the foreground of the image. The woman wears trousers, cut wide in the leg but narrow and fitted at the waist, as well

⁴¹ “Ask her why it’s called the ‘home front,’” Westinghouse, *Saturday Night*, October 17, 1942, 19. The same ad appeared in *Chatelaine*, October 1942, 63, and in *Maclean’s*, October 15, 1942, 34.

as a fitted blouse with short, puffed sleeves and a patterned bandana on her head, one round curl of hair emerging at the front. Her bust and hips are noticeably larger than her waist – a decidedly hourglass figure. The woman also wears black, chunky high-heeled shoes on her very small feet. The woman’s body faces the machine; both hands are visible, and both touch the machine. The woman’s face is turned away from the machine, and looks out from the advertisement towards the viewer with eyes half-closed, smiling and showing her teeth. The woman is white, young, and has a beautiful and glamorously made up face – shaped eyebrows, a small nose, blushing cheeks, accented eyelashes and eyelids, and dark lips. There is careful, bright highlighting around the edges of the female figure, to set her off from the dark machine in the background and to make her, truly, the centre of the image and the advertisement as a whole.

The ad promoted both participation in Canada’s third Victory Loan as well as Westinghouse as a company. At the bottom of the ad, various products made by Westinghouse are listed, including “radios, ranges, refrigerators, washers, electrical appliances, lamps and radiotrons.”⁴² Most of the text described how industry had shifted to war production and worked towards Victory, but two sections are of particular relevance. First, the ad copy began thus: “The war has turned soft feminine hands to harsh and unaccustomed tasks... just as it has upset the familiar pattern of life for the thousands of men in our armed forces.” The “feminine hands” were clearly intended to be those of not just the woman war worker in the image, but also of all women taking up

⁴² “Ask her why it’s called the ‘home front’,” Westinghouse, *Saturday Night*, October 17, 1942, 19. During the war, the Canadian government asked citizens to participate in “Victory Loans” by purchasing war bonds (also called “Victory Bonds”), which matured slowly and would help fund the war effort, in a series of campaigns – ten during the war and one after it ended. For more on Victory Bonds, see Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 30-34.

“unaccustomed” wartime labour. The softness of those hands, and of women’s bodies generally, was considered a key part of their attractiveness and femininity – important enough to open the ad copy. This was also a particularly classed understanding of women’s bodies – the assumption that women had not previously worked for wages or in a way that would roughen their hands betrayed middle-class privilege. Working-class women’s hands may not have been so soft to begin with. This assumption was part of a general framing of the ideal/iconic woman war worker as someone *choosing* to take on war work as a sacrifice, rather than because she wanted the money or needed to support her family. Towards the end of the copy, the ad reminded readers that when Victory arrived, Westinghouse would return to producing “those comforts and amenities of life which make our Canadian homes worth all the temporary sacrifices which Victory demands.”⁴³ The sacrifices being made by Canadians and suggested by the ad included men enlisting in the armed forces, Canadians in general sacrificing discretionary purchases to invest in the third Victory loan, and Canadian women surrendering their soft

⁴³ For American advertising that promised consumer products, and homes in particular, as postwar rewards for citizens, see Lizbeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 71-75.

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Ask her why it's called
THE "HOME FRONT"



The war has turned soft feminine hands to harsh and unaccustomed tasks . . . just as it has upset the familiar pattern of life for the thousands of men in our armed forces.

Whole industries converted to war production, are working with all the manpower and material at their disposal to safeguard the future . . . the freedom and happiness of our homes.

Industry . . . along with every individual man and woman . . . works for the day of Victory, when we may return once more to the production of those comforts and amenities of life which make our Canadian homes worth all the temporary sacrifices which Victory demands.

**"Nothing Matters Now
but VICTORY!"**
INVEST IN
**CANADA'S 3rd
VICTORY
LOAN**

Westinghouse
MANUFACTURERS FOR THE HOME
RADIOS • RANGES • REFRIGERATORS • WASHERS
ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES • LAMPS • RADIOTRONS
CANADIAN WESTINGHOUSE COMPANY LIMITED - HAMILTON, CANADA
SINGUWER, TRAIL, CALGARY, EDMONTON, REGINA, SASKATOON, WINNIPEG, FORT WILLIAM, TORONTO, SWASTIKA, LONDON, MONTREAL, OTTAWA, QUEBEC

Figure 1. "Ask her why it's called the 'home front'," Westinghouse, Saturday Night, October 17, 1942, 19.

This image of a woman war worker is a clear and evocative example of Canadian war worker imagery in general. By including a glamorous, feminine, and beautiful woman in the ad, Westinghouse suggested that working women need not become dirty, frumpy, or masculine because of their work – which was, in any case, only a temporary sacrifice necessitated by the demands of war. The image showed viewers a beautiful feminine war worker, even though the copy framed war work as a gendered sacrifice, a struggle against lost or diminished femininity.⁴⁴ The ad's visual language sent the message that, despite the exceptional demands of wartime, women should remain feminine and beautiful in appearance, and because of this, and the temporary nature of their sojourn in the waged work force, the binary understanding of gender roles need not change in the long term. The ad also suggested that women's beauty and softness was very valuable – comparing the temporary struggle to maintain beauty to the sacrifices made by enlisted men sent a strong message about bodies and gendered wartime duty. Here, the visual and textual messages were interestingly out of sync; although the ad's text suggested that women's bodies might be negatively affected by their war work, the ad's imagery, featuring an alluring and attractive woman worker, showed no such evidence.

Many other companies took advantage of the positive associations cultivated around the figure of the woman war worker by featuring her in their advertisements. These ads reaffirmed that women war workers could and should be beautiful and feminine, no matter their labour. In *Maclean's* magazine, for example, a Barrett Roofing

⁴⁴ It was not acceptable for war workers to sacrifice their femininity for victory – on the contrary, they were *expected* to stay feminine and to resist defeminizing elements of war work. Instead, the sacrifice was in the additional time, effort, and skill required to erase war work from their bodies.

ad appearing in the August 1, 1943 edition, showed a man in a suit, a man in a soldier's uniform, and a woman war worker, with their backs to the magazine reader, facing towards a bird's eye view of a neighbourhood dominated by homes and, in the centre, a church (see figure 2).⁴⁵ The ad encouraged readers to maintain any owned buildings in good condition using the services provided by Barrett Roofing. Although there was no mention of any of the figures in the ad copy, they were in the foreground of the black and white illustration that dominated the full page ad. We recognize the woman war worker because of her narrow-waisted coveralls, bandana-covered hair, glamorous look (even in profile, it is clear she is wearing lipstick and eye makeup), and by the wrench she holds in one hand. Even though this ad does not mention the woman war worker (or the other two figures) in its text, it places these figures in a critical location, highlighting them as important and assuming they will be identifiable to readers. The visual similarities between this war worker and those featured in other ads, including the Westinghouse example, make an important point: the woman war worker quickly became a powerful, identifiable, and appealing visual icon.

Other companies ran ads that not only featured the woman war worker as a visual icon, but targeted her as a consumer, too. This type of ad promoted a range of products, from bread and yeast (Fleischmann's), breakfast cereal (All Bran, Shredded Wheat), insurance (Mutual Life of Canada, Prudential), dry cleaning (Sanforized) to marmalade

⁴⁵ "Homes and Buildings Wanted," Barrett Roofing, *Maclean's*, August 1, 1943, 23.

August 1, 1943
Maclean's Magazine, August 1, 1943
23

...protect the one YOU own

TRY to rent one and you will realize how critical is the shortage of homes and factory space in Canada today. This condition cannot entirely be corrected until after the war, for new construction is restricted by war requirements.

That's why it is so important to Repair, Protect and Maintain your home, farm or factory buildings . . . to make them last until Victory is won. It's a duty you owe to yourself and your country.

The biggest danger to property is the weather—sun, rain, wind, frost and snow—which attack unceasingly and can cause complete destruction unless adequate protection is provided.

But it is so easy to maintain your property in sound, weatherproof condition by making regular inspections and attending to all necessary repairs promptly. Barrett manufactures a complete range of roofing and maintenance specialties for any type of building. Bituminous roof coatings, cements and plastics, paints, creosote oils, shingle stains, etc. . . proven products of proven dependability. The roof is the most vulnerable part of any building and if this is beyond repair, reroof with Barrett Broad Shadow* asphalt shingles, Storm King* roll roofing or Barrett Specification* felt and pitch.

Send for **FREE BOOK** full of practical hints on how to repair, protect and maintain any type of home or building. The Barrett Company Limited, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, Vancouver.

*Trade Mark Reg'd.

WATCHWORD FOR TODAY
REPAIR PROTECT MAINTAIN with
"Between the World and the Weather since 1854"

Barrett
ROOFINGS AND PROTECTIVE PRODUCTS


Figure 2. "Homes and Buildings Wanted," Barrett Roofing, Maclean's, August 1, 1943, 23. Originally published in Maclean's™ magazine on Aug. 1, 1943. Used with permission of Rogers Media Inc. All rights reserved.

and beverages (Shirriff's, Orange Crush, Coca Cola).⁴⁶ A Prudential ad, which ran in *Chatelaine* (November 1943), *Maclean's* (15 September 1943), and *Saturday Night* (20 November 1943), provides a good example (see figure 3).⁴⁷ The top of the black and white advertisement featured a photograph of a smiling woman war worker, wearing a collared, buttoned blouse, and grimy work gloves. Although she does not wear the characteristic war worker bandana, her hairstyle is neat and tidy but feminine, and she smiles widely, showing teeth. With her gloved hand, she holds part of a large metal machine. Under the headline "Last Saturday was the proudest day of my life!" the copy explained, in the woman war worker character's "own" voice, her motivations for investing her first paycheque into life insurance provided by Prudential. She indicated that she saw this action as a way to safeguard her children's future and to make her husband proud.

⁴⁶ "Help Yourself to Bread," Fleischmann's, *Chatelaine*, September 1944, 4; "Snap out of it, Sue, there're planes to be built," All Bran, *Saturday Night*, March 27, 1943, 24; "Get a fresh start for fall... with this energy breakfast," Nabisco Shredded Wheat, *Chatelaine*, November 1944, 47; "Believe me on this war job I need an energy breakfast," Nabisco Shredded Wheat, *Saturday Night*, April 10, 1943, 34; "My war job means a safe future," Mutual Life of Canada, *Saturday Night*, October 10, 1942, 14; "Last Saturday was the Proudest Day of my Life!" Prudential, *Maclean's*, September 15, 1943, 54; "We don't waste washables!" Sanforized, *Chatelaine*, October 1943, 54; "The Smartest Girl on the Assembly Line," Sanforized, *Chatelaine*, September 1944, 54; "Shorty Knocks the Gals for a Loop," Shirriff's marmalade, *Chatelaine*, December 1944, 80; "Time Out? Get Real Orange Freshness," Orange Crush, *Chatelaine*, May 1944, 63; "Have a Coca Cola," Coca Cola, *Saturday Night*, February 12, 1944, 12.

⁴⁷ "Last Saturday was the Proudest Day of my Life!" Prudential, *Chatelaine*, November 1943, 27; *Maclean's*, September 15, 1943, 54; *Saturday Night*, November 20, 1943, 10.

Chatelaine, November, 1943 — 27



THE FUTURE BELONGS
TO THOSE WHO
PREPARE FOR IT

**“Last Saturday was the
proudest day of my life!”**

THE DAY my Bill went off to war, he held me tight as he kissed me good-bye and he said, “So long, little Allie—you’re the head of our family now!”

If you knew Bill—well, you’d see why winning this war is so important to me! I think of him every day when I take my place in the shop—and my work so far has passed inspection with flying colors!

And last Saturday, when they handed me my first pay envelope, I did something I’ve been thinking about quite a bit, lately . . . ever since I read somewhere that “The future belongs to those who prepare for it.”

I paid the first premium on some insurance on my life—so that little Janie and Bobby will be *sure* of the future Bill and I have in our hearts for them . . .

Life Insurance Suggestions for the Woman War Worker

- If you’re single, your basic life insurance need is a small policy to cover final expenses and burial. But if you have dependents, such as elderly parents, chances are you need life insurance for their protection—or for your own retirement later.
- If you are married, with children, and your husband has gone away to war, have you considered that right now your own need for life insurance may be almost as great as your husband’s was formerly?
- If you are helping your husband to support your family, it is wise for each of you to take out life insurance in proportion to your contribution to the family income.
- Your Prudential representative will gladly advise you on any of these plans.

The PRUDENTIAL

INSURANCE COMPANY OF AMERICA

HOME OFFICE: NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

BRANCH OFFICES IN ALL LEADING CANADIAN CITIES




Figure 3. “Last Saturday was the Proudest Day of my Life!” Prudential, Chatelaine, November 1943, 27.

The bottom section of the ad, under the subheading “Life Insurance Suggestions for the Woman War Worker,” made further suggestions about the reasons why women in different personal circumstances (single with dependents like elderly parents, married with children, helping a husband to support a family) should choose to invest in life insurance. While this ad does address the woman war worker in a slightly different way, recognizing her waged work as something that gave her an increased and altered ability to act as a consumer and purchase different kinds of goods and services, the ad is still located in the context of a broad, visual representation of a woman war worker strongly in line with other iconic imagery – it still promotes the idea that women war workers were young, attractive, and feminine. The ad noted the possibility that a woman war worker might be single; however, the ad’s main narrative turned on the woman war worker’s heterosexual family life. The first line of copy, in fact, read: “The day my Bill went off to war, he held me tight as he kissed me good-bye...” By strongly foregrounding heterosexuality, the ad supports the messages that women war workers are attractive, feminine women, who are embedded in or will form heterosexual, nuclear families. Their wartime labour does not threaten the gender binary (and their femininity), or the dominance of heterosexually-oriented patriarchal families.

Magazines used images and text to sell a wide variety of products and services, but they also sold *themselves* using bold visual messages. Magazine covers, in particular, played an extremely important role in appealing to potential readers and driving impulse sales. In this section, I will compare and analyze three magazine covers, which feature women war workers – covers from *Maclean’s* in June 1942 and November 1943, and *Chatelaine* in September 1942 (see figures 4, 5, and 6).

There are a number of important similarities between the *Maclean's* June 15, 1942 and the *Chatelaine* September 1942 covers. Both featured large, full colour *photographs* of a lone woman war worker, engaging with the tools of industry in some way and bearing some of the key signifiers of war worker imagery. Both magazines also featured the publication title in large white letters on a red ground at the top of the cover.⁴⁸ On the *Maclean's* cover, a woman dressed in a white, one-piece uniform and white kerchief uses a metal tool to tighten the top of a bright yellow shell. Her dark hair is visible at the front of the kerchief. The woman stands, in fact, amidst a large number of identical, waist-high yellow shells that fill the entire frame of the photograph and seem to go on forever. The bright colour and repeated shape of the shells make the photograph a memorable one. Interestingly, the war worker does not look at the reader, but down at the shell she is working on. Her hands are central to the entire photograph. Although not overly glamorous, she looks tidy, pretty, modest, and feminine.⁴⁹ In this issue of *Maclean's*, reporter Thelma LeCoq expanded on the theme introduced by the cover in a lengthy article titled “Woman Power,” which opened with this description:

⁴⁸ Both *Maclean's* and *Chatelaine* were owned by Maclean-Hunter, perhaps leading to the use of a similar visual style. “Within the Maclean Hunter Consumer Magazines Division, *Maclean's* and *Chatelaine* were regarded as sibling publications.” – although, *Maclean's* apparently received much more funding and attention. Korinek, *Roughing it in the Suburbs*, 49.

⁴⁹ This image is of a DIL employee. An extremely similar image is held in the Pickering Ajax digital archives: www.pada.ca. See www.pada.ca, “Life in Ajax during World War II Scrapbook” for a photo of the same woman in the same pose but looking up at the camera, and “Defence Industries Limited – Bombs” for the scrapbook photograph by itself, captioned “A black and white photo of Evelyn Chartrand tightening nose plugs of 500-pound bombs,” P070-000-155. Library and Archives Canada (LAC) lists the image as “Eleanor Chartrand tightening nose plugs of 500-pound bombs, Defence Industries Ltd.” the location as “Bouchard, Quebec,” and the photo credit as Jack Long / National Film Board of Canada, MIKAN no. 3191773. DIL did have plants in Quebec in addition to the Ajax facility. The caption on the cover of the *Maclean's* image read: “‘Exports for Germany’ Five hundred pound bombs made in Canada. Public Information Photo.” Cover of *Maclean's*, June 15 1942. Note that the image in which Chartrand smiles at the camera also appeared on the cover of the 1990 edition of Pierson’s *They’re Still Women After All*, where it is cited as National Film Board/Public Archives of Canada PA-145665.

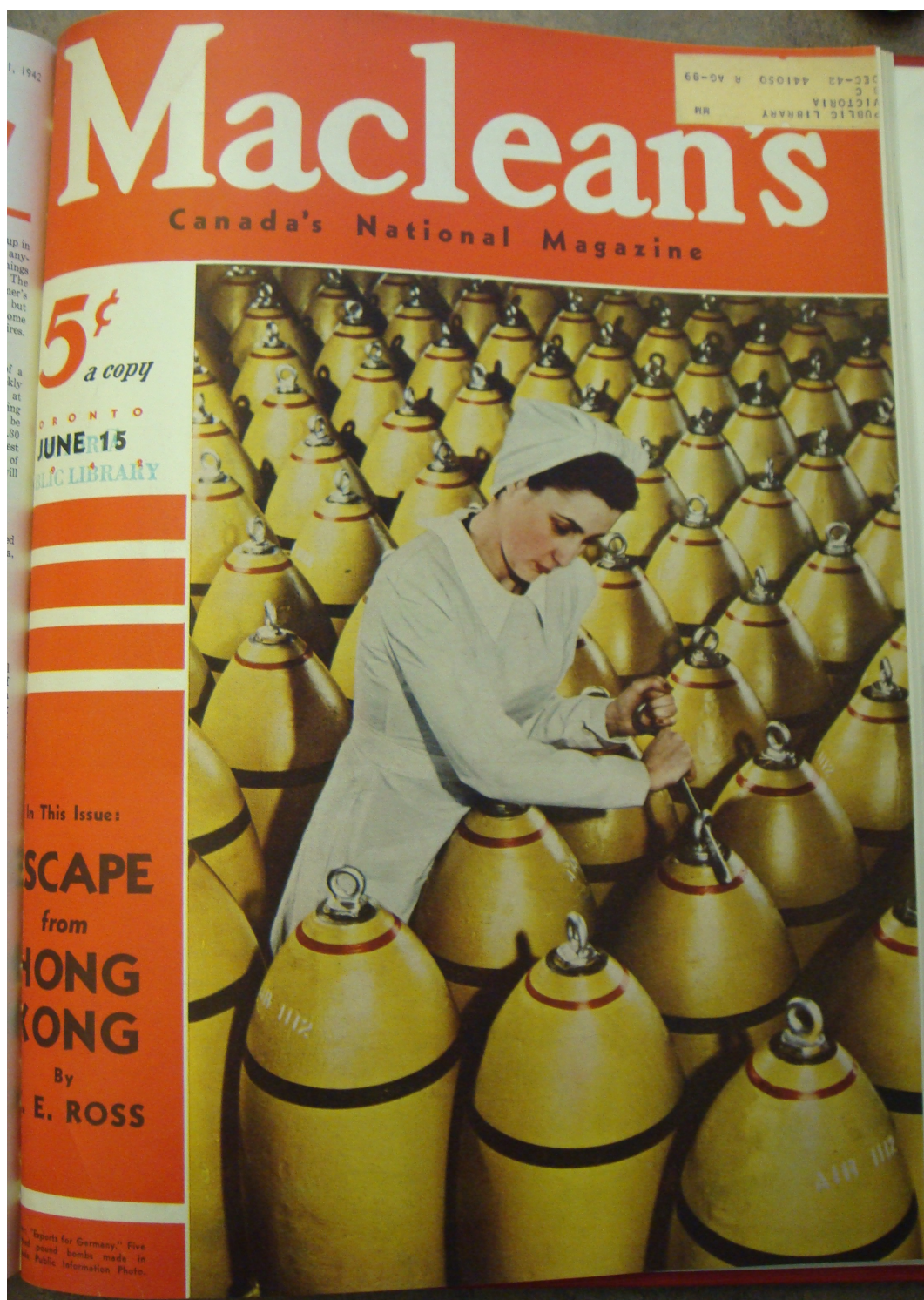


Figure 4. Maclean's, June 15, 1942, cover. Originally published in Maclean's™ magazine on June 15, 1942. Used with permission of Rogers Media Inc. All rights reserved.



Figure 5. Chatelaine, September 1942, cover.



Figure 6 Maclean's, November 1, 1943, cover. Originally published in Maclean's™ magazine on Nov. 1, 1943. Used with permission of Rogers Media Inc. All rights reserved.

“She’s a wartime phenomenon – the pretty girl in slacks and jacket, colorful bandana on her head, lunch pail in her hand, riding a midnight trolley to her job in a war plant.”⁵⁰

On the *Chatelaine* cover, a woman war worker uses one hand to spin a large wheel attached to a clock. One thumb nail, adorned with dark red polish, is visible on the hand that turns the wheel. The woman wears a red and white striped collared shirt with short sleeves, and dark green bottoms, tailored at the waist. She wears a red and green floral patterned kerchief over her dark hair; a styled roll of hair emerges from the bandana at the front. She smiles broadly, showing teeth. Her face is feminine and carefully made up – lipstick, thin shaped eyebrows, a small nose. She carries a bright red jacket and a navy lunchbox, and while her body is oriented in profile to the viewer, she looks out directly towards the reader. Inside the front cover, *Chatelaine* published a smaller photo of the same cover model, with a description of “Our Cover Girl”:

She has a clean-cut, smiling confidence as she stands at the time clock, ready to punch in on the 8 a.m. shift. She’s doing a man’s job, but she’s still a woman—well-scrubbed, neat, trim in her work clothes, with her lunch box under her arm. *Chatelaine* is proud to present The Munitions Girl.⁵¹

The blurb also mentioned the war worker’s awareness that time matters in war production, so she’s “working against time.” Finally, the T. Eaton Co. is credited for having provided both her clothing and her lunchbox. This issue of *Chatelaine*, in fact,

⁵⁰ Thelma LeCoq, “Woman Power,” *Maclean’s*, June 15, 1942, 10-11 and 40. LeCoq’s piece probed the role of women war workers, asking questions about whether they will wish to continue working after the war, what their wartime labour means to them (her answer was better pay and alternatives to domestic service, for the most part), and how men felt about women in industry. The article even pointed out clearly that women workers were not paid the same as men, and were not likely to be. So, even though it opened with a reference to the beautiful, feminine war worker icon, the article explored the complexity of real war workers in contrast to the imagery presented on the cover.

⁵¹ “Our Cover Girl,” *Chatelaine*, September 1942, inside of back cover, 62.

contained a special focus on women war workers, including articles like “Women Take Over,” “Meet the Girls Who Work to Win,” “What the Girls Say of the Job,” “Picking the Right Girl for the Job,” “Essentials for Workers,” “Keeping Fit for the Job,” “Meals on Shift,” and “Support for the Job,” a piece on appropriate girdles for war work.⁵²

These two magazine covers, which appeared only a few months apart on publications with comparable middle-class readerships, are strikingly similar. Both featured one woman war worker, white, young, with dark hair and feminine facial features, a trim, clean uniform, interacting with some aspect of industrial war work. Hands played a central role in the dynamic content of both images. While neither was especially glamorous or sexy, both women war workers on these covers are clean, relaxed, and happy looking: they make war work look appealing. The subtler messages they imparted about women’s wartime labour are that war work is safe, comfortable, and easy. Neither woman looks stressed or challenged by her labour. Using these two photographs on the cover of magazines might appeal to women war workers themselves, who might see themselves or their coworkers reflected in the images. The photographs might appeal to other Canadians as a comforting and reassuring reminder that, even though large numbers of women were joining the waged workforce, Canadian womanhood still looked familiar. The cover images were also intended to motivate women to consider taking up war work themselves, if they had not already done so. Overall, these two magazine covers present very similar messages about the bodies and appearance of women war workers: they were attractive enough, and feminine enough, to

⁵² *Chatelaine*, September 1942.

be magazine cover models, despite their participation in potentially rough, industrial labour.⁵³

The third magazine cover I will analyze here presents a more extreme version of the woman war worker image. While the two previous covers were published in summer and fall 1942, the last cover appeared over a year later. By this time, women war workers had been part of the visual landscape for some time. The November 1, 1943 cover of *Maclean's* magazine featured a full colour *illustration* of a buxom blonde war worker, looking at herself in a mirror. In the background of the image, a pair of blue coveralls and a blue cap with a small bow hang on a nearly closed door. The woman, who we understand to be a war worker not only based on her discarded uniform, but also because of the lunchbox and welding goggles placed on the bureau before her, wears a blue and white dress with a very deep v-neck, as well as several bracelets.⁵⁴ Next to the lunchbox and goggles, we see a bottle labelled “turpentine” and a piece of paper - a telegram, with the words, “Dearest – Arriving for dance by 8 P.M. – Stop. Love, Bill.” In the midst of this setting, the woman holds a jar labelled “grease remover” in one hand, and a white handkerchief in the other. With the handkerchief, she wipes dark spots of grease or dirt from her face. Her expression is panicked, but still beautiful; wide blue eyes with dark,

⁵³ Recruitment materials made these points even more directly than magazine imagery did. Photos featured in recruitment materials for women war workers, including specific appeals for staff needed at both DIL and GECO, showed a combination of life-sized mannequins attired in women’s uniforms, display photographs, and displays covered with text. For example, next to a GECO mannequin, the text read: “Hundreds of women are urgently needed at once by the large fuze [sic] filling plant in Scarborough. To help speed the flow of ammunition to Canadian and Allied Forces... Your help in this work may save the life of a Canadian boy... Easy to learn... Light – Sit down work... Pleasant surroundings... Good pay. Any woman can do it.” See photographs, “Defense Industries Limited – Ammunitions Display,” P070-000-193, <http://pada.ca/lib/images/1/3958.jpg>.

⁵⁴ Note that both goggles and a lunchbox are more rarely seen – but still potent – symbols of the woman war worker; Norman Rockwell’s Rosie image featured both.

full eyelashes and shiny red lips open in a pouty O, as well as shaped fingernails with red polish, combine with the large amount of visible cleavage to make her glamorous and sexy.

The woman's heterosexual appeal is evident, and central to the "story" being told. After a messy day at the factory, a war worker must clean up and get ready quickly for an unexpected date with her sweetheart. Despite the dark smudges on the woman's face, hands, and arms, she remains otherwise clean and attractive, with carefully done hair and makeup. Published over a year after the other two war worker covers, this image is bolder, sexier, and more playful. It is also an illustration rather than a photograph, which gives its creator even more license to communicate symbolically. This war worker's femininity could never be questioned. Aside from the hair, makeup, dress, jewelry, and cleavage, her sleeves boast small bows and the wall of the room behind her is light pink. Even though (unlike the women in the earlier magazine covers) this war worker's body *does* bear the marks of industrial labour, she is even more overtly feminine than they were. This may be intentional – additional markers of obvious femininity to compensate for evidence of participation in the masculine world of work. While the message of the first two covers might be that industrial labour will not affect women's bodies negatively, the message of this magazine cover is that even industrial labour will not make feminine, pretty women any less appealing.

The illustrated November 1943 *Maclean's* cover also contained important messages about heterosexuality. The war worker expects, we understand, to attend a dance with a man named Bill; she desires, we can intuit from her expression and her use

of powerful cleansers, to appear clean for her date. Erasing the signs of wartime work from her body, and in particular from her face and *hands*, carries extra importance when her body is likely to be seen by and interacting with a man in whom she is romantically interested. Unsurprisingly, this suggests that women's attractiveness is valued more highly than their labour by potential male romantic partners – otherwise, the need to erase the evidence of their work might be less important. It also underscores, again, women's desirability: war work is not a deterrent to male suitors. Read another way, this aspect of the cover could signal women's additional burden of labour beyond their time in the factory. After working all day, she might arrive home to work on her body to prepare for an evening either taking part in patriotic morale-boosting work by entertaining a man, or relaxing and enjoying herself through socializing (or, most likely, a combination of both).⁵⁵

All three magazine covers featuring women war workers helped to sell their respective magazines, appealing either to women war workers themselves or to other Canadians who might see them in a positive light. All three covers featured young, attractive white women whose bodies and attire clearly mark them as war workers, and in particular, as factory workers. All three images featured at least one hand, a body part that was a particular focus of concern; the roughening of women war workers' soft hands was a surprisingly common worry in wartime media. Unquestionably, all three magazine covers "sold" the idea of the woman war worker as a respectable, attractive, feminine

⁵⁵ On expectations directed at American women who volunteered as morale-boosting wartime hostesses with the USO, and in particular around rules about appearance, femininity, and attractiveness, see Winchell, *Good Girls, Good Fun*, especially Chapter 2, "The Loveliest Girls in the Nation." Winchell notes that USO hostesses enjoyed, resented, and resisted beauty expectations.

person. Finding such images of women war workers in a high profile location like a magazine cover suggests significant penetration into the Canadian visual landscape.

The most obvious manner in which print culture and advertising reinforced the relationship between the iconic figure of the female war worker and physical beauty and femininity was through advertising for beauty and body products. Like ads for other products unrelated to the body, these ads told both war workers themselves and other magazine readers how an ideal war worker might look and behave. Like the magazine covers I examined, beauty ads contained powerful messages about femininity, heterosexuality, and the desirability of women war workers' bodies being clean, soft, and pretty. Interestingly, beauty ads featuring women war workers framed women's bodies as both vulnerable and powerful. Many products aimed, and claimed, to protect women's bodies from bearing visual or otherwise discernible markers of their wartime work. That merely being exposed to grease or grime could be so problematic hinted that women's bodies might not be very hardy to begin with. Some products even claimed they could mask or eliminate the deeper physical effects of war work that could not be seen (like headaches or corns), helping women to continue *behaving* in a feminine manner as well as looking that way. However, the ability, even the necessity, for women's bodies to appear feminine and attractive, specifically to men, confirmed that women's bodies were critical to the maintenance of the heterosexual gender binary. Further, the strong desire to prevent or erase evidence of labour from appearing on women's bodies indicated that their primary purpose was to look, feel, and act feminine and beautiful. Women might

work, temporarily, in service of the war effort, but they should not let that impede the real work of being a woman – looking pretty and attracting a male partner.⁵⁶

It is worth noting that, while advertisements for beauty products aimed at war workers identified war work as a unique and powerful threat to women's bodies, most ads for beauty products were aimed at women more generally and still suggested that women needed to purchase and use consumer products in order to manage their unruly bodies. Hand products, for example, made up a significant portion of all beauty ads aimed at women in *Chatelaine*, *Maclean's*, and *Saturday Night*. Most hand cream ads reminded women that they needed to protect their hands and keep them soft, regardless of whether they worked for pay or not. Some brands used war workers in only a small minority of ads; for example, Campana's Balm, which occasionally advertised directly to war workers, was much more commonly marketed to women in general, assuming that dry or rough hands were a general concern which could be caused by "wind, weather, water and work" (especially during Canadian winters, or "chapped-skin weather").⁵⁷ War work, then, was not the *only* reason that women might need to buy hand cream, and war workers were not the only ones at risk.

⁵⁶ The implication that women's war work was temporary, and that women would not normally need to deal with the challenges of working in an industrial context, indicated a middle-class perspective which would not be out of line with *Chatelaine*, *Maclean's*, and *Saturday Night's* target readership. Some working-class women did work in factories before the Second World War, and many middle-class women worked for wages prewar, especially before marriage and after their children were grown.

⁵⁷ For more on Campana's Balm ads featuring war workers, see remainder of this chapter. For examples of non-war worker Campana's Balm ads, see "New! Campana's Cream Balm," *Chatelaine*, October 1944, 67 and December 1944. Quotation is from December 1944, 86, which contains two Campana's Balm ads – one for Original Campana's Italian Balm (from which the quotation is drawn), and one for "New! Campana's Cream Balm," which still mentions "water, wind and weather" – risks which presumably all women were exposed to.

Hands were the part of women war workers' bodies that caused the most anxiety and drew the most attention from beauty advertisers.⁵⁸ A wide variety of hand creams and hand lotions, marketed to the general population before, during, and after the war, were featured in ads sometimes aimed specifically at war workers during the conflict. Women's hands, then, were always expected to be soft, whether they worked for pay or not. However, for what magazines presumed were middle-class women unlikely to be engaged in industrial labour outside the context of war, war jobs seemed likely to roughen hands more or differently than everyday civilian life might do. Middle-class women were also prime candidates for this type of advertising because their disposable income made them attractive targets.⁵⁹ Advertisements for hand lotions, creams, and soaps which used the image of the female war worker very frequently suggested that first, war work could, and probably would, make women's hands rough; and second, that women needed soft hands to attract men – or, at the very least, that men noticed and appreciated women's soft hands. Companies including Jergen's, Campana's Italian Balm, Hinds, Cutex, Vaseline, and Cuticura all advertised products for hands using war worker imagery.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ For analysis of American advertisements featuring products for hands (not limited to war workers, but including housewives and other women as well), see Chapter 2, "Tender Hands and Average Legs: Shaping Disparate Extremities," McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*, 56-99.

⁵⁹ Alternatively, perhaps these advertisers simply saw a vulnerable population whose insecurities could be capitalized on (or created). Many of these hand cream companies also ran ads for their products that did not feature war workers between 1939 and 1945, but instead involved some other messaging or storyline.

⁶⁰ See, for example, "If you want him to whisper... 'Your hands hold my Heart,'" Jergens Lotion, *Chatelaine*, September 1943, 53; "Working wives keep Hands enchanting," Jergens Lotion, *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 27; "Your hands now need Campana's Balm protection... more than ever!" Campana's Balm, *Chatelaine*, January 1943, 26; "My boss says I've got as pretty a pair of hands as ever monkeyed a wrench!," Hinds, *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 61; "Hands on the Job," Cutex, *Chatelaine*, October 1943, 44 and September 1943, 52; "Why have Rough, Grimy Hands?," Vaseline, *Chatelaine*, February 1944, 36 and *Maclean's*, February 1, 1944, 38; "Women Workers!" Cuticura, *Chatelaine*, December 1944, 64.

Beauty ads addressed the expectation that women workers should remain physically feminine most directly. For example, in 1943, a Campana's Italian Balm ad visually and textually emphasized the importance of soft hands for war workers (see figure 7).⁶¹ The headline declared, "...Your Hands now need Campana's Balm protection... *more than ever!*"⁶² Black and white illustrations of a woman wearing a short-sleeved shirt, dark coveralls, and a polka dot bandana on her hair while manipulating a machine, and of the same woman with styled hair and jewelry taking candy from a box being offered to her by a man, complemented the bold headline message. The copy explained more fully:

Extra work... dirtier jobs...all to be done with the same pair of hands that must match the loveliness of your best dress. Let Campana's Italian Balm give your hands its famous protecting care and then... in spite of harder work, your hands will be soft and lovely.⁶³

The illustration of the man and woman together in this ad signalled that the reason it mattered whether one's hands were as lovely as one's dress: it mattered to men.

An advertisement for Cutex hand cream explained why soft hands were important, beyond simply being pleasurable to touch. Soft hands denoted femininity, in part because they suggested that a woman did not work for pay, but instead remained at home and was financially supported by her husband (see figure 8). The Cutex ad featured a large black and white photograph of war worker Anne Picard, wearing a printed

⁶¹ "Your hands now need Campana's Balm protection... more than ever!" Campana's Balm, *Chatelaine*, December 1943, 48.

⁶² See Waller and Vaughan-Rees, *Women in Wartime*, 94, on the repeated use of the wartime slogan "Now more than ever!" in the UK.

⁶³ "Your hands now need Campana's Balm protection... more than ever!," Campana's Balm, *Chatelaine*, December 1943, 48.

bandana over her hair, a light coloured patterned blouse, and a dark shirt over the blouse. Anne's hands manipulated a large machine. A second black and white photograph showed hands being moisturized over a white sink. The copy pointed out that Anne was married to Private René Picard, and then directed the reader to examine Anne's hands:

Notice Anne's hands... strong and capable... yet smooth and soft *as if she spent her days at home*. She smooths in fragrant Cutex Hand Cream during rest periods. It keeps her hard working hands looking soft and feminine.⁶⁴

First, the ad affirmed Anne's heterosexual and partnered status (mentioning that her husband was an enlisted man added further patriotic appeal and credibility); then, the ad explained that soft, feminine hands hint that Anne does not work for pay at all, but rather "[spends] her days at home," an activity which the ad assumed did not involve labour.⁶⁵ By using Cutex Hand Cream "during rest periods," the ad implied, working women could erase the physical evidence of war work from their bodies, maintaining the illusion of patriarchal dominance of the labour market and the fiction of women's restricted place in the home. In this image, women's presumed and idealized role as middle-class wives who remained outside of the waged workforce involved presenting a feminine body to communicate their class position, showing that their husbands or fathers earned enough to prevent them from needing to work for pay.⁶⁶ This advertisement told readers that women war workers should purchase products and strive to keep their bodies looking and feeling feminine, as well as framing them as ideally heterosexual, married, and middle-class.

⁶⁴ "Hands on the Job," Cutex, *Chatelaine*, September 1943, 52. Emphasis mine.

⁶⁵ In other words, domestic and caring labour, which Ann might be doing even if she *were* "spending her days at home," was not considered to be a risk for increased hand roughening.

⁶⁶ Note that this ignored the experiences of working-class women entirely.

... Your Hands now need Campana's Balm protection ...

... more than ever!

EXTRA WORK... dirtier jobs
...all to be done with the same pair of hands that must match the loveliness of your best dress. Let Campana's Italian Balm give your hands its famous protecting care and then... in spite of harder work, your hands will be soft and lovely.

TODAY... more than ever before, your hands need Campana's Balm. A drop or two of this rich, soothing hand lotion does for both hands. A 35c bottle lasts a long time.

POPULAR FOR OVER 60 YEARS!

"Nothing better for the hands", say beauty-wise women. And thank goodness there are 265 applications for both hands, in one bottle; for in these war times the supply of Campana's Balm is unavoidably limited.

35c

CAMPANA'S ITALIAN BALM

Figure 7. "Your hands now need Campana's Balm protection... more than ever!"
Campana's Balm, Chatelaine, December 1943, 48.

Anne Picard of
Canadian Pacific Airlines

During rest periods—
Hand Cream

HANDS ON THE JOB

• Anne Picard married Pte. René Picard, R.A.M.C., two years ago in Surrey, England. When Pte. Picard was transferred home to St. Johns, Quebec, his young English bride came, too . . . joined the staff of Canadian Pacific Airlines Air Observers' School in St. Johns as a mechanic. Notice Anne's hands . . . strong and capable . . . yet smooth and soft as if she spent her days at home. She smooths in fragrant Cutex Hand Cream during rest periods. It keeps her hard-working hands looking soft and feminine.

CUTEX HAND CREAM

Figure 8. "Hands on the Job," Cutex, *Chatelaine*, September 1943, 52.

A third hand lotion advertisement, promoting Hinds for Hands cream, linked soft hands the most directly to heterosexual romance (see figure 9). In this ad, a woman wearing a tailored jumpsuit and holding a wrench in one hand addresses the reader directly: "My boss says I've got as pretty a pair of hands as ever monkeyed a wrench! . . .

Greasy grime was tough on my hands till I started using Hinds Honey and Almond Cream... Now my hands wash up smooth and pretty as you please!”⁶⁷ A large illustration of a pair of feminine hands (with shaped, polished nails) holding a bottle of Hinds cream dominates the ad.⁶⁸ Towards the bottom however, a smaller image, framed by a heart, provides an important visual message: a man in uniform holds the hands of a thin, white woman wearing a dress, with styled hair. The woman’s gaze addresses the reader, and she says, “He says my hands feel EXTRA SOFT... they’ve got the touch he can’t forget!” (emphasis in original). This ad dynamically connects messages about the effect of war work on women’s bodies – greasy, grimy hands – with the benefits of using a particular hand cream: soft hands that cannot be forgotten by bosses or male suitors.⁶⁹ The fact that men are present in all of these hand cream ads, either visually or textually, strongly indicated to women and to other magazine readers that men could and should expect women to think about, and work towards, having a body that looked and felt soft, feminine, and beautiful – the way it would if that woman was not taking part in waged

⁶⁷ “My boss says I’ve got as pretty a pair of hands as ever monkeyed a wrench!,” Hinds, *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 61. Though her body is turned away, her face is turned towards the viewer – this is a pose, which, even today, is highly feminized because of the way it emphasizes an hourglass figure and allows both breasts and buttocks to face the viewer at once. In some ways, this image echoes “Vargas Girl” style pinup images popularized in *Esquire* magazine during the war. For more on Alberto Vargas and pinup history, see Mark Gabor, *The Pin-Up: A Modest History* (New York: Universe Books, 1972) as well as chapter 5 in this dissertation. Kimble and Olson also identify similarities between Vargas’ work and Miller’s series of poster images for Westinghouse; Kimble and Olson, “Visual Rhetoric Representing Rosie,” 560.

⁶⁸ Including an image of the product itself was a strategy used by advertisers to help consumers recognize the product when seeking it on store shelves.

⁶⁹ “My boss says I’ve got as pretty a pair of hands as ever monkeyed a wrench!,” Hinds, *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 61. Whether “boss” refers to her employer or her husband or boyfriend, the implication that this male person is in some kind of power relationship over her is telling. If this is in fact a reference to her employer, it implies a significant amount of bodily management or supervision. Further, the ads suggest that a significant part of women’s motivation to preserve/present soft hands relates to the desires of men, or their relationships with men – rather than, for example, because it feels nice to a woman, is pleasurable for her in her own right; this is not beauty for beauty’s sake, or just for fun. It is for men.

war work. It further framed the woman war worker as a heterosexually appealing and respectable figure.

Advertisements for beauty products other than hand creams also featured women war workers who were physically attractive, and encouraged the purchase of products that would help them look feminine and behave in womanly ways. An Ipana toothpaste ad in *Chatelaine* magazine suggested that women working in a wide variety of jobs ought to strive for beauty when not at work (see figure 10). With the headline “After Hours – turn heads and hearts with a sparkling smile!,” the full page, black and white ad is dominated by a large, viewer-facing photograph of a smiling white woman’s head and shoulders. She has short, dark hair and wears shiny earrings, three strands of pearls, and a dark top. Behind her are six smaller illustrations of different women participating in different kinds of labour: a scientist, a nurse, an office worker, a member of the armed forces, and two women who appear to be working in factory settings – one checking gauges, and one working with a machine and wearing the trademark collared, short sleeved shirt and bandana typical of war workers.⁷⁰ In the bottom portion of the ad, women are encouraged to take up war work, and to view a wide variety of employment as ‘war work’.

⁷⁰ “After Hours,” Ipana, *Chatelaine*, December 1944, 1. The bottom section of the ad, dominated by text, also includes a boxed section titled “Your country needs you in a vital job!” encouraging women to take on a war job of some kind and recommending they contact their local NSS office to do so.

Chatelaine, September, 1942 — 61

"My boss says I've got as pretty a pair of hands as ever monkeyed a wrench!"

I say it's because I use **HINDS** — a **HONEY** of a lotion! No chapped, red look for my hands!

• Sure, I'm a factory worker—jeep suit and all. Greasy grime was tough on my hands till I started using Hinds Honey and Almond Cream. Say, Hinds skin-softeners act like an *invisible glove*. Now my hands wash up smooth and pretty as you please!

Copyright, 1942 by Lohr & Pink (Canada) Ltd.

He says my hands feel **EXTRA SOFT..** they've got the touch he can't forget!

HONEY. Beauty Advisor, says: **EXTRA-SOFTENING!** Hinds is an extra-creamy emulsion of true skin-softening ingredients. **WORKS FAST!** Even one application of Hinds gives your red, chapped skin a softer, whiter look, a comfy feel. **EFFECT LASTS!** Hinds skin-softeners help protect your skin through work and soapy-water jobs. **DOES GOOD!** Actually *benefits* skin. At toilet goods counters

HINDS for HANDS
and wherever skin needs softening!

YOU CAN FIGHT TOO!
Buy a War Savings Stamp TODAY!

Figure 9 "My boss says I've got as pretty a pair of hands as ever monkeyed a wrench!"
Hinds, Chatelaine, September 1942, 61.

Chatelaine, June, 1944 — 1

After Hours—



turn heads and hearts with a sparkling smile!

Your Country needs you in a vital job!

Women are needed to serve on the home front—to carry on the tasks of men gone to war—to release more men for wartime duties.

Jobs of every kind—in offices, stores and schools—as well as in defense plants—are war jobs now.

What can you do? *More than you think!*

If your finger can press a button, you can run an elevator or a packaging machine! If you can keep house, you've got ability that hotels and restaurants are looking for!

Check your Help Wanted ads, or see your local National Selective Service office.

Smiles are brighter when gums are firmer and healthier. Guard against "pink tooth brush". Use Ipana and massage.

YOU'RE WORKING on the home front—backing our heroes on the battle front. But when your day's stint is done—it's time for relaxation—for fun, for dates and romance.

Do you need beauty—bright as a star—to capture hearts? Not at all! Look at the popular girls about you. Few can claim real beauty. But they all know *how to smile!*

So let your smile be bright—warm hearts with its magic! But for that kind of a smile you need

bright, sparkling teeth. And remember, sparkling teeth depend largely on firm, healthy gums.

Never ignore "pink tooth brush"!

If you see a tinge of "pink" on your tooth brush—*see your dentist!* He may say your gums are tender because soft foods have robbed them of exercise. And like many dentists, he may suggest Ipana and massage. For Ipana is designed not only to clean teeth but, with massage, to aid the gums as well.

Massage a little Ipana onto your gums every time you clean your teeth. Circulation increases the gums—helps them to new firmness. Let Ipana and massage help keep your teeth brighter, your gums firmer, your smile more sparkling.



START TODAY WITH Ipana AND massage

A product of Bristol-Myers—Made in Canada

Figure 10. "After Hours," Ipana, Chatelaine, December 1944, 1.

More telling is the contradictory message in the rest of the copy:

You're working on the home front – backing our heroes on the battle front. But when your day's stint is done – it's time for relaxation – for fun,

for dates and romance. Do you need beauty – bright as a star – to capture hearts? Not at all! Look at the popular girls about you. Few can claim real beauty. But they all know *how to smile*! So let your smile be bright – warm hearts with its magic! But for that kind of a smile, you need bright, sparkling teeth.⁷¹

Although the copy directly stated that women do not require beauty, it still reminded them that being attractive was important, and that even if they were not naturally good-looking, they could still behave in a feminine and alluring way. Further, all the women *pictured* in the advertisement are beautiful. While the copy may suggest otherwise, the ad certainly promotes physical attractiveness. Smiling and being cheerful are also often considered to be ways of performing femininity, as they are framed in this ad. Encouraging women to pursue a “bright,” “magical” smile that can “warm hearts” outside their working hours still supported the idea that however difficult one’s workday was, when socializing, attractiveness and physical appearance mattered. Further, to promote its product (toothpaste), the ad reminded women that smiling was not enough. To have an attractive smile, they needed to purchase the right product and then use it. This ad suggested that planning, proactive product use, and performance could be as successful in creating an attractive body as having a naturally beautiful shape and face. Finally, the ad suggested that relaxing after-work activities included “fun, dates, and romance”; highlighting these activities and arguing that pleasing behaviour (smiling) helped to “capture hearts” connected women’s war work, beauty, and heterosexuality once again.⁷²

⁷¹ “After Hours,” Ipana, *Chatelaine*, December 1944, 1.

⁷² All of this continued emphasis on heterosexuality further served to eclipse any other types of sexuality or gender orientation. Also, war workers were featured in a number of advertisements for dental products, including not only toothpaste like Ipana, but also toothbrushes – see for example “Dental health means less delay for Victory!,” Dr. West’s Miracle Tuft, *Maclean’s*, September 15, 1943, 24. This ad focused more on

Other ads featured war worker visual imagery in subtler ways (or not at all), but suggested that war workers could and should use particular body-related products in accompanying text, to help manage or mitigate conditions of the female body perceived to be problematic or in need of special attention.⁷³ Corsets, girdles, and brassieres are a good example. A 1942 Nature's Rival advertisement featured two black and white drawings of women in the same position, standing slightly reclined with both arms in the air (see figure 11). One woman wears a jumpsuit and stands below machinery, possibly a plane, while the other, below a block of text, wears just a brassiere and girdle. Both women are in profile. The headline reads: "When your work keeps you on your toes all day... your figure needs Nature's Rival: Corsets for Defense of Canadian Figures"⁷⁴ The rest of the copy suggested that women who were frequently "on their feet" could conserve energy – or at least avoid wasting it – by choosing and wearing the right corset. Although the ad invoked health reasons as a justification for purchasing corsets, for most women, foundation garments functioned more to serve beauty and fashion needs than to prevent illness or sustain energy. While this ad did not suggest directly that beauty could be obtained through the use of their product, it featured an attractive woman identifiable

the qualities of the toothbrush and the health benefits, although it also concluded that the brush was "a sure way to have a brighter smile—a national as well a personal asset."

⁷³ Smith and Wakewich have argued that women war workers' health was a major concern in visual and other media. There were certainly worries about the potential reproductive ramifications of war work on women of childbearing age; framing them as Canada's "future mothers" is a common refrain. See Smith and Wakewich, "Regulating Body Boundaries." I have found several examples that suggest products serving women's "health" often served instead to support continued performance of femininity, whether visually, physically, or behaviourally – for example, promoting a "healthy smile" was actually about enforcing continued friendliness and kindness as part of broader expectations around femininity.

⁷⁴ "When your work keeps you on your toes," Nature's Rival, *Saturday Night*, November 28, 1942, 32.

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Elizabeth Arden suggests.

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When your work keeps
you on your toes all day
... your figure needs

NATURE'S RIVAL*
CORSETS FOR DEFENSE OF CANADIAN FIGURES

Conservation of energy is
important to the woman who is
seldom off her feet. Discomfort and
non-support in a badly-fitted corset
can quickly sap that precious store
of vitality. Make sure you have the
utmost comfort, control, support—
have your corsetiere give you a
perfect fit . . . in Nature's Rival.

PARISIAN CORSET MANUFACTURING CO. LIMITED
Quebec Montreal Toronto

*Registered

Figure 11. "When your work keeps you on your toes," Nature's Rival, Saturday Night, November 28, 1942, 32.

as a war worker, and recommended a product specifically to “defend” her figure, keeping it feminine.

A 1943 Nature’s Rival ad also emphasized the problems that a badly fitted corset could pose for working women (see figure 12), with copy reading,

Long hours tensed over an assembly line, desk, typewriter, or work table – make the most robust women droop from neck and shoulder fatigue. A NATURE’S RIVAL or LeGANT corselette, expertly fitted, will support the bust comfortably, preventing drag on the shoulders.⁷⁵

This ad did not include a visual depiction of a war worker, but it painted a picture of the physical impact of wartime work on women’s bodies (including both traditionally feminine context indicators – desk and typewriter – as well as more unusual, wartime ones such as assembly line, work table), offering a purchasable solution. The need for women war workers to purchase and wear specific support garments was announced not only through these ads, but also in an article and accompanying illustrations in *Chatelaine*. Carolyn Damon’s review of appropriate foundation garments for different types of war work, with the title “Support for the Job,” explained that women’s health, safety, and attractiveness depended on selecting the right bra or girdle:

There’s a lot more to being properly turned out for munitions work than meets the eye. Trim and trigger as your blue denims or slacks and shirt may be in the shop showcase, it’s another thing again having them look and feel just right on *you*. It means having the best type of foundation garment for your clothes, your work and your figure that you can get.⁷⁶

One of the images paired with Damon’s article, a black and white drawing, featured a tiny war worker, wearing coveralls, a blouse, and a bandana, bent on one knee and

⁷⁵ “Shoulder Arms for Victory,” Nature’s Rival, *Saturday Night*, April 10, 1943, 28.

⁷⁶ Carolyn Damon, “Support for the Job,” *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 43.

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Lie on back, a heavy phone book under shoulders. Pull head back, point toes—and stretch. Raise straight arms in semi-circle, touching floor above head, then return arms to sides. Neck exercises illustrated will also relieve tension and can be done while at work. P.S. Whenever you think of it -s-t-r-e-t-c-h like a cat for suppleness and relaxation!

Shoulder Arms for Victory



LONG HOURS tensed over an assembly line, desk, typewriter work table — make the most robust women droop from neck and shoulder fatigue. NATURE'S RIVAL or LeGANT corselette, expertly fitted, will support the bust comfortably preventing drag on the shoulders. The simple exercises illustrated above will also help untie those "knots" between your shoulders!

This is one of a series of advertisements suggesting exercises for figure improvement and for the relief of tense, fatigued muscles.

PASADIAN CORSET MFG CO LTD QUEBEC MONTREAL TORONTO
MAKERS OF
NATURE'S RIVAL
BRASSIERES, GIRDLES AND CORSELETTES
CORSETS FOR DEFENSE OF CANADIAN FIGURES

*Registered

Figure 12. "Shoulder Arms for Victory," Nature's Rival, Saturday Night, April 10, 1943, 28.

holding a tool up to the hip of a much larger, girdle-clad woman's head and torso; it looks like the tiny Rosie is "working" on the girdle-wearer's hips. The article explained the various unattractive results of different war jobs — spreading hips as a result of a more sedentary job, for example — and which garments could mitigate the effect. Damon's piece communicated the same message the ads were offering, in an even clearer way: women workers needed to buy and wear specific undergarments in order to manage the physical impacts of their wartime labour and keep looking and feeling feminine.

When addressing the special needs of women war workers' bodies, advertisers recommended not just beauty items, but health products as well. Some ads focused on women's special needs, and others aimed to reduce women workers' rate of absenteeism or to promote health, productivity, or morale. Ads for a variety of menstrual products, as well as pain relievers, eye drops, bandaids, foot treatments, and Vaseline (for first aid use rather than cosmetic purposes) capitalized on the recognizable symbol of the woman war worker.⁷⁷ While ads for these products did not always argue that women workers had a unique need for these items (more than or different from men or other women), the inclusion of the image of a beautiful woman war worker is still significant. The repeated association of women workers with such health-oriented products may have signalled a latent belief in the delicateness or weakness of female bodies; physical war work might menace or harm women's bodies more seriously or in specific ways. Alternatively, we can see this intersection of ideas about women workers' health and images of beautiful workers as evidence of the conflation of health and beauty; often, beauty was presented as a mark of a healthy female body.

⁷⁷See ads for Modess, Tampax, Kotex, Midol, Aspirin, Murine, Band-Aid, Blue Jay, Dr. Scholl's, and Vaseline. "Me – I make shells," Modess, *Chatelaine*, April 1942, 27; "Yes sir! – that's my baby!" Modess, *Maclean's*, May 15, 1943, 36; "War workers cheer the extra freedom," Tampax, *Maclean's*, May 15, 1943, 30; "You're the Fun in His Furlough," Kotex, *Maclean's*, October 15, 1942, 39; "I've Given Up Luxuries – and that Includes Lost days!" Midol, *Chatelaine*, October 1944, 58; "No time out for sore throats," Aspirin, *Saturday Night*, February 20, 1943, 20, and *Maclean's*, March 1, 1943, 32; "No time out for headaches," Aspirin, *Saturday Night*, March 20, 1943, 20 and *Maclean's*, April 1, 1943, 40; "Work on Happy Feet," Blue Jay for Corns, *Chatelaine*, November 1944, 62; "Foot Trouble," Dr. Scholl's, *Maclean's*, May 15, 1943, 46; "After war work when eyes smart," Murine, *Maclean's*, October 1, 1943, 51 and *Saturday Night*, May 22, 1943, 28 and *Chatelaine*, August 1942, 51; "War Workers," Band-Aid, *Maclean's*, October 15, 1942, 57; "Quicker Recovery, Less Suffering from Burns," Vaseline, *Maclean's*, March 1, 1944, 32.

Menstruation was certainly posed as a special problem for women workers, and a variety of products promised to help.⁷⁸ A Midol ad featuring a smiling war worker, her hand on a machine, told viewers, “Speaking of “defense” work Midol does a special kind – for women!”⁷⁹ (see figure 13) This advertisement capitalized on the new challenges faced by women during the war: “Standing all day at a machine, working harder at a desk, or giving hours each week to service organization duties, many girls and women now find functional periodic pain a more serious problem.”⁸⁰ Comparing factory work with other types of task likely to be done by women in wartime, this ad reframed its product’s purpose to take advantage of women’s “new” needs and special wartime challenges. A Kotex ad with extensive text offered Do’s and Don’ts to war workers when menstruating, including not taking on heavy work, not staying out too late, and sitting out active dance numbers (although they were reassured that “you needn’t skip the ‘swing shift!’”) (see figure 14). The ad also blamed women’s absenteeism on menstruation: “A war plant nurse wrote Kotex that their greatest number of absentees are women who miss 1 to 3 days of work each month, frequently on ‘problem days’.”⁸¹

Image Redacted for Copyright Reasons

Figure 13. “Speaking of ‘defense’ work,” Midol, *Chatelaine*, November 1943, 86.

⁷⁸ Smith and Wakewich, “Regulating Body Boundaries,” 62; Smith and Wakewich note that some women did mention menstruation as a health challenge in relation to their wartime factory work.

⁷⁹ “Speaking of ‘defense’ work,” Midol, *Chatelaine*, November 1943, 86. For another example of a Midol war worker ad, see “We girls who are All-Out can’t be periodically All-In!,” Midol, *Chatelaine*, September 1944, 56, which included the statement: “Getting a war job is easy, but *doing* it is what really counts. And that once-a-month, all-in feeling does not mix with every-day, all-out effort. *So call on Midol.*”

⁸⁰ “Speaking of ‘defense’ work,” Midol, *Chatelaine*, November 1943, 86.

⁸¹ “Do’s and Don’ts every woman absentee should know,” Kotex, *Chatelaine*, May 1944, 46.

46 — Chatelaine, May, 1944

Do's and Don'ts

every woman absentee
should know

A WAR-PLANT NURSE WROTE KOTEX that their greatest number of absentees are women who miss 1 to 3 days of work each month, frequently on "problem days". These hints are just a few of the many in the new 24-page booklet we offer free to help you feel better and stay on the job every day. Lost days mean lost lives!



DON'T wrestle with these heavy jobs on "difficult days". Straining is harmful, and your foreman would rather give you lighter work at this time than have you on the absentee list. Send for the new free booklet "That Day Is Here Again" for tips on how to lift the *safe* way!



DO but don't overdo, and you needn't skip the "swing shift"! But why not wait for the waltzes and rhumbas and leave the jitterbug tactics 'til next week? Sit out a dance now and then . . . to look at the stars or hear a life story. You can always say your feet hurt!



DON'T get the late-at-night cocktail habit . . . too much stimulation is bad at any time! And on these days, more than ever, you can't afford that logey, let-down feeling! Make it a rule to get your full 8 hours sleep every night! You won't be a sissy . . . you'll be smart!



DO watch your diet. Eat less starch—more salads! To help avoid constipation, get more greenery in your diet: leafy vegetables, for instance. Eat lots of fruit. Drink water a plenty. If you should need a mild laxative besides . . . take it. There'll be no harm done and you'll feel better.

DO send for this free booklet —lost days mean lost lives!

"That Day Is Here Again" contains 24 lively pages of do's and don'ts for war-workers' "problem days". A full page of suggested exercises to curb cramps. When to see your doctor. Facts for older women and for when the stork's expected. Plain talk about tampons. We take pride in bringing you this authentic information just as we take pride that more women choose Kotex* sanitary napkins than all other brands of pads put together.

To get your copy free, just mail name and address to Canadian Cellucotton Products Co. Ltd., Dept. K4-4, 330 University Ave., Toronto 1, Ontario.



(K.T. M. Inc. Can. Pat. Off.)

TO WAR-PLANT NURSES AND PERSONNEL MANAGERS. We'll gladly send you (free) a new instruction manual, "Every Minute Counts". It's a "refresher" course for plant nurse or doctor—makes it easy to conduct classes on feminine hygiene. Specify if you also want free jumbo charts on Feminine Physiology. Address: Canadian Cellucotton Products Co. Ltd., Dept. K4-4, 330 University Avenue, Toronto 1, Ont.

Figure 14. "Do's and Don'ts every woman absentee should know," Kotex, Chatelaine, May 1944, 46.

Yet another Kotex ad, featuring black and white drawings of both a tall, glamorous woman in a floor length formal gown as well as two uniform-clad war workers toiling in an industrial setting, connects women's special health needs with their sexual and romantic responsibilities to men, reminding them that "You're the fun in his furlough!" and "You don't need a furlough!" The ad strongly emphasized how valuable women's beauty was to men. The story made Kotex the solution to a war worker's exhausting double day:

To think that at five o'clock you were ready to break your date! Because today's eight hours of defense work had seemed like eighty!... 'Why let trying days of the month rule your life?... Why should you be a deserter when other girls carry on in comfort every day?'⁸²

This advertisement reminded women war workers that their beautiful bodies were doubly conscripted - first, into waged labour, and second, into heterosexual service. Further, they were reminded not just to socialize with men by keeping dates even after a long working day, but to set aside their own needs for rest and relaxation in order to "Keep going in Comfort - with Kotex!" Kotex offered a purchasable solution to women's exhaustion or discomfort, allowing them to fulfill their wartime responsibilities no matter what. In this narrative, women workers were expected to be productive employees and pleasant romantic companions, regardless of their physical state. Even after a long day of labour, they ought to regroup, re-style their bodies, and continue serving their country and the war effort with their beautiful bodies.

Although women war workers were framed as having unique beauty needs and were addressed directly by beauty advertisers, the same products marketed to workers

⁸² "You're the fun in his furlough!" Kotex, *Maclean's*, October 15, 1942, 39.

were frequently also being sold to non-workers or to other female wartime figures, including nurses, enlisted women, and housewives. Magazine ads frequently presented the uniforms of war workers alongside those of CWACS and other enlisted women, suggesting that both groups were making a similar sacrifice in sidelining civilian clothing for the duration. For example, Modess sold its sanitary products to a wide variety of fictionalized wartime female figures in a series of ads using the same visual layout and broadly the same messaging with the slogan “Modess – for busy girls.” One of the earliest ads in the series featured a classic woman war worker holding a large shell with the headline “Me – I make shells!” The campaign spanned from at least April 1942 to November 1943, and included ads with a female member of the army, a heroic housewife, a “campus Patriot,” a volunteer war worker, an aircraft worker (wearing classic war worker coveralls and bandana, holding a wrench and posed next to a plane propeller), a woman collecting scrap, a member of the air force, and a nurse.⁸³ The beauty and bodies of war workers, then, were presented as facing both challenges unique to their type of employment (like greasy grimy hands, rectified by special hand products), and issues faced by working women more generally (dealing with headaches and periods). In both cases, women’s bodies were framed as delicate, in need of consumer products to

⁸³ See Modess series in *Chatelaine*. Ads in this series led with a headline in the featured woman’s own voice (see examples below) and ended with the slogan, “Modess – for busy girls.” Many of these ads also appeared in *Maclean’s*. For all ads referenced below, emphasis in original. “Me – I make shells,” Modess, *Chatelaine*, April 1942, 27; “I’ve joined the army,” Modess, *Chatelaine*, June 1942, 34; “Am I dictated to!” Modess, *Chatelaine*, August 1942, 53 and *Maclean’s*, July 15, 1942, 27; “I MAN THE HOME FRONT!” Modess, *Chatelaine*, October 1942, 41 and *Maclean’s*, September 1, 1942, 37; “I’m a campus Patriot,” Modess, *Chatelaine*, December 1942, 31; “WAR WORKERS – LOOK ALERT!” Modess, *Chatelaine*, January 1943, 27; “Yes sir! – that’s my baby!” Modess, *Chatelaine*, May 1943, 68; “I’m in the Scrap!” Modess, *Chatelaine*, July 1943, 35; “KEEPING AN EYE ON THE BOYS!” Modess, *Chatelaine*, September 1943, 46; “IMAGINE ME IN A JUNGLE!” Modess, *Chatelaine*, November 1943, 48.

remain attractive, and responsible for looking beautiful and performing femininity, in both labour and leisure contexts.

Whether it addressed women war workers as people with unique challenges or intimated that all working women's bodies were at risk in some way, print culture, and particularly advertising, encouraged women war workers to erase the visible signs of labour from their bodies and to maintain their heterosexual femininity and attractiveness. Women's increasing wartime participation, not only in waged and masculine factory and industrial work, but also in the armed forces, magnified concerns about the war's impact on masculinity and femininity. To combat fears about the disintegration of heterosexual nuclear family or the transformation of traditional femininity, advertisers specifically and print culture generally presented Canadians with a strong visual message about women war workers. By repeatedly using images of young, white, attractive and feminine women war workers, they told both workers and their readership as a whole that the demands of wartime industry should not change women's bodies – or that if they did, those changes should be carefully disguised with lotion, girdles, and magical smiles.

Chapter 4: “Through These Clocks Pass Canada’s Most Glamorous War Workers”: Beauty Culture in the Wartime Workplace

In the January 1, 1943 edition of *Maclean’s* magazine, a bold and flowing headline proclaimed, “They’re Still Feminine!”¹ The article, by Lotta Dempsey, who covered the “women and war” beat for several Canadian magazines during the war, addressed concerns about the impact of wartime jobs, from military service to war work on the home front, on the women of Canada. The headline and article were accompanied by an evocative cartoon by Nancy Caudle (see figure 15): five women are shown, three in the various uniforms of Canada’s women’s divisions of the different armed forces, and two in war worker garb. One blushing, uniformed woman holds up her left hand, on which a large ring on the third finger is visible, emphasized by highlighting lines. The other four women’s bodies show their excitement and interest – they lean in and appear enthused. Dempsey’s accompanying article considered women’s ability to remain feminine during the war, a “hot spot of discussion groups all over Canada today.” Dempsey reassured readers that, “According to beauticians, fashion designers, psychiatrists and boy friends, the little woman who is making war her business is doing all right.” Tellingly, as Canadian women entered wartime industrial workplaces, the authorities charged with assessing their performance were, apparently, heterosexual men, mental health professionals, and experts in beauty and fashion. Women’s bodies, and in particular the beauty or ugliness of those bodies, became central to the way women

¹ Lotta Dempsey, “They’re Still Feminine!” *Maclean’s*, January 1, 1943, 7. This article title also evokes the title of Pierson’s book, *They’re Still Women After All* (although her book’s title actually references a slightly different article). Note that a version of this chapter was presented at the Canadian Historical Association’s May 2014 meeting in St. Catharines, Ontario.



Figure 15. Maclean's, January 1, 1943, 7. Originally published in Maclean's™ magazine on Jan. 1, 1943. Used with permission of Rogers Media Inc. All rights reserved.

were viewed and depicted as workers during the war.

Although women who took on wartime jobs in Canadian munitions plants were making concrete contributions to the war effort through their labour, they were frequently scrutinized for signs of eroding femininity and praised for their continued attractiveness, interest in beauty, and heterosexual appeal. While both male and female workers were encouraged to keep their bodies healthy and fit for war work, only women workers were

exhorted to guard their bodies from the negative impacts of factory labour on femininity.² Interest in beauty and attention to women's bodies constantly invaded the wartime workplace. In this chapter, I explore ways in which women workers' bodies and beauty were viewed and depicted in workplace settings and publications. I argue that women workers' bodies and beauty were perceived to be both vulnerable and powerful. Women's delicate bodies could easily be negatively affected by their work, and therefore needed protection and care to remain feminine. However, women's beauty was also powerful; it could distract women themselves from their responsibilities or divert male workers from their tasks. Women workers' beauty even had the potential to cause accidents. Finally, media firmly asserted that women war workers were still beautiful, still feminine, and still interested in beauty culture, *despite* their labour (and despite whether women actually were interested or not).

Women's bodies became a focus in the Canadian wartime workplace in a variety of ways. Uniforms and other workplace safety attire drew attention, and were accordingly tailored to be flattering and appealing. Beauty professionals plied their trade among war workers, and magazines and employee newsletters described strategies for protecting hands, hair, and skin from the impact of munitions work. Recreational programs for women war workers even included special glamour classes. Finally, safety literature and newsletter content suggested that women's beautiful bodies might threaten safety and productivity in wartime workplaces. Each of these beauty-promoting elements underscored the classed nature of images and understandings of women's war work – the

² See in particular Smith and Wakewich, "Regulating Body Boundaries"; also MacDonald, *Strong, Beautiful, and Modern*.

assumptions that women had leisure time, money, and energy to spend prioritizing their appearance, and little or no prior experience in working environments, betrays a middle-class orientation that did not necessarily reflect women's actual experiences. Not only had many women been employed before taking on war jobs, but also most had been involved in low-wage, feminized domains, and needed the additional income that war work provided.³

In contrast to existing historical work on beauty in wartime which posits working women's interest in beauty culture without exploring beauty culture itself, this chapter identifies and explores patterns in the ways that women workers encountered beauty culture in the wartime workplace, in company newsletters, and in magazines.⁴ By comparing and connecting examples of workplace beauty culture across several companies, my study demonstrates that beauty was a common concern for employers, as well as an interest shared by at least some women workers in different factories and communities. Messages valuing beauty culture and pressuring women to participate in it were remarkably consistent across media from multiple different sources and war plants. Further, my study identifies the ways in which women workers' beautiful bodies were depicted as concurrently dangerous, and vulnerable to the de-feminizing effects of

³ While this study does not aim to explore wartime workplace demographics in detail, work by other historians strongly suggests that even though most media showed war workers to be middle-class, working-class backgrounds were common and the majority of women joining the wartime workforce were motivated primarily by financial need. See for example Endicott, "Woman's Place (was) Everywhere," 43; Scheinberg, "Tessie the Textile Worker," 155; Klausen, "Plywood Girls," 206; Smith and Wakewich, "Trans/forming the Citizen Body," 309; Smith and Wakewich, "Politics of 'Selective' Memory," 60-61; Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*, 67-73; Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 157.

⁴ For existing work, see Smith and Wakewich, "Beauty and the Helldivers"; Smith and Wakewich, "Regulating Body Boundaries"; Smith and Wakewich, "Trans/forming the Citizen Body"; Spencer, *Lipstick and High Heels*; Molyneaux, "Temporary Heroes"; Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker"; Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*; Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*; Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*.

industrial labour. In Smith and Wakewich's "Beauty and the Helldivers," they argue that women war workers were constantly framed as "decorative morale boosters."⁵ The evidence uncovered in my research supports this argument, but also suggests that women workers' beautiful bodies were a particularly important focus of both tension and ambivalence: these bodies were not only out of place in the "masculine workplace," but were perceived as a present and active threat to it. Women workers' beauty was important and celebrated, but could also be problematic in terms of safety and efficiency in the workplace.⁶

Smith and Wakewich demonstrate that both Canadian society more broadly and workers at the plant they studied, CanCar, were attentive to and sometimes concerned about the appearance and attractiveness of women war workers.⁷ Their research gives some attention to beauty, but also frames attention to women's bodies as primarily health and morale-related, dwelling on the role of the home as a space for body management. In contrast, my research focuses on the role and presence of vulnerable but powerful and potentially dangerous beauty and femininity in war plant newsletters and in wartime workplaces. The workplace, and workplace visual culture, were crucial spaces where war workers' bodies were presented, made over, and assessed. Moreover, while Smith and Wakewich's oral history work helpfully shows that women workers themselves had a

⁵ Smith and Wakewich, "Beauty and the Helldivers," 104. In this article, Smith and Wakewich argue that CanCar's newsletter the *Aircrafter* (which was only created in the last year of the war) acted as a "mechanism of ideological continuity" that allowed prewar ideas and message about gender to persist. By connecting gendered ideas about beauty across different war plants, a much more extensive number of newsletters (which were published over several years), and different media sources, my study extends this idea significantly.

⁶ The "dangerous" aspect of workplace beauty culture is touched on very briefly in Smith and Wakewich's "Regulating Body Boundaries," 62.

⁷ Smith and Wakewich, "Regulating Body Boundaries," 60-66.

variety of reactions to the constant pressure to prettify, this chapter explores bodily beauty in war plants in greater detail and with a more comparative lens, uncovering previously unacknowledged beauty activities taking place in war plants and establishing patterns across different workplaces.

Although civilian women worked in a wide variety of industries during the war, the iconic woman war worker was a munitions worker clad in jaunty bandana and coveralls.⁸ Women were encouraged to take up jobs in munitions in order to relieve male workers, allowing them to enlist in the armed forces. In some ways, women's munitions jobs were prestigious; women could feel that they were contributing directly to the actual fighting part of the war as they produced shells, bombs, and guns. Recruitment advertisements made this suggestion overtly. A 1944 newspaper ad for women's jobs at GECO, for example, read, "It's up to you WOMEN to back up your Men! Filling Fuzes [sic] at Scarboro is one of the most important women's jobs, to assure a steady flow of vital INVASION AMMUNITION."⁹ In DIL's employee newsletter, one writer described the woman war worker thus:

The woman war worker. How very important she is to-day. In bandana, smock and flat-heeled shoes each girl looks very much like the girl beside her. But they are all in uniform and every uniformed person acquires a certain glamour. Most people agree that the woman war worker belongs to the élite as far as labour's social scale is concerned.¹⁰

⁸ See Molyneaux, "Temporary Heroes," for the argument that women war workers are the greatest focus of attention; see Bland for a detailed list of different types of images of women; for women in wartime film, see Mathews-Klein, "How They Saw Us." For more evidence about the iconic nature of the woman war worker, see previous chapter and especially the section on Rosie the Riveter imagery.

⁹ "It's up to you women," General Engineering Company, *Globe and Mail*, June 14, 1944, 13.

¹⁰ Midge, "Powder Puffs," *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 3, August 5, 1942, 4.

Despite the prestige women might accrue, and the apparent glamour that accompanied donning a uniform, munitions jobs also held the most potential to transform women's bodies in negative or problematic ways: greasy hands, rough skin, dry hair, and ugly uniforms were the spectres of the wartime factory.

Although the look of work uniforms might seem like a trifling concern during a global military conflict, the femininity and appearance of women war workers attracted national attention. In a 1945 edition of the CBC radio program "Servicemen's Forum" on the topic of women's work, Canadian servicewomen, and one man, discussed the looks of women workers. In serviceman Roy Robertson's opinion, war working attire *did* make women less attractive:

I'm afraid the average man feels that the feminine sex has lost their femininity, which is very important to the masculine sex. A lot of women working in factories are becoming too masculine. You see them walking down the street in a pair of coveralls and a dirty old turban wound around their head, and carrying a chipped old lunch pail. And while I've no grudge against women working, I'd like to see them retain their femininity. Of course that's just speaking for a mere male.¹¹

Both women's work uniforms and their dirtiness were, apparently, objectionable.¹² One of the most commonly cited Canadian wartime ads demonstrated broad worry about pants, in particular; appearing in both *Chatelaine* and *Maclean's* and sponsored by the Department of Munitions and Supply, the headline read, "Please, don't stare at my pants!" (see figure 16).¹³ The ad featured a woman war worker clad in slacks, with a scarf

¹¹ "What is the Role of Women After the War?" Servicemen's Forum Radio Program, March 22, 1945, CBC archives, <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/second-world-war-women-after-the-war>.

¹² Women did frequently remember war plants as dirty places. See War Story interviews with Vi Connolly and Linda Wrigley, www.warstory.ca

¹³ "Please, Don't Stare at my Pants!" Department of Munitions and Supply, *Maclean's*, March 1, 1942, 3; *Chatelaine*, March 1942, 1.

covering her hair, as well as an older, upper-class man and woman who were clearly surprised and dismayed by the war worker's attire. The ad reassured readers that women's pants were a requirement for workplace safety rather than a preference or a personal choice, since those reasons for selecting pants would apparently be unacceptable. The message was that women's factory attire was too ugly and masculine to serve as regular street wear outside of the exceptional context of wartime. Wearing pants was presented as a patriotic sacrifice for women, because pants made them less feminine and less attractive.

In fact, the war worker pictured in the "Please don't stare at my pants!" ad, which has been analyzed by a number of historians, was not a model or an actress. Rita Guerin, a vertical lathe operator producing Bren gun components, posed for the photograph.¹⁴ Profiled in *Chatelaine's* "On the Factory Front" column in April 1942, Rita had been "discovered" as she left work:

When the Department's cameraman spotted her among the groups of girls coming off shift one afternoon, outside the big Toronto plant where she works, she looked exactly as she appeared in the advertisement, or as she is pictured above: scrupulously neat, with every shining black hair in place under a practical headdress; sparkling brown eyes and a pink-and-white complexion; blue serge slacks and a workmanlike short-sleeved shirt under her topcoat.¹⁵

Including this detailed and evocative description of Rita's appearance suggests a desire to confirm that the woman in the original ad was indeed as feminine, attractive, and

¹⁴ For other historians' analysis of this particular image, see Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 150; Smith and Wakewich, "Regulating Body Boundaries," 61; Spencer, *Lipstick and High Heels*, 177-178; Molyneaux, "Temporary Heroes," 82-83; Bland, "Henrietta the Homemaker," 74-75. For information on Guerin, see "On the Factory Front," *Chatelaine*, April 1942, 52.

¹⁵ "On the Factory Front," *Chatelaine*, April 1942, 52.



Figure 16. “Please, Don’t Stare at my Pants!” Department of Munitions and Supply, Maclean’s, March 1, 1942, 3. Originally published in Maclean’s™ magazine on March 1, 1942. Used with permission of Rogers Media Inc. All rights reserved.

appealing in her everyday life as the staged image made her appear. The message here was that beauty was achievable for real women workers, and not a façade like that in

other images, created by “a suave ten-dollar-an-hour professional model posing for the camera.” In the piece, Rita also reported that she enjoyed her job, even though pants were a part of it, telling readers, “The public is getting used to the idea of girls in slacks... There are too many of us munitions workers around to cause any surprise. And I wouldn't wonder if there won't be a whole lot more before this war is won.” Overall, the article underscored the message of the original ad: Canadian society should make a temporary, patriotic allowance for women workers' less feminine clothing, while at the same time, women workers should strive to look as pretty and womanly as possible in their uniforms. Women should still be tidy, clean, and well-groomed, even while wearing pants and working fifty-four hour weeks like Rita.

In her oral history-based research on women war workers at ALPLY in Port Alberni, BC, Susanne Klausen reports that at least one of her interviewees connected propaganda images like the “Please don't stare at my pants” ad with patriotic feelings about war work. Feelings of duty to male relatives serving overseas were a particularly strong motivator for women working at ALPLY, who saw their factory jobs as part of what Klausen calls the “army on the homefront.”¹⁶ In fact, one worker cited Rita Guerin's advertisement specifically as an example of wartime imagery that included the “homefront army” theme; the worker told Klausen, “...it showed a woman looking down her nose at this woman with a kerchief – we had to wear kerchiefs in those days to keep our hair out of machinery, a kerchief and slacks... that's where this army on the home front [came from].”¹⁷ Although this worker did not relate the ad to messages about

¹⁶ Klausen, “Plywood Girls,” 297.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 207nn41.

beauty, her clear recollection of the image and description of it to Klausen, years later, suggests that it did have a significant and memorable impact on at least some workers. The message that women workers' appearance was of interest to Canadian society was being heard.

While radio commentator Roy Robertson and many others felt that women's factory attire was unattractive, problematic, or at the very least unorthodox, employers and other media frequently suggested that women looked good in their uniforms, or at least tried to reassure prospective female employees that there could be fashionable aspects to industrial safety clothing. This constant, cheerful assurance that women's work clothing could indeed be pretty and fun is very telling – powerful fear and worry that Canadian women's bodies *were* being masculinized by their war jobs lurked behind the sunny promotion of fashionable uniforms and clean workspaces. A war industries show at the Eaton Auditorium, designed to recruit women workers, foregrounded work clothing in its efforts to attract employees. An ad for the display in the *Globe and Mail* suggested questions women might have about wartime work, including “What Does a War Worker Wear?”¹⁸ The ad promised that the display, sponsored by the Local Council of Women, the National Selective Service, and Toronto War Industries, would answer all of these questions and allow potential employees to meet and interact with women attired in their work-wear. There would also be “a showing of what the well-dressed war worker should wear at work.”¹⁹ The next day, an article described this part of the event as “A fashion parade of war-plant uniforms and off-duty dresses.” The same article mentioned

¹⁸ “War Industries Display,” *Globe and Mail*, August 30, 1943, 3.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

the uniforms of women from GECO specifically: “[they] wear smart two-piece outfits of immaculate white.”²⁰ In fact, the GECO women who participated in the show were described in *The Fusilier’s* newsletter coverage as well: “Quite irresistible were our girls who skilfully demonstrated typical filling operations in their trim white uniforms.”²¹ Showcasing work uniforms in a fashion show, a light-hearted and fun activity, pulled them away from being perceived primarily as a downside to munitions employment. Further, these attempts to frame women’s factory uniforms in a positive light suggest a tendency to view women as temporary workers, more interested in looking good than starting a real career or even just earning money or helping the war effort. Assuming that women had no idea what might be worn in an industrial setting carried classed judgments as well – many women would have previously worked in factories themselves – or have had family members who did, and might already be aware of the kind of safety gear required. Framing potential war workers as completely ignorant of the realities of factory work painted them with a middle-class brush. Addressing worry about the femininity of uniforms trivialized women’s position as *workers*. It may also have recognized some women’s real concerns about uniforms being unfeminine and about losing control over the ability to dress the way they wanted to at work. The frequent, firm protestations that war worker uniforms were smart and attractive seemed to highlight social anxieties that such uniforms were in fact anything but attractive.

²⁰ “War Industries Display Is Challenge to Women,” *Globe and Mail*, August 31, 1943, 10. Undoubtedly, their colour helped them to look especially clean, countering Robertson’s concern about dirtiness.

²¹ “Women Attracted by War Exhibits,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 12, September 11, 1943, 2, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO. The article mentioned that the event “has already inspired some 2,000 women to apply for war work,” and noted that participating companies included Victory Aircraft, Small Arms, John Inglis, Research Enterprises, Radio Valve, Canadian National Carbon, Goodyear Tire, and GECO.

The tension between seeing factory uniforms and safety gear as either ugly, or safe but still feminine and attractive persisted throughout the war, but overall there seemed to be more compliments than complaints. Employee newsletters often praised women's working clothes. In February 1944, *The Commando* featured an article entitled "What Is The Fashion At Ajax? Answer – Various Smart Uniforms." The piece described five different types of uniform worn by women in diverse departments at Ajax in highly positive terms. For example: "Envied by many is the chic uniform worn by the D.I.L. girl drivers," a tailored coat and cap, which were modeled in an accompanying photo by Ethel Brooks.²² As if to explain the reason for reporting on uniforms at all, the article pointed out that, "The psychological effect of new clothes on the feminine mind has always been remarkable and well-cut working clothes can help to provide this same effect."

Lotta Dempsey and other journalists made this same claim in several magazine articles throughout the war. In a September 1942 piece on what women told her about their war work, Dempsey reported,

They talk about smart uniforms to work in, and do better when they have them. And about comfortable rest-rooms where they can relax, and wash and make-up before they go off duty. And the hair-dos and pretty dresses they wear after work. And how they wish everybody would realize that they wear their slacks to work to save time for the job.²³

²² "What Is The Fashion At Ajax? Answer – Various Smart Uniforms," *The Commando* vol. 2 no. 7, February 1944, 5.

²³ Lotta Dempsey, "What the Girls Say of the Job," *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 16. Note again the emphasis on pants or slacks being *only* for practical work reasons, and not because of personal style or preference. Constantly suggesting that women found pants deeply undesirable acted to close out other possibilities – for example, that some women enjoyed wearing pants for style or comfort reasons, because pants better matched their ideal gender presentation, or because wearing pants might help them signal homosexuality.

In a 1943 article on differences between male and female workers, Dempsey affirmed:

“How a woman looks is a matter of concern because it affects her efficiency.”²⁴ Writing

in *Chatelaine*'s special war worker issue in September 1942, Jean Alexander wrote confidently about working women's continuing good looks, opening her piece thus:

Carnations to our new crop of careerists! What if they do wear slacks and shirts and bandannas [sic], instead of skirts and slips! That doesn't mean that our women in war industry have lost interest in keeping up appearances. Far from it! They know that health, cleanliness, good looks and careful grooming are just as essential to them now as in former days when they lived their lives against the more familiar background of home or school or office.²⁵

Alexander assured her readers that women's bodies and behaviour had not changed too much; instead, women's values and attention to their bodies were framed as stable and consistent in print media. While actual women workers' reactions to uniform requirements were diverse, journalists, advertisements, and print media in general spoke in one voice, praising workers' appearance and explaining away any evidence of problematic masculinity. These messages pressured women workers to conform, as well as shutting down contrary views.

In order to make safety clothing seem more feminine and interesting, coveralls and jumpsuits worn by women had decidedly different tailoring than the men's versions. When possible, women workers were given dresses or skirts to wear – this was most frequently an option for laboratory, transportation, or inspection staff. Women's coveralls had narrower waists than men's did, and while men often wore caps, women's hair

²⁴ Lotta Dempsey, “What they've found out about us,” *Chatelaine*, September 1943, 16.

²⁵ Jean Alexander, “Keeping fit for the job,” *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 29. It is ironic that Alexander used the term “careerists” for war workers, since deskilling and job segmentation meant that most women were not able to continue working in the same fields when the war was over. Further, women were constantly framed as temporary workers, serving the war effort but ultimately destined for lives as homemakers.

coverings were more stylized and customizable. The expertly tied bandana became a key part of the iconic war worker “look,” and allowed women to exercise a degree of control over their appearance on the job without breaking safety regulations. A *Globe and Mail* article even credited the women workers of the John Inglis company with developing the signature style. After unsuccessfully trying to have women workers wear hair nets attached with elastic and fish net turbans, cotton bandanas were chosen as the only popular solution. According to “blonde and attractive Irma Larson, women’s personnel director” at Inglis,

I think Carmen Miranda was the original inspiration. We omit the basket of fruit she puts on top of hers, though. The credit for evolving the present style of headdress worn in our plant belongs to the girls themselves. They played around with their bandanas, took ideas from each other, and finally figured out a turban twist that looks just swell.²⁶

Larson also noted that the company hoped to open a store at the plant, selling slack suits and bandanas and explaining “how to look attractive and be practical at the same time.” A photo tutorial, clarifying step by step how to tie the bandana in the Inglis style, accompanied the article: “In three easy lessons, Machine Operator Anne Saegert... demonstrates how the war-plant beauties tie the bandana which has become the badge of the feminine war worker.”²⁷ The article also detailed the fit, colour, and embellishments of women’s uniforms at Massey-Harris, the National Steel Car Corporation, Research

²⁶ “Munition Workers’ ‘Badge’ Of Skilfully Tied Bandana Originated In Toronto,” *Globe and Mail*, November 2, 1942, 15. It is also notable that, while quoting this Inglis employee, hair colour and attractiveness were mentioned. This is not surprising given the context of an article on women workers’ appearance, but still another example of how women’s appearance was constantly under observation.

²⁷ GECO similarly produced a series of photographs showing, step by step, how to tie the bandana the GECO way. See series of instructional photos and captions: Illustration No. 6, “Turban – extended to show ease of laundering,” Illustration No. 7, “Turban – first operation – front view,” Illustration No. 8, “Turban – showing cross-over – rear view,” General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box B732, folder F 2082-1-2-15, “Employee Uniform,” AO.

Enterprises, and Defense Industries Limited. The appearance of this beauty-focused article in a national newspaper's opening pages suggests public interest in and wide exposure to the idea that women war workers cared about how they looked at work – and that they wanted to look *feminine*. Intentionally and carefully styled bandanas could take the place of styled *hair* to demonstrate an effort to look attractive as well as a particular type of feminine self-fashioning skill and ingenuity. Larson's mention of Carmen Miranda, an overtly feminine, sexy, and glamorous pop culture figure, put 'war plant beauties' firmly in safe, feminine gender territory; the message was that their participation in industrial war work had not reduced their interest in or ability to perform physical femininity.

Beauty established itself as part of the world of wartime work in other ways, beyond the attention to women's uniforms and hair coverings. At DIL, for example, a beauty shop opened and operated within the plant compound, run by Winnie Heyd and focusing on beauty and hair treatments for women workers.²⁸ Services provided at the beauty shop included oil steam treatments, oil shampoos, finger waves, and manicures.²⁹ Finger waves provided by the shop proved valuable enough to serve as prizes in bingo games played by women workers living in residence at DIL.³⁰ Perhaps Heyd was simply a shrewd businesswoman – with a large population of women workers living in residence, a beauty shop nearby was likely to be preferred to more distant options.

²⁸ "Powder Puffs," *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 2, July 20, 1942, 4. Some American war plants, like Lockheed, also had on-site salons. See McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*, 168. There was also a salon at the Kitchener, Ontario CWAC training centre. See Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 156.

²⁹ "Ajax Beautician Solves Girls' Hair-do Problem," *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 10, January 15, 1943, 5.

³⁰ "Fran Sez," *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 8, December 5, 1942, 8.

Targeting services specifically to the needs of women war workers likely also served to endear her to her clientele. Certainly, the beauty shop aimed to eliminate the physical effects of the factory on working women, returning their hair and bodies to beauty and femininity. The existence of a beauty salon on plant grounds could signal the power of plant management to pressure women to care about, spend money on, and perform physical femininity. Alternatively, we can see the beauty shop as a result of women exercising power, demanding a recreational and self-care oriented service to meet their needs. A photograph of women reading magazines (including *Chatelaine*) while having their hair done at the DIL salon even appeared alongside Kay Murphy's regular "Fashion Shorts" column in an issue of the magazine spotlighting war workers. The image was captioned,

Beauty on the job! This well-equipped beauty parlor, staffed with experts, is an important part of the morale-building programme at a huge filling plant where thousands of girls are employed. By bringing this service, with all the fixin's, to the workers, precious time and transportation costs are saved.³¹

A second photograph of women in the salon, held in the DIL archives, shows a seated woman chatting with a friend, standing, while the beautician, wearing an impeccably white dress and apron along with peep toe wedge heels, adjusted the machine attached to the seated woman's hair. All three women are smiling, and the salon looks clean and modern.³² (see figure 17) The physical presence of a place which sold beauty treatments

³¹ *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 32. This image is also held in the www.pada.ca online archive where it is described as "A black and white photo of the hairdressing parlour located in the centre of the women's residences east of the cafeteria." Photograph, "Defence Industries Limited – Hairdressing Parlour," P070-000-063, <http://pada.ca/lib/images/1/829.jpg>.

³² Photograph, "Beauty Parlour at Defence Industries Limited," P070-000-091, <http://pada.ca/lib/images/1/3755.jpg>.



Figure 17. Photograph, “Beauty Parlour at Defence Industries Limited,” P070-000-091, <http://pada.ca/lib/images/1/3755.jpg>.

to women within the same large compound where munitions manufacturing took place shows that at least some women valued and purchased such services – and that other women had the business acumen to recognize a growing market of consumers.

Interestingly, there was also a facility to support men's grooming needs. In the July 20, 1942 edition of *The Commando*, an article entitled "Men Obtain Equal Rights to Women!" announced the opening of a "modern tonsorial parlour" by seasoned barber Jim Woodward in the DIL men's camp. Listing prices for men's and children's haircuts, massage, shampoo, shave, tonics, and even razor honing, among other services, the article described the full range of services available to those working at the plant and living nearby. Celebrating the new business, Camp Supervisor Stann Mann said,

it's only right. The women around here have had a beauty parlour for some time and us guys have had to look like apes or invest in a trip to Pickering, Whitby or Oshawa, for either a haircut or a shave. With our new shop, though, the local bucks can have their treatments right here at home.³³

Men also valued the ability to access grooming services near the plant, and cared about their appearance. While women unquestionably faced higher standards of self-presentation, and patronized the salon business in larger numbers, men also had at least some interest in maintaining their looks.

The proximity of a beauty shop to the plant might have helped to raise the morale of women workers, or, as DIL's employee newsletter claimed, it may have increased absenteeism:

Surveys indicate that women workers are the chief offenders. Too many are taking days off for shopping tours and visits to beauty parlours, and with more women assuming the jobs of men called to active service, its continued practice could be tragic in its consequences.³⁴

³³ "Men Obtain Equal Rights to Women!" *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 2, July 20, 1942, 3.

³⁴ "Time..." *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 4, September 5, 1942, 1.

The suggestion that pursuing beauty might *harm* the war effort ran counter to the dominant discourse of the period, which told women that keeping themselves attractive was critical to maintaining the morale of men, both at home and overseas. Further, the idea that women could choose to leave work and spend their money on beautifying and leisure activities betrayed classed assumptions about women's need (or lack thereof) for income. While war work did provide some women with more discretionary spending money, especially if they were young, single, and not required to contribute to supporting a family, other women needed the money they made to support themselves and their families. This connection between beauty shop visits and absenteeism is particularly strange because *The Commando* itself published praise for the local shop and its owner.³⁵ Whether the beauty shop helped or harmed plant productivity, it was popular with women war workers and successful as a business. This tension reflects the conflicted discourse around working women's beauty; it could be both positive and problematic.

Heyd, *The Commando* reported, was an experienced beautician who had studied and trained in Toronto before coming to DIL. In order to "learn all she could about her prospective customers" at the plant, she worked on the line before opening her beauty shop. What she discovered was that despite the supposedly fashionable and protective effects of the iconic war workers' bandana, the hair covering could have some disadvantages: "...working among explosive fumes and having a bandana tied tightly on the head for eight hours does not tend to keep the hair attractive."³⁶ In September, 1943,

³⁵ For more on women war workers and absenteeism, see chapter 5 in this dissertation, on heterosexuality.

³⁶ "Ajax Beautician Solves Girls' Hair-do Problem," *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 10, January 15, 1943, 5.

The Commando reminded women at length that their bandana should cover all of their hair, lest ill effects ensue:

So your hair won't take a permanent wave. It is getting limp and lifeless and the deep, shimmering waves that you used to be so proud of, are becoming just a memory. Yet you continue to put your bandanna [sic] on in such a fashion as to expose most of your hair. Your bandanna is meant to cover all your hair, not just a part of it. If you continue to leave your hair uncovered, it is very apt to become dull and discolored and may even fall out. Beauty begins with your hair.³⁷

This warning suggests that, despite the widespread donning of stylish, or at least less objectionable, bandanas, many women arranged them to show at least some hair, often a curl or two escaping on the forehead. Further, there was clearly some conflict about the effects of bandana-wearing – they were needed for protection, and could be fashionable and fun, but they might also lead to unattractive hair after a long shift. In response to the bandana-hair problem, Heyd consulted an expert and apparently found a crème solution that resulted in successful styling. The local beauty shop, then, addressed needs particular to women war workers' bodies created by their industrial work. Beauty culture helped to erase the evidence of long shifts spent wearing safety clothes on women's "crowning glory." The existence of a beauty shop directly serving women war workers is compelling evidence that at least some women valued adherence to contemporary beauty standards enough to pay for the privilege.

Company newsletters, beyond being entertainment for those waiting at the salon, also connected beauty culture with the wartime workplace in powerful ways. Employee newsletters at DIL, GECO, and DeHavilland ran regular columns and special features on

³⁷ "Keep Your Hair Covered," *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 2, September 1943, 5.

beauty issues relevant to women war workers alongside line news and safety records, indicating interest in and attention to women war workers' bodies and beauty.³⁸ Women workers encountered encouragement to keep their bodies attractive in DIL's *The Commando*, which ran a series of five articles between October 1943 and April 1944 on the theme of "Beauty on the Job." Appearing on the "Of Interest to Women" page, the brief column provided cautions and advice about protecting, maintaining, and improving features of women war workers' bodies, including the hands, nails, face, and hair. The columns contain both concern about the effects of war work and confidence that with a little bit of effort and some helpful tips, women could look and feel their best. Beautifying the war worker, the articles argued, was an arduous and crucial but ultimately enjoyable activity:

Might as well face it, you girls who are working in war plants; you must go in for a more rigid and faithful beauty routine than you kept when you were ladies of leisure. Your skin and hands are taking a beating all the time you're on the job, so you must acquire new beauty habits to ward off the ill effects.³⁹

Thus, women war workers bore not only the usual burden of appearing attractive in work settings (women in acceptably feminine jobs in office settings, for example, were also expected to appear stylish and well-groomed), but also had to contend with the harshness of the dirty factory. We can see the operation of dispersed power in these newsletter columns – while they express the desire of plant management to encourage their women workers to look feminine and beautiful, they can also show that women were able to write about – and read about – topics of interest to them, even if these subjects were

³⁸ The employee newsletter for the John Inglis Company, *The Shotgun*, also included a regular fashion and beauty column, entitled "Pot Shots at Style and Beauty." Sobel and Meurer, *Working at Inglis*, 73.

³⁹ "Beauty on the Job," *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 3, October 1943, 5.

unusual in a factory publication. This passage clearly suggests that women workers were middle-class “ladies of leisure,” lacking previous work experience and unfamiliar with the strategies needed to erase the evidence of labour from their bodies.⁴⁰ The first “Beauty on the Job” column, focusing on skin, was clear about the negative effects of “millions of flying particles of dust and abrasives that fill the air of most factories,” and recommended both frequent washing and the use of “protectives” as remedies.⁴¹ This first incarnation of the column addressed the idea that women workers’ bodies were affected by their factory work most directly.

Subsequent “Beauty on the Job” columns detailed other parts of an ideal war worker’s beauty regimen, providing beauty tips, information, and encouragement. Each column shared a common tone and perspective on beauty as a pleasurable pursuit, suggesting that women would be happier when they saw a beautiful reflection in the mirror. In a column on nail lacquer, women were advised that, although some beauty products were scarcer because of war, “there shouldn’t be any fingernail dimout if we practice a few economies.” These included, for example, making sure bottles were closed tightly to avoid waste. Creativity was also encouraged: after saving partial bottles of undesirable colours, one might mix them together, “stir well, and pour yourself a brand-new shade.”⁴² A column on hair problems suggested treatments for both dry hair and oily hair, as well as recommending frequent brushing in order to “make your hair a shining

⁴⁰ This suggests that women workers were not imagined as working-class women or women with a large number of children – people who would not likely be described as “ladies of leisure.”

⁴¹ “Beauty on the Job,” *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 3, October 1943, 5.

⁴² “Beauty on the Job,” *The Commando* vol. 2 no. 4, November 1943, 5.

glory.”⁴³ Another column in the series focused on beauty masks for those who “want to look 20 when you feel like 100.” It offered recipes with ingredients including oatmeal, almond meal, milk, lemon juice, and peroxide, as well as application procedures, and concluded, “go see if you don’t find a more radiant vision in the mirror. A beauty on the job.”⁴⁴

The “Beauty on the Job” columns went beyond facial cleansers and hair treatments, also tackling the topic of colour cosmetics. In the March 1944 version of the column, readers were asked,

Did you ever notice how much brighter the world looks and how much more capable you feel, as you progress with putting on your make-up? ... Nothing is as bad as it seems when you look as pretty as you can in the right make-up... aside from the real protective benefits choose make-up to glorify your own beauty and lift your spirits.⁴⁵

Encouraging the use of foundation, face powder, rouge, lipstick, brow pencils, and mascara, the column promised that make-up could both protect facial skin from “the dirt and grime of the day” as well as provide a psychological boost and increased confidence. The idea that makeup could be transformative, protective, or promote self-esteem was not unique to the Second World War or to women war workers.⁴⁶ However, the inclusion of such beauty tips and encouragement to see physical attractiveness as important in a war worker newsletter suggests that, despite their participation in patriotic labour and the

⁴³ “Beauty on the Job,” *The Commando* vol. 2 no. 9, April 1944, 5.

⁴⁴ “Beauty on the Job,” *The Commando* vol. 2 no. 6, January 1944, 5.

⁴⁵ “Beauty on the Job,” *The Commando* vol. 2 no. 8, March 1944, 5.

⁴⁶ Kathy Peiss writes, “Makeup promised personal transformation, a pledge that sounded deeply in American culture – from conversion experiences and temperance oaths to the appeals of medicine men and faith healers. Beauty culturists had proclaimed the mutual transformation of external appearance and inner well-being.” Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 144.

additional challenges and stresses of wartime, women were not absolved of responsibility for maintaining their appearance. Alternatively, we can see these “Beauty on the Job” columns as a way to encourage women workers, unaccustomed to factory labour, to connect their recreational pursuits with their temporary status as workers. By inserting beauty culture into employee newsletters, companies might make women feel more comfortable with their jobs and be more likely to continue working for the duration of the war.⁴⁷ The presence of beauty advice can be seen as an effort to be inclusive; providing space for women’s concerns and interests in the official employee publication acknowledged their importance and possibly their interests. However, for women not invested in beauty culture, the constant barrage of beauty advice, emphasis on appearance, and pressure to perform normative femininity may have been frustrating, irritating, or oppressive.

Specific advice for war workers encouraging them to maintain their femininity and instructing them on how to stay clean and pretty also appeared in Canadian magazines. Many issues included detailed instructions for how to protect one’s body from the harshness of work, or look good while on the job. Jean Alexander’s 1942 piece “Keeping Fit For the Job” included both advice for women and tips from workers themselves.⁴⁸ The article boasted an extensive section on hand care, including seven specific recommendations for keeping hands clean and feminine, from “dig[ging] fingernails into a bar of soap before you go on the job” to using cuticle oil to counteract

⁴⁷ On auto workers and beauty in the workplace, see Sugiman, *Labour’s Dilemma*, 72-73. On employer efforts to use beauty contests to make war work more appealing to women, see Gentile, “Queen of the Maple Leaf,” 129.

⁴⁸ Jean Alexander, “Keeping Fit For the Job,” *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 29-30.

hangnails. Despite advice to keep nails short, Alexander mentioned one exceptional worker “who’s the Pride of the Plant with the longest nails ever; she uses them as a craftsman his tools—for picking up tiny tacks, they’re as effective as magnets!” There was also detailed advice about taking care of feet, choosing the right socks and shoes, keeping hair attractive (since “Hair fixes for the girls in war industry can mean a lot to her feeling of well-being”), how much makeup to wear (“too-too vivid makeup isn’t the thing”), and the importance of keeping a slim figure and maintaining “personal daintiness” (using antiperspirant, dentifrice, mouthwash, and shampoo).⁴⁹ In the same magazine issue, Kay Murphy’s regular “Fashion Shorts” column zeroed in on war worker beauty concerns. Murphy described the “fashion plates” she saw entering and leaving the plant she visited, and the extensive shower and change room facilities offered to women, which she described as “Really beautiful rest rooms, with large mirrors (to remind the girls to look their nicest).”⁵⁰ Similar articles focusing on the challenges of staying beautiful in wartime appeared in other magazines as well, throughout the later war years. Often, an unflaggingly upbeat tone in these articles camouflaged the intensity of the pressure they placed on women to maintain a normatively feminine and beautiful body. Beauty advice was presented as light-hearted and fun, but it also contained expectations that women would take steps to keep their bodies in line with the iconic image of the woman war worker.

Advice and instruction in beauty culture was also available to war workers in more engaging contexts. Aside from providing information and encouragement about

⁴⁹ Alexander, “Keeping Fit For the Job,” *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 30.

⁵⁰ Kay Murphy, “Fashion Shorts,” *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 31.

beauty culture, employee newsletters also advertised beauty-related classes for women workers offered as part of plant recreational programmes. These classes allowed women workers to gather with their peers to talk about and work towards personal beauty. DIL advertised a multi-session “Seven Steps to Beauty” course, sponsored by the Ajax Health and Culture Club.⁵¹ A quiz in *The Commando* advertised the class, asking readers:

1. Is your hairdo suitable to your particular type? 2. Are you wearing clothes that make you look your best, giving you that slender, chic appearance? 3. Are you being kind to your skin? 4. Do you know everyday, proper etiquette? 5. Do you possess grace and poise? 6. Do you know what gives you personal charm? 7. Do you know how to develop your personality?⁵²

These questions, the newsletter promised, would be answered in a series of courses taking place every Thursday at 2 and 8pm in a residence at the factory. Organized by the Recreation Department’s Mr. H.S. Rumball and open to “all girls in Residence and all women in the Village,” the course would reveal “How to Make Yourself More Attractive” and featured presentations by professionals and experts.⁵³ Lotta Dempsey, feature and fashion editor at *Chatelaine* and author of several articles on women war workers, presented a course on “Everyday Etiquette.”⁵⁴ The course on hair styling was provided by M. Rene, “famous French hair stylist and a top man in his profession,” and Miss McNiece, “trained by one of the famous Ogilvie Sisters.” Wardrobe advice was provided by showing clothing on professional models. Quite popular, the courses were

⁵¹ “Girls Take Keen Interest In Seven Steps to Beauty,” *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 9, April 1944, 5.

⁵² “Quiz Questions,” *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 8, March 1944, 3.

⁵³ “‘Seven Steps to Beauty’ Shows How To Make Yourself More Attractive,” *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 8, March 1944, 4.

⁵⁴ “Miss Lotta Dempsey,” *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 10, May 1944, 5.

attended by over one hundred women.⁵⁵ The enthusiasm for these courses suggests that some women workers were indeed very interested in beauty, and welcomed its presence in their workplace – in particular because many lived at the factory, as well. These beauty courses were deeply connected with the workplace. The courses were held in a women’s residence within the plant compound, and were organized by the official Recreation Department. Intended, then, to entertain and divert as well as to instruct, these popular courses indicate that beauty had a firm foothold in the wartime workplace.

Some women may even have taken it upon themselves to put together beauty classes on their own. In a photograph published in *Chatelaine*, a group of women are practicing walking with books on their heads in a large, well-lit and clean room, while others look on from the sidelines.⁵⁶ Since the photo accompanied an article on war workers, we know their occupation even if they are not in uniform. Some of the women wear trim-waisted slacks and neat blouses, others skirts, and one even sports a long sleeved top with the letters “D.I.L.” inside a maple leaf printed on the front – a detail which suggests this may be a photograph taken at the plant. Most of the women are smiling, and they appear to be enjoying themselves. The caption explained that “these girls are practicing good posture and poise, to the accompaniment of “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree” on the juke box.” Although the women spent their days filling shells, their leisure time involved “fun, games and personal improvement” like this work on poise. Whether the women in the photograph were really thinking about their appearance

⁵⁵ Although exact statistics on the number of employees are not available, at its peak, DIL employed around 9000 men and women. While one hundred participants out of thousands of female employees might not seem significant, few other recreational activities advertised in *The Commando* seem to have drawn so many people – except perhaps bowling.

⁵⁶ Photograph accompanies Alexander, “Keeping Fit For the Job,” *Chatelaine*, September 1942, 29.

or, instead, just enjoying themselves, the magazine's caption framed the activity as beauty-related.

It is worth noting that, despite the availability of beauty classes, there were many other recreational and social opportunities as well - not all women workers were interested in or participated in hairstyling or fashion courses. Neither of my interviewees was involved in the classes, and none of the published histories of DIL mention them. Further, for women seeking something fun to do after work, many war plants (including DIL, GECO, and DeHavilland) ran sophisticated recreational departments that offered their employees a wide range of competitive and friendly sporting and fitness activities as well as dances, live music, theatre, films, parties, charity events, and more. The existence of beauty classes is significant and notable, but the scope of participation and the variety and number of alternatives remind us that beauty culture in war plants was complex.

Classes helping women to keep their bodies slim and attractive complemented instruction in beauty and charm. Both DIL and GECO's recreation departments offered physical activity courses, which, although ostensibly about health, aimed primarily at helping women to lose weight or to remain slim. At DIL, *The Commando* advertised a class for "girls young and old, married or single, who would like the opportunity to reduce their waist, hips, etc... HIPS-HIPS-AWAY!"⁵⁷ Many other recreational sports opportunities were available to women at DIL – in fact, on the same newsletter page, activities for women as widely varied as volleyball, basketball, badminton, and bowling were advertised. While the fitness class aimed at weight loss was far from the only

⁵⁷ "Sports Forum," *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 6, January 1944, 8.

physical activity offered to women war workers, the existence of such a class and the clearly stated goal of “reducing” suggests that physical activity was seen not only as a recreational or pleasurable pursuit, but also as one that could lead to greater attractiveness. Further, it suggests that women’s bodies were perceived to be more attractive when they were thin, and that at least some surveillance of body size existed.

In Scarborough, Ontario, the General Engineering Company combined fitness instruction and beauty rhetoric in a series of “glamour classes.” First announced in the October 23, 1943 edition of GECO’s *The Fusilier*, the classes allowed women to exercise and promised attractiveness would result:

Let’s be honest, girls, we’re all looking for it! Personality—beauty—poise—in the movies they call it “glamour”. You’ve got to have glowing vitality, a graceful carriage and radiant good health to qualify. Do you need to take off a little excess avoirdupois? Or are you one of those girls who would look better with a few pounds? ... You’ll be amazed how others will react to the change in you. You CAN do it—these classes will show you how.⁵⁸

The assertion that all women wanted to acquire glamour signals broad pressure to participate in beauty culture, and an association between femininity and physical attractiveness. Further, this passage connects other aspects of feminine behaviour, like personality and poise, with having an attractive body. Interestingly, this ad for the glamour classes indicates an ideal weight for women, but also mentions that to reach this weight, women may need *either* to lose or to gain weight. At a cost of ten cents per class, women could take part in “easy, graceful motions that sooth [sic] tired limbs and relax muscles” – women were reassured that the exercises taught would not be strenuous and

⁵⁸ “Classes Being Formed To Acquire ‘Glamour’,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 15, October 23, 1943, 6, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

would not be “muscle-forming.” The program was also mentioned on a radio profile of GECO on the program “Let’s Visit!,” where it was described as “popular among old and young. It provides relaxing exercises to music, and a good thing for a tired war worker.”⁵⁹ Emphasizing the non-strenuous nature of the class may have been an attempt to attract already tired war workers, or perhaps to reassure those intimidated by or inexperienced in sporting culture to feel welcome and capable. A more likely explanation is that women with too much muscle may not have been perceived as feminine – thus, exercises for women desiring glamour were light and refreshing instead of challenging.⁶⁰

Two weeks after the glamour classes were first advertised, *The Fusilier’s* Sports and Recreation page reported enthusiastic attendance. A third weekly session was added to accommodate all participants, who met at 4:45, 4:30, or 8:15 on Tuesday evenings. This time, the article kidded that women’s interest in the class might be connected to the shortage of rubber – and thus of girdles: “After all, how could one possibly acquire that much-desired poise without first doing a lot of repair work on figures that had until now depended on elastic to hold them in shape?”⁶¹ The suggestion that working women’s bodies, previously shaped by girdles, now needed “repair,” transformed but did not shift the responsibility for having an attractive body. Women should still make sure their

⁵⁹ “Let’s Visit!” 1945, Radio Transcription Disk, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082-1-3-1, AO, http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/explore/online/d_day/production.aspx, accessed on August 20, 2015.

⁶⁰ For more on idealized women’s athletic and sporting bodies, the emphasis on femininity and heterosexuality among women athletes, and especially the social preference for beauty over power in mid-twentieth century women’s sporting culture, see M. Ann Hall, *The Girl and the Game: A History of Women’s Sport in Canada* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2002), especially chapter 4, “Sweetheart Heroines: Athletic and Lovely,” 104-134.

⁶¹ “Stretch, Swing, Sway Takes The Bulges Away,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 15, November 6, 1943, 3, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

bodies were the right shape and should simply do so through exercise instead of by using the correct foundation garment.

Interest in the classes at GECO increased steadily. By the printing of the November 20, 1943 edition, over 250 women workers were participating, as a lengthy article explained. The classes were run by GECO's Health and Beauty Supervisor, Hilda Ricketts, an English woman trained in the exercise methods and philosophy of the League of Health and Beauty.⁶² Created in 1930, the League was part of a broader British physical culture movement, and provided working women with access to inexpensive exercise classes, as well as the chance "to belong to a larger movement that was characterized by pageantry, drama, excitement and glamorous leadership."⁶³ Ricketts, having completed the League of Health and Beauty instructor's course, traveled to Toronto to teach the exercise method and then began working at GECO in 1941. As "the only qualified League Instructress in Toronto," Ricketts provided a prized and popular service to GECO employees. The classes offered recreation for industrious war workers, exercise to keep women's bodies healthy, and the means to maintain women's beauty. Explaining the history of the league to readers of *The Fusilier*, reporter Helen English explained:

The aims of the league were not only to make women more pleasing to the eye but to bring to the surface, through the medium of abundant good health, the true beauty that is every woman's birth-right. To this end special exercises were devised tuned to women's own requirements. Exercises that would overcome 'spare tires,' over-developed hips, aching

⁶² For more on the League of Health and Beauty during the war years and beyond, see MacDonald, *Strong, Beautiful and Modern*.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 38.

legs and tired arches and even that common evil—bugaboo of good posture—sway back.⁶⁴

The League of Health and beauty exercise classes run by Ricketts unselfconsciously declared their intent to be the pursuit not simply of women's physical fitness, but of women's physical beauty. One might even read the passage above as *equating* women's physical healthiness with beauty. English's article certainly suggested that health and beauty were intertwined, if not identical, aims:

Six months from now Scarborough may be able to boast that within its walls are the healthiest and loveliest workers in the country. So sure are we of this that we are going to requisition... a sign... reading: "Through these clocks pass Canada's most glamorous War Workers."⁶⁵

The conflation of health, beauty, and glamour in the description and promotion of exercise classes for female war workers powerfully demonstrates the assumption that beauty was an essential, good, and important quality in women, in particular in women workers.⁶⁶

Even more striking than the descriptions of GECO's Health and Beauty classes published in *The Fusilier* are a series of cartoon images that accompanied Helen English's November 20, 1943 article (see figure 18). Eight black and white drawings are spread across two pages, placed intermittently between blocks of text. Each image is labeled with a month of the year, from October to May. The images all show the same

⁶⁴ Helen English, "For Health & Beauty's Sake: Scarboro Fortunate in Having Qualified Enthusiastic Instructress in Hilda Ricketts," *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 17, November 20, 1943, 5-6, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Smith and Wakewich's body of work focuses significantly on health as one aspect of the surveillance and control of women workers' bodies; I argue that, while there are some instances where health concerns do dominate, attention to women's health often slips into gendered territory, including conflating health and beauty, especially where 'beauty' is expected to be reflected in women's behaviour, manner, or level of energy.

black-haired cartoon woman, wearing a black brassiere and panties (or perhaps a two-piece swimsuit), black high heeled shoes, and a bow in her hair, performing a variety of exercises and becoming thinner each month.

In the first image, for October, the woman's posture suggests unhappiness, even embarrassment: she faces the viewer, hands behind her back, eyes downcast, eyebrows raised in concern. This image shows the least dynamic pose of the series, suggesting that the woman pictured is not completely comfortable with or able to engage in physical activity. Ironically,

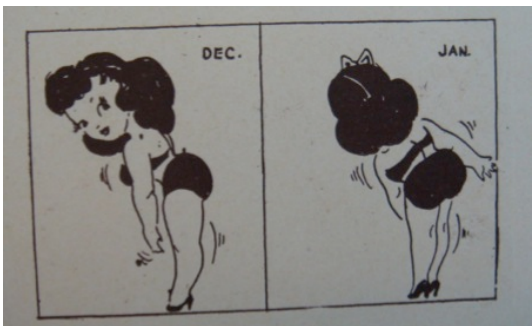




Figure 18. *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 17, November 20, 1943, 5-6, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

the woman's arms, thighs, and bosom seem in proportion to the size of her head (though her feet are extremely tiny and way out of proportion, perhaps to signal feminine delicacy). The visual depiction of a woman just beginning health and beauty classes as undeniably *heavy* is significant. Through this series of images, thinness of body is very clearly equated with physical fitness, feminine attractiveness, and happiness.

In the images for November, December, and January, we see the woman from behind and in profile. In these images, additional lines around her body denote movement and activity: she is clearly bending, stretching, moving. Her facial expression changes in these images, too: she begins to look at the viewer, and even smiles modestly. In the images for February and March, the "movement lines" persist, and the woman's figure

has begun to transform: she now has a narrower waist and thinner arms and legs, although her breasts and head have stayed the same size. In the final two images for April and May, the cartoon woman appears to be at her most slender, most flexible, and most confident. In the “April” image, a side view of the woman shows her bending at the waist, touching her toes. In the May image, the woman’s arms are raised in victory, and she smiles while looking demurely away from the viewer. Interestingly, in this last drawing, the woman wears a one-piece black swimsuit instead of the two-piece ensemble she sported in previous images, when she was heavier. Further, although the woman’s body has diminished in size, her head has remained the same size throughout, emphasizing, by the end, the images’ exaggerated comic quality.

The visual transformation of the cartoon woman over eight months is dramatic and revealing. Along with the copy describing GECO’s women’s fitness classes, these drawings strongly suggest that health was not the only quality women workers might expect and desire to obtain from participation in the sessions. Rather, women workers could reasonably surmise, from the combination of images and text, that they could lose weight and become more beautiful and happier. Further, the visual and verbal discourse highlights key areas of a woman’s body that might be more attractive if they were thinner: both text and images draw attention to thighs, hips, and waist in particular, as “problem areas” where women were likely to be undesirably heavier. These discourses clearly bring attention to beauty and the female body in the workplace in a powerful way. Whether women chose to participate in the classes or not, these articles in the company newsletter reminded working women that certain body types were better than others, and that achieving the most attractive body was a goal worthy of attention and effort.

The League of Health and Beauty exercise regimen at GECO also directly and intentionally targeted working women in the context of war. As a movement, the League of Health and Beauty strove to provide an affordable physical activity class for working-class women who might be unable to afford similar but higher priced options.⁶⁷ As a part of the broader spectrum of employer-sponsored recreational activities, then, Hilda Ricketts' beauty classes would benefit GECO by creating happier and more fit employees, who could then serve corporate needs more efficiently and consistently. Further, in writing about the classes, Helen Smith emphasized the important empire connection:

[W]e are, in reality, only following the lead of our English sisters. In spite of Blitz's and blackouts and four years of war they have faithfully attended the League realizing that if they are to be at their best for themselves, and their men and their country, they must first consider their health and their beauty.⁶⁸

Canadian working women were encouraged to imitate the patriotic exercise regimen of British women, and to make an effort to be healthy and beautiful in service of both patriotism and heterosexuality.

While men might benefit from women's efforts to keep their bodies healthy and beautiful, they may also have taken efforts at beautification less seriously than their female coworkers. Male employees at GECO were, it seems, fully aware of the popular glamour classes. Dominant ideas about white, working-class masculinity, however,

⁶⁷ Helen English, "For Health & Beauty's Sake: Scarboro Fortunate in Having Qualified Enthusiastic Instructress in Hilda Ricketts," *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 17, November 20, 1943, 5, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

precluded any men from participating in the classes, let alone expressing serious interest in beautification. In fact, *The Fusilier* warned men not to mock the classes. Under the headline, “Beware Ye Men of GECO And Restrain Thy Mirth,” they were advised to be respectful of women’s efforts:

Lest the male employees of Scarboro be tempted to become facetious about the women’s Health and Beauty classes now in full swing, it might be well to issue a timely warning that our humour could backfire. It’s this way, we males may be drafted ourselves for a different sort of ‘health and beauty’ movement. (Perhaps in the interest of accuracy, it might better be designated ‘health without beauty’).⁶⁹

Apparently, a local manpower shortage threatened to force some GECO men to work at heaving coal, an undesirable activity, which men might wish to avoid by keeping a low profile. Still, coal heaving would provide a good deal of exercise. It is unclear how teasing women about their beauty classes could lead to conscription into coal hauling for men, but it does seem that one of the unpleasant effects of such labour for men was the physical presence of coal dust on their bodies: “Remember he laughs best, whose face is unsullied by coal dust.” Masculine attractiveness, then, did matter to some male employees; masculinity simply involved a rather different physical ideal – one “without beauty.”

There were, then, complicated attitudes about the bodies of women war workers operating in Canadian war plants. On the job, they faced the scrutiny of male coworkers, the constraints of uniforms and safety equipment, the unpleasantness and potential ill effects of the factory environment on hair, hands, feet, figures, and faces. They were also

⁶⁹ “Beware Ye Men of GECO And Restrain Thy Mirth,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 16, November 6, 1943, 3, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

offered opportunities to pursue beauty at nearby salons, to learn about aspects of beauty culture in socially-oriented recreational programs, and to lose weight or reshape their bodies through participation in exercise aimed directly at producing glamour. The potential for beauty, as well as a range of pitfalls, were visually presented through photographs and drawings in war plant newsletters and national magazines. In each of these ways, women's bodies, and in particular the beauty or ugliness of those bodies, became central to the way women were perceived as workers during the war, and to the ways women were encouraged to reshape, retrain, and present their bodies.

According to wartime prescriptive literature, then, women war workers' beauty was important and absolutely worth pursuing. This required effort and skill, because the safety clothing, footwear, and hair coverings required inside industrial work spaces could make it challenging to look and feel pretty. While there is a limited amount of oral history evidence available about how women saw and reacted to their uniforms, exploring what women themselves had to say about their workplace attire helps provide context for media representations and societal worries about gender, bodies, and attire in wartime factories.⁷⁰ Louise Johnson, who worked weighing cordite at DIL, described the unpleasant effects of assigned factory footwear:

you had special shoes, too, that were particularly made with no metal. Even the shoelaces didn't have any little metal ends on them. And they were all sewn. And when I came to Ajax I [...] wore a seven and a half shoe, and I wear a nine and a half now. And I attribute those two extra sizes to standing up in those boxes because they, they just sort of sheltered

⁷⁰ The following discussion draws on oral history evidence from a number of studies, including Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*; Sangster, *Earning Respect*; Smith and Wakewich, "Regulating Body Boundaries" and "Trans/forming the Citizen Body"; Endicott, "Woman's Place (was) Everywhere." Other oral history-based work that was also consulted such as Larsen, "Sowing the Seeds"; Klausen, "Plywood Girls"; Scheinberg, "Tessie the Textile Worker"; Interviews at www.warstory.ca.

your foot they didn't really fit... They were flat, and they came in seven, eight and, etcetera, you know and, and my feet just spread!⁷¹

Aside from the uncomfortable footwear, Louise also described the uniforms worn by women at DIL, including a bandana and coveralls, cotton underwear instead of silk, and no jewelry or bobby pins. Unattractive uniforms might have been a trade-off for feeling like a key part of the war effort. According to Louise,

[W]ell we felt it was important and we were, we were told that it was important. And we had to um, getting back to the safety aspect, um, when we went in there to work if anyone was looking around for a good looking girl, she certainly was disguised underneath that outfit anyhow.⁷²

In another interview, when asked whether people liked their uniforms or had any ill feelings about them, Louise was even more direct: "It was not a fashion show."

Emphasizing the patriotic nature of wearing factory uniforms, she continued, "I never heard anyone say, I'm not puttin' that on or I-I'm not comfortable or so on. That, I mean the soldiers didn't have a choice. It was the same attitude. This is what you're wearing."⁷³

In a local history of the Second World War in Ajax, where DIL was located, uniforms were described thus: "Coverall attire was also worn by the production workers (the uniforms did nothing for the figure) and bandanas covered the ladies [sic] curls after all the hair-pins had been removed."⁷⁴

⁷¹ Louise Johnson, interview with author, May 26, 2014, Ajax, Ontario.

⁷² Louise Johnson interview, cassette tape, Town of Ajax Archives.

⁷³ Louise Johnson, interview with author, May 26, 2014, Ajax, Ontario.

⁷⁴ Ajax Historical Board, *The Pictorial History of Ajax* (Ajax, ON: Ajax Historical Board, 1972), 37. These descriptions line up with the uniform specifications at GECO as well, where, prior to the plant opening, "The selection of clothing [alone] took weeks of time. Standard uniforms had to be designed which met all safety requirements and at the same time were attractive, economical, and comfortable. No clothing made of silk or wool or containing metal was to be worn by the worker in the Danger Area and this meant the type of undergarments was limited and that special shoes without nails had to be manufactured." "The Story of Scarboro – Canada General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 5, folder F 2082-1-1-18, AO.

Women at DIL were far from the only ones to confront, struggle with, and sometimes resist war plant uniform requirements. Existing oral history evidence strongly suggests that women workers at an array of plants noticed and reflected on clothing and safety gear. Although her study of auto workers in the twentieth century does not deal solely with wartime hires, Pamela Sugiman provides an important perspective on the role of clothing in factories. She suggests that women

clung to highly conventional feminine images. Indeed, during the Second World War the women's departments [at General Motors]... reflected a *traditionally feminine culture*... Physical appearance, make-up, clothes, and hair styles – all defined by contemporary standards – were central to this culture.⁷⁵

Sugiman documents the ways in which women workers at GM pushed back against rules on workplace attire, from spending time on the shop floor styling one another's hair to ignoring or subverting increasingly rigid requirements to keep all hair covered. Justifying women's dislike for wearing close-fitting hair coverings, one McKinnon worker quoted by Sugiman, Amy Swanson, said that: "Their hair 'made them feel feminine.'"⁷⁶ While many of Sugiman's subjects were not expected to wear specific uniforms, they did care about how they looked at work – and whether they looked appropriate and appealing. Celia Wigg remembered that "We never went sloppy. That's one thing, when we worked our hair was done. And we were dressed nice... We never had runs in our stockings. There was nobody sloppy."⁷⁷ In some GM departments, however, coveralls were required. Marie Wilson recalled that this "solved your problem for working clothes. You didn't have to go in worrying whether you looked alright or not, you know. Everybody

⁷⁵ Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*, 73. Emphasis mine.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 76.

looked the same.”⁷⁸ This suggests that at least some women did not find the uniforms inherently problematic. Others resisted in subtle ways by adding their own stylish flair. Bea Parkin and Marie Smith reported that “We used to wear fancy hankies in it.”⁷⁹

For Sugiman, these acts of resistance by women workers in the 1940’s reflected the positive, traditional, feminine culture women created in factories. She emphasizes the “comfort” and “pleasure” that could be found in sharing fashion and femininity in the workplace. Joan Sangster’s study of women workers at Dominion Woollens, Westclox, Quaker Oats, and General Electric highlights a similar gendered culture of consumption in the interwar period:

Women who grew up in the interwar period were surrounded by a popular culture that stressed consumption, beauty, heterosexuality, and romance as central to feminine identity. These themes were reproduced endlessly in magazines (especially those geared towards female readers), newspapers and movies.⁸⁰

This idea of a gendered, consumption-based and heterosexually-oriented popular culture may explain why some women workers found it either pleasurable or necessary to affirm their feminine identities by resisting or even simply expressing dislike for workplace uniforms and safety gear.

In their work on CanCar, Smith and Wakewich also found that women recalled struggles around uniforms and instances of resistance as well as examples of pleasure and

⁷⁸ Sugiman, *Labour’s Dilemma*, 76.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 77. Sugman continues: “Some women embroidered butterflies and other pretty and delicate images on the handkerchiefs during their spare time in the plant.”

⁸⁰ Sangster, *Earning Respect*, 86. Both Sangster and Sugiman cite the idea of “women’s culture” in factory settings, even though neither is particularly focused on wartime workers. In her study of women workers at ALPLY in Port Alberni, Klausen also discusses the role of women’s culture and solidarity in drawing women into factory jobs. See Klausen, “Plywood Girls,” 213-215. On beauty culture as women’s culture at Maidenform in the United States, see Howard, “At the Curve Exchange,” 196-197.

the exercise of agency. While CanCar employees supplied their own uniforms, “Some did consider the choice of uniform to be the essence of feminine morale.”⁸¹ One worker, Mariella, seized the chance to control her own attire, creating (with the help of a seamstress) a “black outfit” that she planned to wear with different blouses. Mariella “nostalgically remembered, ‘it was clean and nice, but at the same time, it looked quite well dressed for that type of job.’”⁸² While Mariella found a way to make her work wear feel feminine, other women interviewed by Smith and Wakewich either appreciated wearing pants because they were “a public symbol of productivity,” or resented it because they felt it lacked respectability.⁸³ As in many other war plants, at CanCar, Smith and Wakewich’s interviewees recalled hair and hair coverings as a primary site of tension and resistance between women workers and management. Women remembered voluntary headscarves, which were replaced by mandatory tams that many found ugly: ‘Jane’ described them as “a pancake... the colour of cow dung.”⁸⁴ Other workers, including a male supervisor, described a process of gradual resistance to proper hat wearing, in which women “kept pushing the tams [hats] up more and more until they were useless.”⁸⁵ This seemingly small action still captured the attention of supervisors, who could send women home for such hat-related transgressions. Yet another CanCar worker, Angie, described

⁸¹ Smith and Wakewich, “Regulating Body Boundaries,” 63.

⁸² Ibid., 63. Smith and Wakewich describe Mariella’s efforts thus: “Mariella’s story stood out from the other women we interviewed because of the intensity with which she focused upon constructing, at great expense, a feminine, middle-class version of her work clothes intended for masculine viewing, but within carefully monitored moral restrictions.”

⁸³ Ibid., 63. For appreciation of pants as productivity markers, see Ann’s story. For frustration with pants as less respectable, see Doreen’s story.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 64.

⁸⁵ Ibid. They also cite one worker, Cora, who remembered pushing her tam back “to let her curled bangs (fringe) show – ‘it’d be very naughty but I can’t go on looking like...’ – she could not find the words to express her disgust.”

finding her uniform pants particularly unpleasant to wear outside of the shop-floor context; in the plant's office, "the men were in suits and ties and that, and the girls were dressed and nicely, and I come in like this farmer from outside... I was very comfortable in my place, but not in the office."⁸⁶ Through their interviews, Smith and Wakewich demonstrate convincingly that women at CanCar were aware of the rules around uniforms and head-coverings, often pushing back against them because of their perceived unattractiveness.

Finally, aircraft workers from both DeHavilland and Victory Aircraft, interviewed by Valerie Endicott, remembered some tensions around aspects of the uniforms, but also expressed feeling comfortable and satisfied with them, or recalled solving uniform problems in their own ways. Endicott's informants generally did not feel too constrained by their unfeminine uniforms, although some remembered coworkers who tried to dress in a more sexy and feminine way at work – actions which led to censure from supervisors.⁸⁷ There were complaints about low quality shoes that wore out quickly, and the enterprising solution of simply wearing sturdier men's shoes:

Bertha Curry started wearing boys' shoes because the women's shoes would wear out too fast. The boys' had thicker soles; they did not look 'dainty' but Bertha 'didn't really give a darn.' Welder Daisy McKinnon remembers that the steel-toed shoes were uncomfortable: 'they hadn't perfected them too well for women.' She also recalls 'some of the more

⁸⁶ Smith and Wakewich, "Trans/forming the Citizen Body," 322. The same worker (Angie) described some pleasure in occasionally wearing dresses to work when workers were called in at odd hours or at night, when they had been at a party, even though this made them "a spectacle." In "Beauty and the Helldivers," Smith and Wakewich also mention interviews "in which some of the women plant workers express envy at the secretaries' freedom to dress in a more decorative and feminine style. Ironically, the regulation to wear pants is not necessarily understood by the plant workers as a sign of 'freedom' or as a privilege denied the secretaries." Smith and Wakewich, "Beauty and the Helldivers," 101nn90.

⁸⁷ Endicott, "Woman's Place (was) Everywhere," 54.

feminine members used gloves, I wasn't that feminine. I wouldn't be caught dead with gloves."⁸⁸

For Curry and McKinnon, practicality won out, and less feminine working attire was not a problem. Instead, they valued comfort and durability. Other women quoted in Endicott's study similarly described the security and pride uniforms provided. DeHavilland riveter and electrical worker Jean Hopper felt that "It was kind of good you didn't have to worry about what you were going to wear to work." Fellow DeHavilland employee, welder Mary Longhurst, similarly appreciated her overalls: "you felt it was a uniform, we looked alike."⁸⁹ Endicott's interviewees did not describe their uniforms as feminine or attractive, but instead as functional and practical. Although beauty and femininity may not have been the primary priority for them, they did notice and have opinions about their own workplace attire, as well as commenting on the efforts of colleagues to stay feminine by wearing tighter, sexier, or more fashionable versions of company clothing.⁹⁰

A key reason that women war workers were constantly reassured that uniforms were appealing and that they could still be feminine was concern about remaining sexually attractive to men. Even though news media and ads for beauty products constantly reminded women war workers that their appearance mattered because it mattered to men, at least some women did not see that as a problem. In DIL worker Louise Johnson's words, "I really don't think that it had any impact on your attitude. I

⁸⁸ Endicott, "Woman's Place (was) Everywhere," 55.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁹⁰ For more on memories of coworkers dressing provocatively, resisting expectations around attire, and arguing that if their pants were not acceptable the company should pay for them, see *ibid.*, 54-55.

think when you went to your locker and took off your personal stuff, you were somebody else. You weren't trying to catch the boy down the hall. Besides the boy down the hall was 95 so you didn't, you know. There were very few young men..."⁹¹ The desire to attract a mate, then, did not necessarily trump feelings of duty and patriotism for all women. Others did dress with men in mind. Women interviewed by Endicott from both Victory Aircraft and DeHavilland remembered coworkers who were reprimanded for their intentionally alluring attire. Victory Aircraft electrical worker Edith Law reported that before official uniforms were mandated,

there was some criticism of the clothes being worn by the girls, some of them came looking for a man and dressed to the nines... Then various girls tried to outdo themselves as far as the slacks were concerned and this didn't go over well with the woman supervisor.⁹²

While some women chose to deploy their work clothing as part of a sexual strategy, others rejected the workplace as an appropriate space for such obvious flirting or showing off.⁹³ Priorities around displaying bodies and trying to look attractive varied. DIL employee Louise Johnson mentioned a war worker whose present-day interviews foregrounded hair styling:

There's one lady who's being interviewed and her biggest topic was doing her hair up in pin curls so it would be fine to go dancing at night... but she couldn't use bobby pins so she used toothpicks... We did our hair in pin curls, you take a little strand and you roll it around and you put a pin in it and it's curly or something. But anyway... it's in all of her interviews, and I thought, we were fighting a war we weren't curling our hair up with toothpicks. But that was what was important to her.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Louise Johnson, interview with author, May 26, 2014, Ajax, Ontario. This is particularly ironic considering that Louise DID meet her husband at DIL in her uniform!

⁹² Endicott, "Woman's Place (was) Everywhere," 54.

⁹³ For more on the potential for danger and harassment related to women's bodies and uniforms in the factory context, see the later portion of this chapter.

⁹⁴ Louise Johnson, interview with author, May 26, 2014, Ajax, Ontario.

In a number of interviews, then, women workers vividly remembered both their own choices around fashion, styling, uniforms, and gender performance, as well as the different choices made by others. Appearance did not have the same importance for all workers.

Women workers' bodies were experienced, imagined, and depicted as both feminine and unfeminine, attractive and unattractive, powerful and vulnerable. The need to balance these qualities is nowhere more evident than in prescriptive visual and verbal messages about safety in industrial environments during wartime. Some safety materials warned women about the particular ways their bodies or dress could be risky in the workplace. Other media suggested that women themselves could be dangerous and even impede efficient production. In this way, women's beauty and bodies entered the workplace as potential risks to be managed and surmounted. The visual discourse constantly offered contradictory advice: women were reminded to put in the effort to look beautiful both for themselves and for the morale of others, but not to pay *too* much attention to beauty, and not to distract anyone with their appearance.

While the mere presence of women's attractive bodies, or their clingy sweaters, is sometimes cited as a danger in the industrial workplace, specific body parts were also criticized or suggested to be especially troublesome. Women's hair, for example, was a particular source of concern.⁹⁵ Unlike tight clothing or appealing bodies, women's hair was a worry not because it could allegedly distract men, but because it could become

⁹⁵ For an American assessment of the value of and risk posed by women's hair in factory settings, including a poster series on hair and safety featuring actress Veronica Lake, see McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*, 166-171.

caught in machinery if uncovered, leading to actual injury. Alternatively, women's vanity or desire to look attractive could lead them to disregard rules about hair coverings, again leading to accidents.

The idea of hair-related emergencies did have some basis in reality. There are a few reports of 'scalping' accidents occurring in war plants, which undoubtedly contributed to the construction of visual narratives about gendered bodies and danger. Kay Rylko, who worked at Small Arms in Toronto, gave an account of such an incident at her factory:

...we had to have our hair covered 'cause I remember when they came around and said one lady had to go to the hospital and I couldn't find out why. It's quite easy to do and no harm to our hands. And but she disobeyed and didn't put her hair cover. And her hair got caught in the machine and took some of her skull away, and that was pretty bad. But she survived but I don't think she came back to work anymore. But we were to cover our hair and we have to obey rules.⁹⁶

It is easy to see how a report of such a tragic industrial accident would have a powerful impact on workers. In her study, Sugiman also cites a McKinnon Industries plant newsletter piece by safety columnist Frank Mulvale, which describes two similarly gory incidents:

A woman [sic] who was trying to replace a belt on a pulley when static electricity generated in the line shaft pulled her hair around the shaft. She was completely scalped and died nine weeks later. In addition, a power sewing machine operator put her head under the table to retrieve an object when her hair was caught in the shaft, and the scalp was torn off. According to Mulvale, she never recovered from the shock.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Interview with Kay Rylko, www.warstory.ca/video.php?story_id=66, accessed June 24, 2015.

⁹⁷ Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*, 75, citing 'Crown and Glory,' *McKinnon Doings*, vol. 9 no. 2, 1945, 7.

Accounts like these, of women's hair causing dramatic and disfiguring accidents, fuelled ideas about the inherent dangers of women's bodies in the industrial workplace.

Prescriptive safety materials often warned about the dangers of women's hair at work. At GECO, a photograph published in *The Fusilier* shows two women creating posters for the company, as well as some finished work hanging on the walls (see figure 19). One poster, which could target



Figure 19. *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 3, May 14, 1945, 8, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

both men and women, reads "Points to Remember Trim Those Nails." Another shows two turbaned women, one with a great deal of dark hair spilling out of her kerchief, and another with all her hair covered. This poster reads, "Hair's a Thought Keep It

Covered.”⁹⁸ Women’s concern for ensuring their hair looked as attractive and feminine as possible, despite the requirement of coverings like kerchiefs and turbans, led to additional reminders about hair and safety. In DIL’s newsletter *The Commando*, a regular column focusing on safety highlighted women’s hair as a potential cause of injury to women. In the April 1945 edition of the publication, the Safety Sam column argued that unsafe work practices were akin to gambling, concluding:

There’s only one way to beat the odds—protect yourself and do things the safe way. And remember poor Lulu: *Lulu Dripp was a gorgeous blonde; No cap confined her hair, A drill machine peeled Lulu’s bean, Now Lulu wears a spare.*⁹⁹

Despite the amusing tone of this poem, the suggested accident is actually quite gory.¹⁰⁰ Warnings, like this poem, both reminded women to observe uniform-related safety regulations as well as connected factory floor accidents with attractive women and their vanity. By keeping her “gorgeous blonde” hair uncovered, Lulu risked being violently disfigured.

In the DeHavilland *Mosquito*, safety cartoons and poems warned about strikingly similar accidents. In one edition, a poem in the “Safety Lines” column read, “A cute little lady named Hannah/ Who discarded her scarlet bandannah/Got close to a pulley/And her hair, though quite wooly/Was shorn in a horrible mannah.”¹⁰¹ Similarly, in a three panel cartoon, also published in the *Mosquito*, a woman with long blonde hair is shown next to

⁹⁸ *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 3, May 14, 1945, 8, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

⁹⁹ “Safety Sam Sez...” *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 9, April 1945, 7.

¹⁰⁰ For further documentation of gory hair-related wartime injuries including scalping, see Sugiman, *Labour’s Dilemma*, 75, and McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*, 167.

¹⁰¹ Howard Pyke, “Safety Lines,” *The Mosquito*, vol. 1 no. 8, December 1, 1944, 7, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-4, AO.

a sign reading “Cover your hair”; the second panel shows her screaming, her hair trapped in a machine. In the final panel, we see the woman nearly bald, looking at a sign reading: “Don’t comb your hair inside plant.”¹⁰² Another edition of the newsletter identified women’s blonde hair as especially risky, claiming that “Blonde people, particularly women, store up more electricity than brunettes.” An anecdote about a tire manufacturer whose facility was prone to fires caused by static followed, with the conclusion that “a blonde girl worker was the cause, and upon her removal and the removal of the other blondes from this Department, the fires have ceased.” The same brief article reminded readers that “girls in Canadian shell filling plants” are required to wear only cotton underwear, not silk, to further reduce the risk of static sparks.¹⁰³ Men’s hair and underwear, it was assumed, would not be problematic. In contrast, women’s hair, underwear, and desire for beauty were depicted as dangerous in the workplace.¹⁰⁴

Some war plants used images of women workers’ sexualized bodies to encourage all workers to observe safety regulations. For example, one drawing, which appeared both in GECO’s *The Fusilier* and also in archival photographs of life at the plant, focused on a nude, bathing woman worker and the importance of cleanliness. The image shows a woman seated in a white, claw foot bathtub, which is filled with water. Her head, back, arms and knees are visible above the line of the water, and she is holding a back scrubber to her neck (see figure 20). Two men are also in the scene: one uniformed man lies on the

¹⁰² “Hair Today and Gone Tomorrow,” *The Mosquito*, vol. 2 no. 5, March 15, 1945, 10, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-6, AO.

¹⁰³ “Gentlemen prefer blondes?” *The Mosquito*, vol. 1 no. 3, April 1942, 8, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-1, AO.

¹⁰⁴ For another example of the same theme, see “Think Safety,” *The Mosquito*, vol. 2 no. 1, February 1943, 12, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-2, AO.

ground below and to the left of the bathtub, holding a wrench, and looking directly at the woman, eyes wide, smiling. Another man in white overalls stands to the right of the bathtub; one hand holds a paintbrush to the wall, and the other holds a paint can. He also looks directly at the woman in the tub, eyes wide, eyebrows raised, and smiling widely, showing teeth.



Figure 20. “Wash Often,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 12, September 11, 1943, 5, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

The woman in the tub appears to have her eyes closed, paying no attention to the men nearby. The accompanying text reads, “Wash Often Don’t Let *Anything* Stop You.”¹⁰⁵ Frequent washing by all plant employees was part of normal safety procedures, in order to minimize the risk of bringing dangerous chemicals out from the plant, or bringing

¹⁰⁵ “Wash Often,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 12, September 11, 1943, 5, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

contaminants in. This image, however, clearly brings the attractive, sexualized female body into the factory setting, supporting the appropriateness of men's interest in women's bodies and even encouraging women's tolerance of that interest. Since the woman is nude, we cannot be completely certain that she is intended to be a worker, but it seems very likely. Probably intended to be humorous in tone, the image nonetheless places a nude female body alongside two clothed male ones, as well as approving of male heterosexual gaze. This image not only appeared in the company newsletter, but also in an archival photograph of seven adult men in suits and military uniforms surveying plant promotional materials (see figure 21).¹⁰⁶ One man holds up a poster-sized version of the bathtub image, while the other men look on. All the men in the image are smiling, perhaps amused by the image. In this photograph, real men are looking at an image of men looking at a woman worker's body in an undeniably approving and sexual way. Women workers' sexualized bodies were part of the wartime visual discourse around safety and plant life in ways that men's bodies simply were not. This trend framed women more as sexual objects than as workers, subtly undermining their importance as labourers and patriotic Canadians.

Interestingly, another promotional poster is visible in this archival photograph which was also later reproduced in *The Fusilier*, and which sends an even stronger message about women's bodies and safety in the workplace.¹⁰⁷ In this poster (see figure 22), a scuba diver whose entire body and head is covered in a scuba suit and headgear, sits next to a wrecked ship at the bottom of a body of water. A cable rises from the

¹⁰⁶ GECO photograph, Fonds 2, Series 1243, Subseries 5, File 3, Toronto City Archives.

¹⁰⁷ "Carelessness Brings Trouble," *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 11, August 28, 1943, 4, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

diver's suit out of the water – bubbles emerging from the cable suggest it may be an oxygen connection – and a fish severs this line. On the diver's lap sits a topless female mermaid, with light flowing hair. The mermaid and diver have their arms around one another.



Figure 21. GECO photograph, Fonds 2, Series 1243, Subseries 5, File 3, Toronto City Archives.



Figure 22. “Carelessness Brings Trouble,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 11, August 28, 1943, 4, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

The visual message is complemented by text, which makes the point unmistakable:

“Carelessness Brings Trouble Keep Your Mind On Your Job.” In this image, the presumably male diver has been distracted by a beautiful and semi-nude female creature. As a result, his diving equipment has been compromised. Being distracted by attractive women, then, could “bring trouble” to the workplace. Women’s bodies could literally, it suggested, be the *cause* of carelessness. The power of feminine and attractive bodies is very clear, here: men could be so interested in women’s bodies that they might neglect work or safety. Even though the female figure in this image is not a worker, it still communicates the idea that women’s bodies in the workplace could be distracting to male workers. The assumption here is that the increased presence of large numbers of often

young, single women in industrial workplaces during wartime might make male workers more likely to be distracted and more likely to need such reminders.

Sending a related message about men's gaze and women's safety in the industrial wartime workplace, a comic in *The Mosquito* shows a blonde woman whose sweater is caught in a machine. As the sweater unravels from the hem upwards, five men stand by and watch, smiling, their hands in their pockets or on their hips. In the caption, the alarmed woman says, "Well, don't just stand there. Do something!"¹⁰⁸ Here, men's interest in seeing a woman worker's attractive body stops them from helping her remove her clothing from a machine. The men are unmotivated to help, the viewer is to understand, because they want the woman's sweater to continue unraveling, so that they can see even more of her body, unclothed.

In another edition of GECO's newsletter, the connection between men's attraction to women and the potential for workplace accidents is made even more directly. A cartoon, accompanied by a poem, identified flirting as the cause of one man's need to visit the doctor (see figure 23). In the black and white drawing, a man approaches a corner in a hallway. He looks behind him, smiling, with eyebrows raised, at a woman war worker wearing white coveralls and a turban. She returns his gaze. Around the corner, another worker, also a woman, approaches. All three

¹⁰⁸ "Well, don't just stand there..." *The Mosquito*, vol. 3 no. 1, August 1, 1945, 8, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-6, AO.



Figure 23. "Giddy Jack Horner," *The Fusilier*, vol. 4 no. 2, May 14, 1945, 8, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

are moving quickly – lines around each figure suggest speed. A poem confirms what the image suggests: “Giddy Jack Horner / Barged round a corner / Heedless of danger ahead / If while he was flitting / He’d attended his knitting / He’d’ve avoided the man in red.”¹⁰⁹

The same theme is addressed in safety cartoons in *The Mosquito*. A cartoon in the “I. Maida Mistake” series (subtitled ‘The Plant Menace’) shows a male worker stepping off the top of a false staircase, because he is looking at an attractive female worker. The drawing is accompanied by an explanatory verse: “Everyone knew he’d say ‘GEE GOSH’/When he met with Dolly Dash,/But we didn’t think he’d be in a spot/Where he’d fall and break his ---er—Neck.”¹¹⁰ Clearly, the men in these images put themselves in danger by paying too much attention to the attractive women around them. Women’s beauty, then, also entered the workplace as a potential source of danger, in particular to men, who were always presumed to be heterosexual.

In interviews with war workers, historians have uncovered some evidence that the idea of “distracting and dangerous women’s bodies” extended beyond prescriptive posters and into practice in war plants. For example, some plant authorities policed women’s appearance and attire because they believed attractive women really could problematically divert men from their work. In effect, they used the excuse that women’s bodies might cause a distraction as an excuse to monitor clothing and enforce rules about style. DeHavilland machine shop inspector Dorothy Wilton recounted that tight clothing was a particular problem:

¹⁰⁹ “Giddy Jack Horner,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 4 no. 2, May 14, 1945, 8, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

¹¹⁰ “I. Maida Mistake (The Plant Menace),” *The Mosquito*, vol. 1 no. 10, November 1942, 5, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-1, AO.

if you wore anything too tight that could be distracting to the men... they'd tell you straight out... some of these girls had pretty good busts, they'd come in with a sweater... [management] would haul you down and cover you right up... You soon got used to the idea that you dress sensibly.¹¹¹

Wilton's account shows both that men's distraction by women's bodies led to action on the part of bosses, and that women were the ones subject to regulation. In particular, the idea that women with larger busts were more likely to be "covered right up" shows that women's bodies were being scrutinized and sexualized. The policing of "sweater girls" is especially ironic, although not surprising, considering the simultaneous celebration of pinup culture in many war plants.¹¹² A CanCar worker, Ann, also remembered sweaters being significant at work:

She spoke ambivalently about the 'sweater girl', her co-worker who dressed in trousers and very tight sweaters, and enjoyed the opportunity to distract men in the plant and invite their whistles as she walked to the bathroom as often as possible.¹¹³

Ann's story suggests that her colleague was intentionally drawing men's attention, and welcoming it. However, Smith and Wakewich also found that many of their interviewees "identified the walk to the bathroom as a site of tension between health, morale, and morality because at this point their uniformed bodies were on display for the male coworkers."¹¹⁴ They conclude that women felt unable to avoid men's scrutiny or change men's behaviour, and were only able to exercise agency in choosing how to react: "Some women embraced this as a chance to do some morale boosting and quite enjoyed the

¹¹¹ Endicott, "Woman's Place (was) Everywhere," 54-55.

¹¹² The "sweater girl" was a sexy icon during the 1940s and 1950s. For a more extensive discussion of pinup culture in war plants and among war workers, see chapter 5 in this dissertation.

¹¹³ Smith and Wakewich, "Regulating Body Boundaries," 63.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

walk; some just ignored it, while others found it quite distressing.”¹¹⁵ Some women workers may have dressed or styled themselves in ways that drew men’s attention, either intentionally or unknowingly. However, even if some women aimed to distract, close supervision and regulation of their bodies was unwelcome and upsetting for others. I argue that this scrutiny and regulation was harassment rather than justified concern in part because I have not found accounts or evidence of such accidents. None of the oral histories I consulted included examples of incidents in which someone was hurt because their focus was drawn away from their work by a sexually appealing woman, even though this trope was a consistent feature of prescriptive safety literature. The effect of this safety literature, then, was more to shame and control women than to prevent injuries.

Whether it was contributing to industrial accidents, bringing communities of women together, or making unwelcome sexual advances by men seem more permissible, beauty culture marched steadily into wartime workplaces along with Canadian women. Interest in looking and feeling feminine and attractive persisted despite controversial uniforms, hair coverings, footwear, and other safety regulations. Recreation departments offered women workers structured opportunities to learn how to manage the additional challenges to beauty posed by industrial work, and how to keep a trim figure to be at their best for themselves, their men, and their country. Media encouraged workers to be on guard for accidents caused by women’s pursuit of beauty – or men’s attention to it. In each of these ways, women workers’ beautiful bodies were central to how they were

¹¹⁵ Smith and Wakewich, “Regulating Body Boundaries,” 64.

perceived in the workplace. Further, the idea that women's bodies and beauty might be a problem in industrial settings suggested that perhaps they were not ideal factory workers at all. While they could be tolerated and accommodated during the crisis of war, this media sent the message that women's bodies might be an impediment to postwar careers in factories.

Focusing on women as possessors and cultivators of beauty also set them apart from male workers, and served as a constant reminder of the rigidity of the gender binary. While women might enter masculine spaces like the factory and take on masculine jobs, their bodies signalled their difference.¹¹⁶ In fact, the glamourization of the woman war worker, exemplified in Rosie the Riveter type imagery, did significant cultural work to counter the potential gender role shakeup made possible by the war. Yet, the enthusiastic participation of at least some war workers in fitness and glamour classes shows that the association between beauty and war work was not limited to the realm of media spin. A number of women were clearly unwilling to compromise their desire to look a certain way. These women encountered constraints in the factory, as well as conflicting pressures to look attractive – but not too attractive, and found ways to engage in and enjoy beauty culture within the context of wartime industrial labour. Although enjoyment of beauty culture was not universal among war workers, it undeniably played an important role in war plant culture and in shaping the image of the ideal, iconic woman war worker.

¹¹⁶ Though, significantly, men and women very frequently performed *different* tasks in these environments.

Chapter 5: Pinup Girls, Pretty Shell Workers, and the Parade of “Feminine Pulchritude”: The Woman War Worker as Heterosexual Icon

While Rosie the Riveter, powerful and beautiful, was America’s most famous war worker icon, Veronica Foster was Canada’s bombshell equivalent. Foster, rebranded as “Ronnie the Bren Gun Girl,” appeared as an undeniably sexy, heterosexually appealing, pinup-style war worker in a series of promotional photographs created by the National Film Board’s still photography division in 1941.¹ (see figures 24 and 25) Some of the images show Foster interacting with heavy machinery at the John Inglis company, producer of Canada’s Bren gun. In other photos of “Ronnie” wearing an extremely stylish hat, a coat with fur trim, and a sparkling brooch, she prepares for a night out at the Glen Eagle Country club, where further images show her in a dark dress and light pumps, dancing the jitterbug with a plant foreman. In one particularly cheesecake-style image at the club, Foster adjusts her stockings. Shot nearly from floor level, Foster’s shapely bent leg tantalizes at the center of the photograph. Perhaps the most iconic images of Foster, though, are those in which she poses with a Bren gun and a cigarette.

¹ See series of photographs, Library and Archives Canada online, www.collectionscanada.ca: “Veronica Foster, an employee of John Inglis Co. Ltd. known as “The Bren Gun Girl,” operating a lathe on the Bren Gun production line,” unknown photographer, May 10 1941, Toronto, LAC, NFB, Still Photography Division fonds, accession no. 1971-271, item: WRM 780 or PA-051587; “Veronica Foster, an employee of John Inglis Co. Ltd. known as “The Bren Gun Girl,” preparing to go to a party at the Glen Eagle Country Club,” unknown photographer, May 1941, Toronto, LAC, NFB, Still Photography Division fonds, accession no. 1971-271, item: 767; “Veronica Foster, an employee of John Inglis Co. Ltd. known as “The Bren Gun Girl,” jitterbugging with plant foreman Bill Ward during a party at the Glen Eagle Country Club,” unknown photographer, May 10 1941, Toronto, LAC, NFB, Still Photography Division fonds, accession no. 1971-271, item: WRM 817 or PA-116065; “Veronica Foster, an employee of John Inglis Co. Ltd. known as “The Bren Gun Girl,” adjusts her stockings at the Glen Eagle Country Club,” unknown photographer, May 10 1941, Toronto, LAC, NFB, Still Photography Division fonds, accession no. 1971-271, item: WRM 808; “Veronica Foster, an employee of the John Inglis Co. Ltd. Bren gun plant, known as “The Bren Gun Girl” poses with a finished Bren gun at the John Inglis Co. plant,” unknown photographer, May 1941, Toronto, LAC, NFB, Still Photography Division fonds, accession no. 1971-271, item: WRM 768. See also Payne, *The Official Picture*, 91-93.



Figure 24. “Veronica Foster, an employee of the John Inglis Co. Ltd. Bren gun plant, known as “The Bren Gun Girl” poses with a finished Bren gun at the John Inglis Co. plant,” unknown photographer, May 1941, Toronto, LAC, NFB, Still Photography Division fonds.



Figure 25. “Veronica Foster, an employee of John Inglis Co. Ltd. known as “The Bren Gun Girl,” adjusts her stockings at the Glen Eagle Country Club,” unknown photographer, May 10 1941, Toronto, LAC, NFB, Still Photography Division fonds.

Sitting on a table alongside the rather phallic gun, one cigarette-holding hand draped over it, Foster, wearing dark coveralls, a clingy, short sleeved blouse, and the ubiquitous war

worker's bandana, looks down at the gun and blows out a puff of smoke. Even though they also show Foster interacting with machinery, walking around the plant, chatting with other employees, and even demonstrating how to tie a bandana the Inglis way, the images frame Foster specifically and Canadian women war workers generally as feminine, glamorous pinup girls who just happen to be in a factory at that moment.² The heterosexual appeal of the female war worker, in particular as filtered through the male gaze, is a central component of the series. Photography historian Carol Payne shows that the Foster images, combined with other NFB photographic projects, like those focusing on sisters Céline, Roberte, and Hélène Perry as well as married mother Mrs. Jack Wright, all war workers, reflected the government's desire to "[endorse] war work for women and yet [hold] conventional gender roles as intractable."³ Photographs, cartoons, drawings, and other visual and verbal representations of women war workers constantly reminded viewers of the women's heterosexuality, emphasizing the erotic appeal of their bodies and their reproductive potential.

Heterosexuality certainly dominated Second World War era home front Canada. Popular media at home strongly encouraged Canadian men and women to value, celebrate, and pursue romantic relationships with one another, and shortly after the end of

² For images of Foster tying her bandana, see photographs, Library and Archives Canada online, www.collectionscanada.ca: "Veronica (Ronnie) Foster, employee of the John Inglis co, and known as 'The Bren Gun Girl' ties her head scarf to work at the John Inglis Co. Bren gun plant," unknown photographer, May 1941, Toronto, LAC, NFB, Still Photography Division fonds, accession no. 1971-271, item: 825; "Veronica Foster, an employee of John Inglis Co. Ltd. known as 'The Bren Gun Girl,' demonstrating the use of a kerchief to protect the hair of female employees from being caught in machinery," unknown photographer, May 1941, Toronto, LAC, NFB, Still Photography Division fonds, accession no. 1971-271, item: 830 or PA-116930.

³ Payne, *The Official Picture*, 103.

the war, what Doug Owsram calls the “shock wave” of the baby boom began.⁴ War plant newsletters, national newspapers, magazines, archival photographs, and oral history evidence suggest strongly that heterosexuality was a constant presence in Canadian war plants. Women workers were featured as newsletter pinups, flirtatious foremen lurked around factory corners, dating and dancing were described as pleasant recreational pursuits, and the marriages of plant workers were frequently and fully celebrated. I argue that the woman war worker and her white, feminine body became a focus of both concerns and hopes around heterosexuality during the Second World War. She was an icon of heterosexuality, presented in visual and print media as sexually appealing to men, romantically interested in them, and engaged in flirting, dating, and marriage both inside and outside war plants. Women war workers’ attractive bodies, feminine behaviour, and interest in heterosexual socializing and romance were frequently connected and foregrounded in visual and verbal representations of them. The wartime influx of women into factories facilitated the flourishing of heterosexual culture in war plants, and led to plant newsletters featuring women as pinups, as dancing partners, and as fiancées and brides. The war worker’s role as a heterosexual icon supported morale-raising recreation, placed the spotlight on war plant marriages, and signalled family-related, whiteness-inflected postwar national ambitions. This barrage of happy heterosexuality could also act to strongly discourage women from pursuing romantic relationships, lifestyles, or career paths perceived to be incompatible with heterosexual married life, and perhaps to cover up or compensate for sexual behaviours during wartime that fell outside the rubric of

⁴ Owsram places the start of the baby boom in 1946; see Doug Owsram, *Born at the Right Time* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), xiii; Pierson, *They’re Still Women After All*; Keshen, *Saints, Sinners and Soldiers*.

“respectable” heterosexuality. For some women, they could also make any alternatives seem hard to imagine. Finally, sexual advances initiated at work, and encouraged by the flourishing of heterosexual culture in wartime workplaces, could be aggressive or unwelcome, leading to what we recognize as sexual harassment today.

Women war workers were strongly and constantly associated with femininity, glamour, and attractiveness. In previous chapters, I explored advertising that sold beauty products and other consumer items using pictures of pretty factory workers, and the myriad of ways that safety and beauty intersected in war plant settings. Each of these examples connects women war workers with femininity, and further, with heterosexuality. Advertising promised war workers and other women that using particular beauty products would make them more attractive to men – including male factory bosses. Workplace safety rules, uniforms, and recreation programs structured working women’s ability to self-fashion, an activity which, it was suggested, could distract men from their work. The intense and constant focus on women war workers’ physical beauty and feminine behaviour was strongly connected to the broader cultural dominance of heterosexuality.

The woman war worker, because of her increased presence in industrial settings, especially after 1942, drew attention and caused some concern. As discussed in previous chapters, media depictions of women war workers as feminine, sexy, and glamorous reminded all Canadians, including workers themselves, that despite taking on potentially dangerous and grimy factory work, women could, and should, exert efforts to remain

attractive to men.⁵ The less transformed women workers' bodies and sexual interests appeared, the less threatening they were to the dominance of patriarchy, the stability of conceptions of family, and Canada's existing, prewar gender divisions and ideals. Of course, such ideals around appearance were just that – ideals, not always within reach for (or of interest to) all women. Working-class women and women of colour likely struggled the most to meet expectations around what femininity “should” look like.

In order to encourage the flourishing of ideal bodies and relationships, support and praise for these ideals appeared in the wartime visual landscape. War plant newsletters encouraged entrenched normative heterosexuality in several ways. Heterosexuality's presence in war plants provided opportunities for romantic socializing: dances, dating, and flirting allowed both men and women to enjoy themselves outside of their working hours. Many war plants developed extensive recreational programs to promote the health, happiness, and efficiency of their employees, making the war plant more than just a workplace, but also the site of fun and leisure.⁶ Heterosexual interaction in war plants was presented as a pleasurable social activity, and as a popular distraction from the stress and pain of wartime. Dances, flirting, engagements, and marriages were framed as an exciting part of keeping up morale on the home front – and for some workers, they *were* pleasurable and important experiences. While too much flirting at work was imagined by management to pose safety risks, and sexual attention could easily cross over from harmless to harassing, workplace romances were sometimes also the

⁵ See chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation for more on this.

⁶ Note that providing recreation and other social activities was also in the war plants' interests. Offering their employees these kinds of perks was intended both to keep workers satisfied and productive as well as to induce workers to remain at a particular plant rather than choosing another factory that might offer different or better perks.

source of morale-boosts for employees. For women concerned about their attractiveness despite ugly work-wear, such relationships could be affirming – and for their employers, heterosexual culture could provide reassurance that the female-driven wartime workplace would not substantially reorganize sexual culture in Canada.⁷ At least some of the obsession with working women’s physical appearance was connected to concerns about their ability to participate in heterosexuality, both as wives and as mothers. Constructing the woman war worker as a firmly heterosexual and respectable figure helped to dispel some of the stresses of wartime, reassuring Canadians that not everything was changing. At the same time, integrating a potentially disruptive and symbolic figure like the woman war worker smoothly into hegemonic heterosexuality helped to shut down more revolutionary possibilities, like lesbian relationships or lives without marriage, while simultaneously distracting from her potential participation in transgressive sexual activity.

To make the woman war worker a heterosexual icon, media constantly emphasized the interest of women war workers in men, marriage, and ultimately motherhood. Sometimes, women’s work was presented as focused on explicitly heterosexual goals: women might be working to patriotically support an enlisted boyfriend, or to save up money for their future wedding trousseau or household needs.⁸ In fact, war work was “sold” to women in advertisements for consumer products as a way to save up for marriage or for other household amenities; war work was a way for women to

⁷ See chapter 4 in this dissertation for more on beauty, heterosexuality, and danger in the workplace.

⁸ See for example chapter 6 in this dissertation, on the Miss War Worker contest and how winners intended to use their prizes.

shore up their future heterosexually-focused happiness. Ultimately, then, women war workers' association with heterosexuality connected them with a "normal" future outside of the world of waged work. The presence of heterosexuality in visual media subtly promised stability and prosperity for postwar Canada and reminded women workers of the roles they were expected to fulfil as wives and mothers. As new heterosexual relationships were formed and new marriages were solemnized, new families who would carry Canada through into the postwar era began to emerge. These marriages could signify hope, comfort, and the abandonment of factory attire for maternity wear among women war workers. Conversely, the message that heterosexuality was an inevitable part of women war workers' future acted to shut down other possibilities. Lesbian relationships, a future without marriage or children, and continuing postwar careers, particularly in industrial fields, were all erased from the visual landscape. Since these options were missing from the media, one could argue that they were banished and made almost unspeakable or unthinkable by their absence.⁹

In fact, many women involved in war work did imagine futures in which they worked for pay, but the question of woman's place in a postwar world was complex. Both Jeff Keshen and Ruth Roach Pierson have shown that, according to wartime opinion polls, the great majority of women war workers wanted to continue working after the

⁹ On the dominance of heteronormativity and the challenges of creating lesbian community later in the twentieth century, see Liz Millward, *Making a Scene: Lesbians and Community Across Canada, 1964-84* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2015). Millward writes: "Women had their work cut out in their attempts to make a scene [to create a community]. They existed in the context of an overwhelming, but certainly not monolithic, heteronormativity that was reinforced in all its subtle variations every single day, at work in the home, at school, in religious organizations, in stores, at the movies, on radio and television, in the newspapers, and in the design of space, such as that in the suburban home. The ideology of heteronormativity, with its foundational tents linking masculinity and feminine inferiority, was strengthened by relentlessly defining all alternatives to it as laughable, criminal, sick, or a foreign vice." Millward, *Making a Scene*, 7.

conflict.¹⁰ However, as Keshen also points out, “it is unclear how many of these women were willing to see veterans go without work as a result.”¹¹ The pressure to vacate jobs for returning veterans was strong; male veterans’ imagined needs as breadwinners for heterosexual families trumped women workers’ desires for meaningful employment and better pay. In her research on gender and employment during and after the war, Jennifer Stephen shows that ideas about heterosexuality were intentionally used to help reduce demand for postwar employment among women, simultaneously ensuring full employment for male veterans. In combination with vocational screening processes that constrained women’s training and employment opportunities, “the household was positioned as the primary social unit, one in which the state had considerable interest. Happy democracy depended for its very survival on happy homes. In this domesticity discourse, the first and true vocation of women lay within the household.”¹² As both Stephen and Keshen point out, discourse about women’s role in heterosexual marriages and families was buttressed by government programs and policies, including the introduction of family allowances, the reinstatement of marriage-bars affecting women in the civil service, and the closure of dominion-provincial day nurseries.¹³ Along with these structural forces pushing women out of the workforce, discourses that framed marriage and motherhood as a happiness-producing reward for war years filled with stress and loneliness proliferated in popular culture. The more strongly a future as a heterosexual

¹⁰ Jeff Keshen, “Revisiting Canada’s Civilian Women during World War II,” *Social History/Histoire Sociale* 30, no. 60 (1997): 255-256; Pierson, *They’re Still Women After All*, 78-79.

¹¹ Keshen, “Revisiting Canada’s Civilian Women,” 255nn83.

¹² Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl*, 127; *ibid.*, 105-108.

¹³ Keshen, “Revisiting Canada’s Civilian Women,” 257-258 and Stephen, 106-108.

housewife was emphasized, the less possible continued careers, singlehood, or same sex relationships may have seemed.

While the newsletter, newspaper, and magazine sources I consulted focused squarely on heterosexual themes, it is important to acknowledge and consider what is missing from these sources. Unsurprisingly, there is significant silence around same-sex desires or experiences in these managerially and editorially supervised sources, even though historians have shown that the broad social changes and disruptions sparked by the Second World War provided new opportunities for sexual and romantic same-sex relationships. In their study of working-class lesbian bar culture in Buffalo from the 1940s to the 1960s, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline Davis identify the Second World War as a key moment for lesbian communities, and explain many of the ways that the war had “a tremendous impact on lesbian life.”¹⁴ These included greater independence for women in general, less stigma and reduced threats to women’s reputations when women socialized in same sex groups, less scrutiny of women spending their own money on both necessities and leisure items, fewer men in local neighbourhoods making it safer and more common for women to travel (especially at night), and greater acceptance of women wearing pants and other masculine clothing.¹⁵ Broadly, their point is that these shifts contributed to making it more difficult to distinguish lesbian women from straight women, many of whom were also engaging in these behaviours. This meant that women pursuing relationships with other women had

¹⁴ Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 38.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 64, 154-155, and 374.

slightly more latitude to do so in the context of the war. It also suggests a reason for societal suspicion of or worry about war workers – if they were harder to distinguish from lesbians, perhaps they could become lesbians, threatening the heterosexual future of the nation.

Although I uncovered no overt references to lesbianism in my archival research, it is likely that the logistics of war work provided women who were romantically or sexually interested in other women with greater opportunities to pursue those desires. Many war plants experienced a significant gender imbalance, with far more female than male employees. As Canadian men enlisted in increasing numbers throughout the war, women at home found themselves in the company of large numbers of other women. Many of the men who remained at home and worked in war plants were older and already married, making them less likely partners for the large numbers of young, single women who flooded into war industries. At some plants, including Defence Industries Limited, for example, workers lived at the plant in gender-segregated housing, meaning that large numbers of young, single women lived and worked together with limited supervision.¹⁶ Many women were recruited from other parts of Canada, including both the Maritimes and the Prairies, for work in Ontario; this meant that women might be far away from parents and community, some for the first time in their lives. Living in close quarters, women may have developed close and intimate friendships with one another. Opportunities for same-sex flirtation, romance, and relationships certainly existed, as large numbers of women lived, worked, and socialized together. In fact, some historians

¹⁶ At DIL, for example, although women's residences each had a "housemother," an older woman responsible for enforcing rules and shepherding residents, behaviour outside of accepted norms was very possible.

have highlighted the appeal women found in working alongside other women, as well as the “women’s culture” that grew up in war plants. Even though this women’s culture was frequently oriented around heterosexual milestones like engagement, marriage, and pregnancy, it could still have provided a community for women interested in women.¹⁷

There is some evidence that could be interpreted to suggest the possibility of close, same-sex romantic friendships or relationships. American historians have documented the relationship between women’s softball teams and same-sex relationships and culture in the twentieth century, and several war plants had active softball teams (including Defence Industries, whose team were called the “Dilkins”).¹⁸ In at least one case, the Dilkins played against a team of CWACS.¹⁹ It is possible that, as in the United States, softball or other sports teams allowed women a space in which to form relationships with one another. It is worth noting, however, that at Ajax, the Dilkins facilitated at least one heterosexual relationship - player Doris Eleanor Mitchell married coach Norm Mackeand, and *The Commando* commented: “we can understand now why Norm was so generous with his time helping to coach this fine team.”²⁰ In another example of a space that hints at the possibility of same sex relationships, in three

¹⁷ On women’s culture in factory settings, see for example Sugiman, *Labour’s Dilemma*, 73; Sangster, *Earning Respect*, 85-86. One of Klausen’s interviewees cited the primarily female workforce as a draw: “In explaining why she left this job for ALPLY she referred to the number of other young women seeking work there, which suggests the importance of knowing that she would be working alongside women...” Klausen, “Plywood Girls,” 207.

¹⁸ For American softball and lesbian culture, see Anne Enke, *Finding the Movement: Sexuality, Contested Space, and Feminist Activism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), especially Part Two, “Public Assertion and Civic Space,” 105-176; Klausen’s interviewees from ALPLY also mention a women’s softball team. See Klausen, “Plywood Girls,” 215.

¹⁹ For a game between the Ajax Dilkins (from DIL) and a team of CWACS, see “Sporting Extras,” *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 2, September 1944, 3.

²⁰ Midge, “Powder Puffs,” *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 5, December 1944, 8.

evocative photographs found in the GECO archives, a small group of women dance together in a room with a wooden floor, with a jukebox in the background.²¹ Dancing in pairs while others watch from the sidelines, white and black women hold hands, dance, and spin each other around. In all three photographs, only one woman wears pants; the rest wear skirts or dresses, which swing as they move. The gathering looks casual and fun. In one photograph, a spectator holds a glass beverage bottle. There is one other photograph from GECO showing a mixed gender dance (in a clearly different room), in which two young white women in the background of the image hold hands, perhaps dancing together or perhaps simply watching others.²² These are the only pieces of archival evidence I have come across that suggest anything other than a heterosexual narrative. This does not mean that same-sex desire and relationships were not part of war work; rather, the erasure of firm proof suggests that there *were* lesbian relationships that have been ignored or expunged. Whether these women were friends relaxing and enjoying themselves or romantic couples, these ambivalences in archival records help to balance out the intense focus on heterosexuality in most sources, while simultaneously suggesting fear about the possibility that women *would* seize the opportunity for relationships with other women.

There is one hint that there are stories remaining to be told about the transgressive sexual opportunities that existed during the war. In a recent book on the creation of Canadian lesbian communities in the last third of the twentieth century, Liz Millward

²¹ Photographs, uncaptioned, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 730, folder F 2082-1-2-3.1, AO.

²² Photograph of a white, heterosexual couple, dancing, (foreground of image), uncaptioned, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 730, folder F 2082-1-2-3.1, AO.

cites a 1972 collection of interviews on homosexuality in Canada and mentions briefly that there were some known lesbian spaces during the war:

Women working in the war industries had also begun to create semi-public places to meet. Toronto's Chinatown, for example, was 'the centre of activity for girls newly-released from the services, girls from farms and small towns, girls who had heard vague rumours that in Toronto there was place to go where you could be with your own kind.'²³

Despite this suggestion that some lesbian-identified spaces existed during the tumult of wartime, Millward argues that the gathering in central Canada of women from around the country was not enough to stimulate stable and lasting community: "this process was not as extensive nor as permanent in Canada as it was in the United States or Britain."²⁴

Even without much concrete proof, it seems very likely that same-sex romance or intimacy would have been a part of war plant life. In other wartime contexts in which numbers of women gathered together, such as women's divisions of the various armed services, historians have documented same-sex sexual and romantic relationships. As Paul Jackson writes in his history of homosexuality in the Canadian military, "During six years of war, governed by uncertainty about the near and distant future, young people on both sides of the Atlantic lived for the moment. Passion was momentarily freed of social structures..."²⁵ Although Jackson does not deal with women's experiences, his assertion is likely to hold true not only for military women, but also for civilians as well. Writing more specifically about enlisted women, Carolyn Gossage cites the Army's cautionary words: "When there are large groups of women all living together, it [lesbianism] must

²³ Millward, *Making a Scene*, 5, citing Marion Foster and Kent Murray, *A Not So Gay World: Homosexuality in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1972).

²⁴ Millward, *Making a Scene*, 5.

²⁵ Jackson, *One of the Boys*, 16.

be watched for ALWAYS...”²⁶ Since lesbianism gained attention in Canada’s various armed services, there was likely concern about lesbianism at Canadian war plants too, even if those worries are not overtly present in most historical sources. Cameron Duder perceptively points out that locating historical same-sex relationships can be challenging, because of ideas about what defines lesbians. Duder cautions: “...lesbians have often ignored or made unintelligible the subjectivities of those lesbians who did not live openly as lesbians, were not political matriarchs of the nation, and did not fight for ‘public’ space.”²⁷ So, women who might have pursued or wished to pursue homosexual relationships through their work at war plants may have been less likely to have been identified and understood as lesbians, both by their historical contemporaries and by historians working today. While it is unsurprising that sources like company newsletters and heavily advertiser- approved magazines offer only heterosexual narratives, it is important to keep in mind those stories missing from the verbal and visual mainstream. It is likely that lesbian and bisexual relationships did develop at war plants but have yet to be uncovered and explored.

In war plant newsletters, the dominance of the heterosexual script is especially blatant, in particular through gendered visual narratives. When women war workers’ beautiful bodies were the focus, rather than their presence in masculine workplaces or their participation in rougher labour, women and men alike were reminded of women’s

²⁶ Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 161 (quoting File#325.009 (D252), Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, Ottawa). Emphasis in original. See also Jackson, *One of the Boys*; for the American context, see Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

²⁷ Cameron Duder, *Awfully Devoted Women: Lesbian Lives in Canada, 1900-65* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 4.

sexuality and their sex appeal. Unprecedented numbers of women might, temporarily, be factory workers, but they were still presented visually as beautiful. Images of workers wearing regular clothing rather than uniforms and styled in feminine poses reminded viewers that women were not being “roughened” by their work. Pinup images of women, often war workers themselves, reminded readers of what women looked like outside of their safety gear – and occasionally *in* a more costumed look – signalling women workers’ sexual availability or desirability. These images provide particularly powerful evidence of women’s femininity, attractiveness, and status as objects of gaze and desire, foregrounding women’s identity as *women* rather than as workers.²⁸

Providing powerful evidence of the sexualization of women workers’ bodies, some female GECO employees posed for a series of pinup photos, each woman costumed and styled uniquely.²⁹ On the radio program “Let’s Visit!,” GECO’s recreation director specifically mentioned the pinup program and its origins: “They are selected as pinup representatives from the various shops. The pinup contest was planned and carried out by the *Fusilier*, our plant magazine, which is published every two weeks.”³⁰ The black and

²⁸ Smith and Wakewich argue that “Pin-ups served state as well as personal needs and functioned as an ideological mechanism to encourage soldiers to fight for their country to protect their loved ones.” Smith and Wakewich, “Beauty and the Helldivers,” 88. For more on pinups in workplace newsletters, see Howard, “‘At the Curve Exchange’,” in *Beauty and Business*, 195-216; Vicki Howard, “‘At the Curve Exchange’: Postwar Beauty Culture and Working Women at Maidenform,” *Enterprise & Society* 1, no. 3, (September 2000), 606-608; Belisle, “Sexual Spectacles.” For more on women’s responses to pinup imagery, see Joanne Meyerowitz, “Women, Cheesecake, and Borderline Material: Responses to Girlie Pictures in the Mid-Twentieth-Century U.S.,” *Journal of Women’s History* 8, no. 3 (Fall 1996): 9-35. Larsen’s study of Cominco also mentions a pinup contest held starting in 1944 for the “Most Photogenic Gal.” The contest was publicized in the plant newsletter, copies of which were sent to soldiers. See Larsen, “Sowing the Seeds,” 35, and 35nn59.

²⁹ Interestingly, wartime pinup contests were not limited to war workers; a CWAC newsletter also boasted a pinup contest of its own. Pierson, *They’re Still Women After All*, 147.

³⁰ “Let’s Visit!” 1945, Radio Transcription Disk, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082-1-3-1, AO, http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/en/explore/online/d_day/production.aspx, accessed on August 20, 2015.

white pinup photographs are stamped on the reverse with the address of George Rutherford, likely the photographer.³¹ A second stamp on the back of the photos identifies them as destined for publication in GEICO's employee newsletter, the *Fusilier*, and as "Pin Ups," a comment added in pencil.³² The women featured in these pinup images are mostly white, although two feature black women.³³ (See figures 26, 27, and 28) Clothing varies widely in these shots, from modest dresses and skirts, to more revealing options including one- or two-piece swimsuits, to theatrical choices, accentuated with props, flowers, or hats. In one photo, for example, a woman wears a bikini top and a sheer, gauzy skirt, holding an amphora aloft in one hand. In another series of shots, a blonde woman sports a sailor look, wearing a short, light coloured dress and a white and dark coloured hat. Some photographs focus tightly on women's faces, while others are full body shots. The sailor outfit is shown on two different women. Accessories include flowers, a parasol, a bottle of soda, a watering can, a teacup and saucer, and even a tennis racket and net. None of the pinup photos features women in factory attire. Instead, the series celebrates different types of distinctly *feminine* and non-labour related costume and performance, as well as the feminine bodies and behaviour of women war workers outside their workplace. In these photographs, women perform femininity in many ways: they dress in feminine clothing, interact with props (many of which are coded for feminine domestic tasks or recreational activities), and hold or

³¹ The George Rutherford stamp also includes the notation "For reprints quote negative no. _____." Photographs, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box B731, folder F-2082-1-2-7, AO.

³² Photographs, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box B731, folder F-2082-1-2-7, AO.

³³ These are some of the few images of women of colour I encountered.

present their body's posture in womanly ways, for example by smiling or even keeping knees demurely together.

In one “behind the scenes” shot, the studio setup is shown. A male photographer faces away from the viewer, and the blonde sailor-outfit-clad woman poses in the background of the image. Most photographs were attached securely to black paper backing, so notations on the backs were not accessible. Those which were not attached to backing bear penciled memos about crop lines and adjustments; one even features a processing note: “smooth forehead + fix tooth” (See figure 29).



Figure 26. Pinup photograph, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box B731, folder F-2082-1-2-7, AO.



Figure 27. Pinup photograph, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box B731, folder F-2082-1-2-7, AO.



Figure 28. Pinup photograph, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box B731, folder F-2082-1-2-7, AO.

Some photos are more risqué or suggestive than others. In a few, women lift up their skirts and look suggestively into the camera. While the women are generally not identified on the photographs, their names and the building where they worked appeared

along with individual photos when they were published in the *Fusilier*.³⁴ In the May 8, 1944 edition of the GECO's newsletter, four pinup images appear on the second page, arranged together and with drawings of actual pins acting to hold them up. The caption reads, "Our attractive pin-up girls for this issue are:... Blanche Ferguson, Bldg. 43... Evelyn Bowman, Shop 67B... Vera Wightman, Shops 39 A, B, C, D... Arleigh Rennick, Mechanical 26"³⁵ (see figure 30). Unfortunately, because of gaps in the newsletters available in the archives, further examples of pinup photographs published in the newsletter are missing.

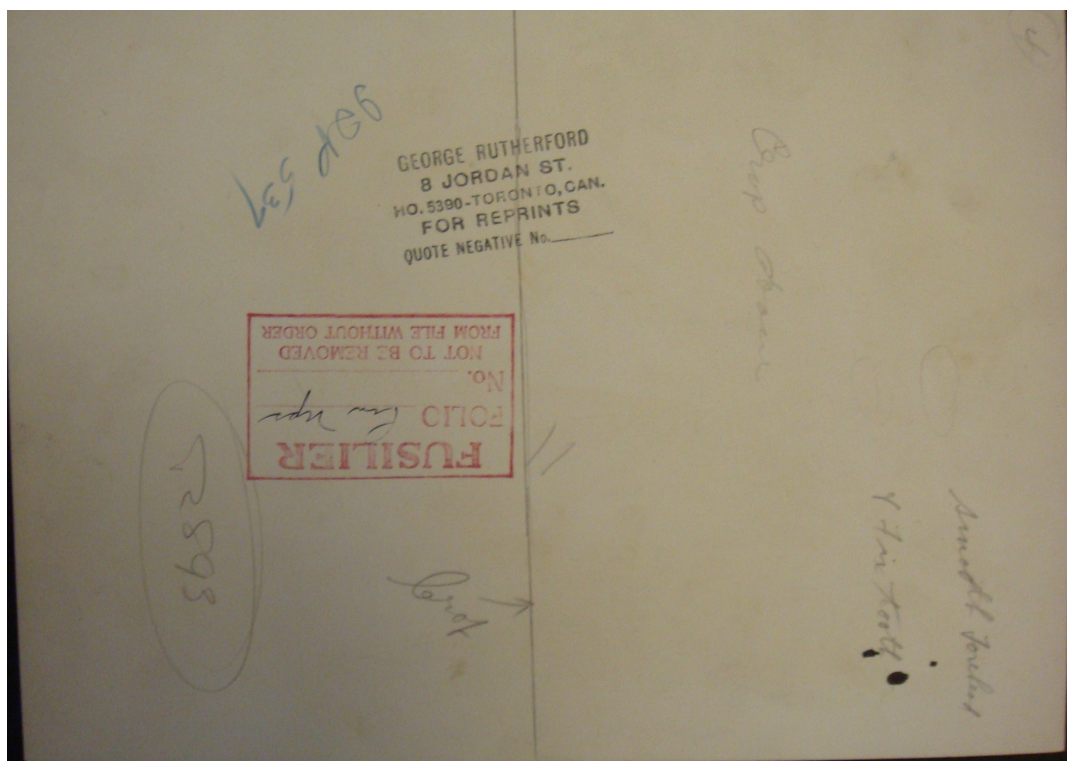


Figure 29. Photographs, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box B731, folder F-2082-1-2-9, AO.

³⁴ There is one exception: the back of one photograph bears the note "Lottie Walsh – Bldg. 26 – Operator." Photographs, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box B731, folder F-2082-1-2-9, AO.

³⁵ "Our attractive pin-up girls," *The Fusilier*, vol. 3 no. 2, May 8, 1944, 2, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.



Figure 30. “Our attractive pin-up girls,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 3 no. 2, May 8, 1944, 2, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

I would speculate that perhaps issues containing pinups were particularly popular – the kind of issue people might take home and look at often – and therefore harder to retain copies of.

One issue of DeHavilland’s *The Mosquito* also featured pinup-style photos. On the back cover of the August 30, 1945 edition (a location which would have meant the

photos were seen by a very wide audience), five photos of women appear, covering the entire page. Four rectangular photos take up the bulk of the page, each covering one quarter of the sheet, with one oval photo centered between all the others. In each of the rectangular photos, a woman's full body is shown; each woman poses in an outdoor setting with some kind of prop: "Terry Ireland of Mailing" holds a golf club and poses in front of a ball, "Isobel Molesworth of Mailing" holds a tennis racket, "Audrey Martin of Escorts" holds a camera, and "Vera House of Personnel" stands on a fence and holds a fishing pole.³⁶ In each of these photos, the woman looks at the camera and smiles, her long hair worn loose; each woman is wearing shorts, making long bare legs a major element of the photo spread. The central, oval-shaped photo is a close-up beauty shot of "Miss Toronto Kay Ireland Formerly of Mailing Dept." Ireland's dark hair is loose, and she smiles directly at the camera, her face framed by flowers. Although this photo spread seems to be one of a kind in the DeHavilland newsletter, it still fits neatly into the war worker pinup genre, showcasing women workers' bodies by presenting them in more revealing, non-working clothes and in a non-factory context, for the consumption and enjoyment of newsletter readers.

Posing for pinups was inherently performative, and allowed those photographed, along with coworkers, managers, and anyone else reading the newsletter, to consider and evaluate the women's femininity, appearance, and attractiveness while still associating them with specific war work. With ideas about sexual respectability and sexual appeal swirling during the war, it is difficult to know whether response to GECO and

³⁶ *The Mosquito*, vol. 3 no. 2, August 30, 1945, 12, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-5, AO.

DeHavilland's pinups was primarily aspirational, admiring, or admonishing.³⁷ The photos foreground the women's bodies: three of four images in the GECO newsletter are full-body shots in which bare legs and thighs appear, and two photos feature bare midriffs as well. In the DeHavilland photos, four out of five feature full bodies and highlight bare legs. Certainly, one can imagine the process of appearing as a pinup as an empowering or pleasurable one for the women involved. In the photographs, they smile and appear to be happy. However, it is notable that only women's bodies were ornamented and displayed in this way. There is no equivalent series of photographs featuring male plant workers dressed up, smiling, and vamping for the camera. It seems likely that such photos were intended for a heterosexual male gaze, even if they were undoubtedly viewed, considered, and enjoyed by female newsletter readers as well. In her study of American women's responses to cheesecake images and less respectable "borderline material," Joanne Meyerowitz points out that,

Through the mid-twentieth century, some women saw shameless beauty and sexual pleasure in erotic representations of the female body while others saw degradation and the corruption of youth. During and after World War II, the division seems to have deepened. The deployment of feminine sex appeal accelerated while the stigma attached to openly sexual women scarcely diminished.³⁸

Yet, despite possible stigma, some women still chose to pose.³⁹ Donica Belisle, in her analysis of images of saleswomen in Canadian department store publications in the mid-twentieth century, boldly outlines reasons why women would have enjoyed having their

³⁷ For more on sexuality and respectability in the US, see Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-wackies*.

³⁸ Meyerowitz, "Women, Cheesecake," 26.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 12. Meyerowitz also notes that during the Second World War, pinups were generally perceived as more respectable, because pinup images were frequently sent to soldiers overseas: pinups became patriotic instead of "prostitutes."

photos published in employee newsletters, including pride, career success, popularity, and attention from friends and co-workers:

These actions indicate that many women enjoyed performing beautiful and attractive personas, and they demonstrate that many women believed that the cultivation of beautiful bodies helped them achieve workplace success... They imply that a certain longing existed among women for their co-workers to view them not as low-status drudges but as exciting, glamorous, flirtatious and distinguished.⁴⁰

Belisle's argument applies to war workers, too. For women taking on jobs that were often grimy, dirty, and perceived to be stigmatizingly masculine, the desire to be seen as glamorous instead of as a drudge is not that surprising.

Pinup images in wartime workplaces and publications were not limited to women workers themselves. Instead, a climate of heterosexuality meant that photos of women as objects of male gaze were commonplace. In DIL's *The Commando*, pinup images of women were associated with male staff and their interest in attractive women. For example, the newsletter's line news section cheerfully described particular men and the images of women they used to decorate their workspaces:

We've found out why Bill Phinney sits so contented and happy in his corner. He has several pictures of beautiful blondes tacked on the wall around him. We don't have to wonder anymore. Another admirer of femininity is Gar Littlejohn. He has two glamorous girls beside him all the time. They never speak, however, being the beautiful but dumb type. We're referring to the posters of the Red Cross for blood donors.⁴¹

Pinup images were suggested to be both pleasurable and valuable, to be shared, displayed, and appreciated. In one edition of the newsletter, a particular guard was advertised as having new and attractive pinups to share:

⁴⁰ Belisle, "Sexual Spectacles," 154. Belisle evocatively calls this process "self-spectacularization."

⁴¹ "Line News – Stores," *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 16, May 15, 1943, 7.

By the way, should any of you folks want pin-up girls for your new calendars, see Staff Sgt. McMillan. They certainly are good. Understand they are kept under lock and key.⁴²

Pinup calendars were popular as well, drawing mention around the new year: “The holidays are over and the New Year was ushered in with a galaxy of ‘gorgeous gal’ calendars by the popular Petty and Vargo [sic] (particularly in evidence in Harry Clark’s sanctum sanctorum.)”⁴³ Pinups were even referred to in a light-hearted, humorous manner. In one *Commando* news item, an employee’s new baby is referred to as a pinup: “Susan Starr, the Gov’t. Lab. Pin-Up Girl, is progressing favourably. Besides eating and sleeping, she talks in four different languages, all of which are understood by [parents] Marion and Art alone.”⁴⁴

Women war workers were sometimes featured in published calendars for other companies. DeHavilland machine shop employee Martha Nadobny, for example, was recruited to pose for a Goodyear calendar poster. Nabodny, *The Mosquito* reported, had been “‘discovered’ by the photographic head of Bridgen’s Limited, commercial photographers, when they noticed her photograph in a past issue of the Mosquito magazine.”⁴⁵ The plant newsletter published a photograph of Nabodny holding the Goodyear calendar featuring her image, surrounded by a group of other female employees. The story is compelling: a woman war worker whose image had been previously published in the company newsletter was deemed attractive enough to be

⁴² “Guards,” *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 10, May 1944, 7.

⁴³ “Line News – Construction and Maintenance,” *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 6, January 1944, 7. George Petty and Alberto Vargas were well-known pinup artists.

⁴⁴ “Laboratories,” *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 4, November 1944, 6.

⁴⁵ *The Mosquito*, vol. 3 no. 1, February 1944, 10, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-3, AO.

contacted by a commercial photographer and subsequently appeared in a promotional calendar for an entirely unrelated company. Further, war plant newsletters facilitated this process by creating and distributing images of their female employees. At least some women war workers, then, were deemed to be attractive enough to actually become pinups or calendar girls even outside the context of their own companies.

While the presence of pinups in war plant newsletters served to occasionally remind readers and workers of female employees' femininity and sexuality, it also foregrounded the attractive female body more generally. DeHavilland's newsletter, *The Mosquito*, featured a glamorous, undeniably sexy cartoon pinup labelled "Billie the Blueprint Girl" (see figure 31). Drawings of Billie, straight on, in profile, and from above, were complemented by a humorous article, purporting to explain how to read and understand blueprint drawings. The straight on image is a striking one: a black and white drawing of a woman, white, young, with dark, shoulder-length hair, standing and facing the viewer directly, with one knee in front of the other and both hands behind her head. Billie wears a light-coloured, wide brimmed hat or bonnet, tied below the chin, and a light, strapless, floor length, translucent gown. White dotted lines outline Billie's body within the dress, including her legs and the lower contour of her breasts.

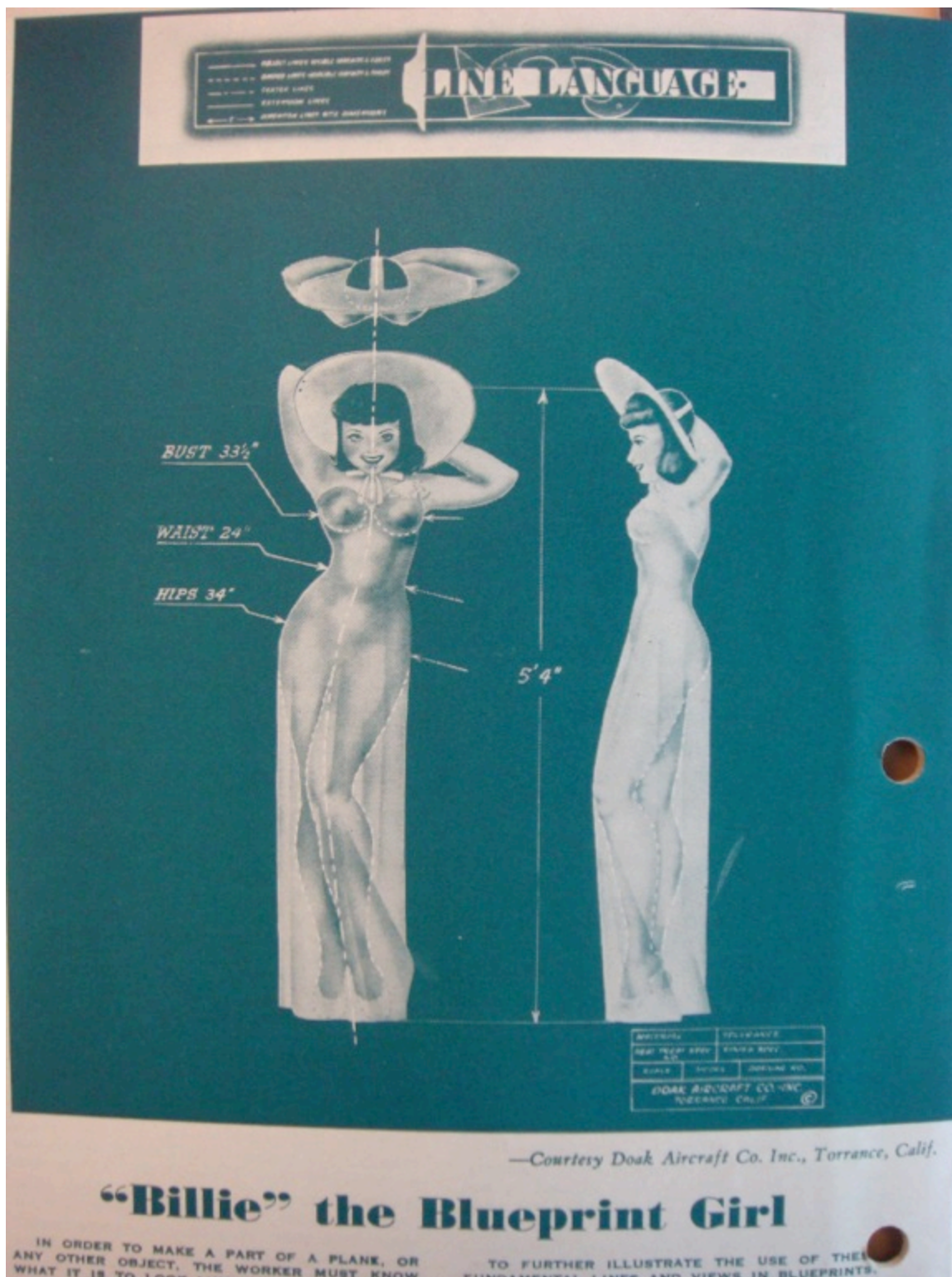


Figure 31. “Billie the Blueprint Girl,” *The Mosquito*, vol. 2 no. 9, November 1943, 14, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-2, AO.

In the article accompanying the drawings, details about the different components of blueprint drawings are described, and then explained with reference to Billie's image. While there is actual engineering-related content, the feminine reference image is clearly playful. The copy suggests that, "Elizabeth Arden, who designs and builds such bodies as Billie's, specifies that for this average, five-foot, four inch model, the ideal dimensions are: bust, 33 ½", waist, 24", and hips, 34"."⁴⁶ Prescribing an ideal body shape for women, down to specific half an inch measurements, placed the focus squarely on women's appearance and sex appeal. Associating Billie with cosmetics and beauty entrepreneur Elizabeth Arden further reminded readers that real women might strive to look like the illustration. Although much of the text is written in an informative, neutral, technical style, there is some playfulness as well. Describing the way lines are used to outline Billie, the article elaborates: "Note that the visible edges and surfaces of her gown, hat and arms are outlined in solid white object lines. The outlines of her so-called invisible surfaces, enclosed in the gown, are drawn in dashed lines."⁴⁷ In the image, dashed lines contour Billie's feet, legs, buttocks, and breasts: these sexy "so-called invisible surfaces" are highlighted and emphasized in the illustration.

Although Billie was not designated as a war worker, the presence of an obviously and intentionally eroticized and objectified female body in the pages of a widely read company newsletter signalled a gaze which perceived women as romantically and sexually compelling. The war plant newsletter, as a forum for sharing community news,

⁴⁶ "Billie the Blueprint Girl," *The Mosquito*, vol. 2 no. 9, November 1943, 14, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-2, AO.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

safety information, and social gossip, also allowed readers to look at idealized women's bodies. While neither *The Mosquito* nor other plant newsletter contained advertisements, the popular visual medium most likely to contain glamourized or exaggerated portrayals of female bodies, I argue that images like Billie the Blueprint Girl served a similar purpose, foregrounding women's attractive bodies and connecting to broader cultural understandings about gaze and sexuality.

Proliferating pinup imagery was not the only way that heterosexuality entered the wartime workplace. Newsletters, advertising, and visual depictions of war plant life show heterosexual socializing and flirting as enjoyable and central to recreational life in these communities. The emphasis on heterosexual relationships in these media may have been about maintaining societal norms in a turbulent time. Focusing on the pleasures of flirting and dating could be a way to raise morale and distract from the stress of home front life in a non-stigmatized way.⁴⁸ While wartime recreation was frequently mediated by reminders of the suffering of those overseas and the need to maintain the total war effort, flirting was free and assumed to be "natural" and fun. It could provide a welcome distraction during potentially boring or dangerous work days.⁴⁹ Further, the ubiquity of casual heterosexuality in war plants could act to reinforce broader social pressures towards nuclear family formation during and after the war. Women war workers were welcome employees, temporarily, but virtually all women were expected to eventually orient their lives around home and family rather than waged labour. Focusing on flirting

⁴⁸ In other words, there were some luxuries that people at home were asked to forgo or reminded to feel guilty about, since those serving overseas were unable to enjoy them. Romance, however, was not rationed.

⁴⁹ As long as it did not cause accidents – see chapter 4 for more on the dangers of flirting at work.

at work solidified the woman war worker's position as a heterosexual icon while underscoring expectations for Canadian women more generally.

Women war workers' heterosexuality was certainly under scrutiny. Despite the possibility that some women war workers were not heterosexual, and that spending long work days with large numbers of women might encourage close friendships or romances between women, women war workers were almost universally assumed to be and depicted as respectably heterosexual. Sometimes, women war workers were even suggested to be intensely or intimidatingly heterosexual – perhaps because of the small number of men in war plants, and the resulting need to compete for their attentions, or perhaps as a way to reassuringly assert women's continuing interest in men – proving that rough factory work had not made them any less heterosexual in their romantic interests. At the same time, these portrayals of women actively pursuing men reflected fears about women's potential masculinization in industrial workplaces; a woman taking on the role of sexual aggressor might be a masculine woman. Two comics from GECO's *The Fusilier* tackled these themes particularly well.

The first image comically illustrates and reimagines the recent plant visit of a military man, Private Hargroves (see figure 32). In this black and white drawn image, a man wearing a dark shirt and pants runs while five women chase him and call out after him. All of the women wear white pants, tops, and turbans – clearly the GECO employee uniform. One woman hangs off of the man, her hands clasping his face and her feet swinging freely in the air. Speech bubbles contain the women's calls: "Wheeeee! He's

mine!,” “Gee a man!,” “Woo! Woo! Woo!,” “I saw him first!”⁵⁰ While the man, Private Hargroves we assume, looks afraid, the women are gleeful and aggressive. The cartoon suggests women’s intense interest in young, attractive, men – and perhaps in servicemen in particular. In this comic, competition for the attention of scarce men made women more forward in their romantic efforts. Suggesting that women workers were strongly interested in pursuing male partners deflected attention from any de-heterosexualizing influences factory work among large numbers of women might have had. It further implies that women valued male partners – enough to chase one down in a pack. The image could also suggest, more darkly, that war work was making women problematically sexually aggressive. Since women were taking on masculine work roles, perhaps they would take on masculine sex roles, too. Although this comic image is a joking take on these issues, fears about women workers becoming masculine in appearance and behaviour were extremely common, and as Ruth Roach Pierson has shown, there was also concern about the lasting effects of war service on enlisted women: “Under the anxiety of the changed appearance of women lay a more profound but less often articulated fear that women were invading male territory and becoming too independent.”⁵¹ This comic must be understood in the context of broad wartime fears about the potential for women to usurp men’s roles in the workplace, in relationships, and at home.

⁵⁰ “Private Hargroves visits Scarboro,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 3 no. 33, February 19, 1945, 4, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

⁵¹ Pierson, *They’re Still Women After All*, 164.



Figure 32. “Private Hargroves visits Scarboro,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 3 no. 33, February 19, 1945, 4, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

On the facing page of the newsletter, another comic takes the theme of aggressive female war worker heterosexuality even further. Under the title “To Be Or Not To Be? – My Valentine,” a tall, broad woman in a GECO uniform stands before a small, cowering

male war worker (see figure 33).⁵² The man's back is to a wall, and the woman leans one hand on the wall, enclosing the man in the space between, one leg casually crossed over the other. In her other hand, she holds a wrench. Her expression is severe: she stares intensely at the man, smiling. The man looks up at her, worried. In this image, the woman war worker is physically dominant, even menacing, with her wrench in hand, suggesting violence. By making the woman the pursuer and aggressor in a heterosexual relationship, this comic paints the woman war worker as unambiguously heterosexual – but also as more masculine than the man in the image. Clearly intended to be humorous, even ridiculous, in particular given the difference in the proportions of the two figures, the image nevertheless identifies women war workers as interested in men romantically. Perhaps by satirizing fears about women war workers' masculinization, the comic might have relieved some tension.⁵³ The fact that these two comic images appeared in close proximity in the same newsletter is likely not a coincidence, given the date of the publication – 19 February, quite close to Valentine's day. While these comics probably do not accurately depict the reality of war plant flirting, they strongly connect women war workers with romantic interest in men, and also suggest concerns about women workers' sexuality and gender performance; maybe women's war work was masculinizing them not only as workers, but as lovers, too. The exaggerated, comical image of an aggressively heterosexual woman worker reminded viewers that the

⁵² "My Valentine," *The Fusilier*, vol. 3 no. 33, February 19, 1945, 5, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

⁵³ For more on the expression of fears about the masculinization of women during the Second World War through the medium of comics and graphic art, see Knaff, *Beyond Rosie the Riveter*, especially chapter 2. According to Knaff, "[Comics] also provided a way to explore how female power and autonomy related to women's new masculinity, how that female masculinity might feminize men, how it might mean that women were sexually threatening, and how it might be linked with lesbianism." Knaff, *Beyond Rosie the Riveter*, 16.



Figure 33. "My Valentine," *The Fusilier*, vol. 3 no. 33, February 19, 1945, 5, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

appropriate behaviour for women was more submissive and passive. Sexual aggressiveness among women could also be interpreted as a sign of promiscuity, which was condemned harshly in both Canada and the United States.⁵⁴

While I have not found significant evidence that women war workers were actually choosing to take on masculine sexual roles or physical appearance, there was broad concern about war work as a slippery slope that could lead to broader gendered and sexualized social transformations. Pierson argues that worries about the potential for major changes stemmed from a Canadian “commitment to a masculine-feminine division of traits as well as separation of tasks.”⁵⁵ Thus, a threat was posed not only by the idea of women becoming more masculine (in terms of clothing, job, domestic responsibilities, etc), but also of men becoming more feminine. This fear was nicely represented in a Vic Herman cartoon published in *Maclean's* magazine in September 1945, in which an overall-wearing woman war worker eats a plate of chicken straight out of the refrigerator after having tracked muddy footprints through the kitchen, while her frilly apron-clad, mop holding husband glares from across the room.⁵⁶ Identifying one way that transgressive gender performance could be disruptive, American historian Knaff writes: “During the war, female masculinity provided for an expansion of people’s ideas of what women should be and how they might behave. It thus provided a canon of images to

⁵⁴ See Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, for more on the whisper campaign and worries about CWACs being promiscuous or vehicles for sexually transmitted infections. See Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-wackies*, for worries about women’s promiscuity in the United States.

⁵⁵ Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 130.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 164-167. The image reflects fears about the inversion of gender roles that women’s war work could, it was thought, provoke. Not only might women become too masculine, that process might force men to become feminine, undermining the structure of gender roles in Canada. Cartoon from *Maclean's*, September 15 1945, published in Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 167.

inform future versions of feminism.”⁵⁷ The problem with transgressive femininity or female sexuality, then, was not just that it was different from prewar norms, but that it threatened to unseat male power and privilege.

To defang the potential for gendered and sexual disruption, non-transgressive relationships and activities were foregrounded. Flirting by actual war workers was frequently mentioned in DIL’s *The Commando*, reminding readers that women war workers were both attractive and appropriately attracted to men. Framing women war workers as explicitly heterosexual distracted from anxieties that masculine factory work could affect their sexual desire or behaviour. The “Line News” section of the newsletter regularly contained teasing, hints, and commentary about which employees might be attractive, popular, and interested in the opposite sex. Bodies and their various attractive features were often remarked upon. In one issue, employee Stu Hunter’s mustache drew notice:

Ajax Girls note, or have some of you noted already? Stu. Hunter is bristling forth with a cookie duster, but it is not of the fuzzy variety like Jack Read’s, however. So if you hear giggles from parked cars in Ajax, you know the girls are tickled no end with our boys.⁵⁸

Women workers at DIL, then, were suggested to be attracted to a particular man and his facial hair, and even liable to be physically involved with him, or with other men. Rather than being framed as dangerous, these activities are described in happy, positive terms: women workers were not portrayed as “loose” or threatening, here. Another issue of the

⁵⁷ Knaff, *Beyond Rosie the Riveter*, 21.

⁵⁸ “Line News – Design,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 8, December 5, 1942, 7.

Commando described a man so handsome that a wide variety of women altered their work patterns to see him:

Feminine interest in our front office (Rec. Centre) has increased incredibly during the past week. They come, young and old, thin and fat, to inquire about everything from lost gloves to the correct time (there's a clock right outside the door). There's a distinct possibility that our new co-worker, Earl Walker, might be responsible for this sudden flurry of feminine fluttering.⁵⁹

This anecdote suggests that all types of women, not merely the young, might pursue an attractive man at work. Not only, then, were women war workers constantly described as heterosexual, they were reported to be acting on their romantic and sexual interests in positive, playful terms.⁶⁰ The fact that there is no suggestion here that women's sexuality was threatening, problematic, or excessive is important; company newsletters had good reasons to frame their own workers as respectable and conforming to gender ideals. Reporting only on "safe" heterosexuality did not mean that conflicts or problems did not occur. Rather, the newsletter reflected an official narrative supported by the company and those employees involved in newsletter production - a narrative of healthy, safe, appropriate sexual and romantic activity at the plant. Maintaining that narrative was likely crucial to the company's ability to recruit and retain workers and preserve a good reputation.

Newsletters also confirmed that women were not only pursuers in the realm of war plant heterosexuality – they were also pursued, or at least, noticeably attractive. A

⁵⁹ "Curtain Calls," *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 7, February 1944, 8.

⁶⁰ See also "A Bang-up Time," *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 1, August 1944, 3 – which described a field trip to a Hamilton proof range, where all the DIL women present were smitten with presenter Captain McNeal, "a rather handsome man." On McNeal, the newsletter reported that, "A certain young captain made some hearts sound like an ack-ack battery."

blatant account of men's interest in DIL's female staff appeared in the Transportation section of one Line News column. The scene at shift change was described thus: "...the boys of Transportation can be heard at their windows viewing the parade of feminine pulchritude. The boys whistle, nearly blowing their front teeth out, but nothing happens. Oh well, keep trying, fellas!"⁶¹ Both male and female war workers' heterosexuality, then, was depicted and described as absolute and enthusiastic. Pretty women war workers were noted by their male co-workers, admired, and even used as a source of morale-boosting. For example, women's images, published in the newsletter, were predicted to draw interest from men. In January 1945, the cover of the *Commando* featured a full page black and white photograph of a woman wearing cross-country skis and holding ski poles. Wearing dark pants and a light-coloured jacket, the woman smiles, snow on the ground beneath her, bare-branched trees in the distant background. Inside the newsletter, the following description appeared:

The charming subject of our front cover is one of the many attractive girls to be found at Ajax. Just keep calm, fellows; I'll tell you her name. It's Zella Wiebe and she is a Western gal, hailing from Edmonton. Zella works in the Purchasing Department we would like to thank her for the fine co-operative spirit she showed in the taking of this picture. We kept her standing on that wind-swept hill so long, it's a wonder she didn't freeze there.⁶²

This detailed caption alerted newsletter readers to several things; not only is Zella assumed to be attractive, primarily to men, she is also described positively as co-operative, a characteristic in line with ideas about femininity and submissiveness. Further, Zella is apparently part of a larger group of good looking women working at

⁶¹ "Line News," *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 12, July 1944, 7.

⁶² *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 6, January 1945, cover page and 4.

DIL. The combination of cover photo and caption shows that women war workers, like Zella, were not only heterosexually desirous, they were also *desirable*. Describing women workers as attractive in some way occurred extremely frequently in war plant newsletters, especially in photo captions. As Belisle argues, constantly describing women workers' beauty and appeal in this way served to "visually aestheticize" them. Noting a distinct increase in references to the attractiveness of female employees in department store magazines during the 1940s, Belisle suggests,

it is also possible that anxieties caused by the shipment of significant numbers of male wage earners overseas, as well as by postwar attempts to reintegrate men back into the Canadian labour force, encouraged the magazines' staff to intensify the sexualization and objectification of female workers.⁶³

Belisle's argument is very convincing, and is reflected not only in photographs of employees, but also in advertising featuring women workers and in the creation of beauty contests scrutinizing them.⁶⁴ There was rarely, if ever, a similar process for male workers, whose bodies and appeal were much less remarked on.

Most of the media featuring heterosexual relationships involving women war workers was celebratory. The relationships appear to be happy, and the activities couples participated in seem fun. In one significant exception, however, *too* much heterosexual fun could be risky – both for the individuals involved, and even for the entire war effort. In 1943, a group of "business and industrial advertisers" funded an ad in the *Globe and Mail* educating readers about the vital role being played by women war workers, and warning about some of the ways their efficiency might be reduced (see figure 34). The

⁶³ Belisle, "Sexual Spectacles," 142-143.

⁶⁴ See chapters 3 and 6 in this dissertation.

headline read, “Absent! Whose fault? Maybe Yours?,” above a black and white image of a row of women wearing blouses and bandanas, their backs to the viewer, faces in profile, seated at a work bench manipulating tools. One worker is missing, and white negative space fills in where her body would be. The ad copy chastises an imaginary male reader:

...an irresponsible action on some one’s part, heedless of the consequences, resulted in the absence of a war worker from a vitally important job. Did YOU keep her out too late last night? Did you insist on that extra hour of fun at midnight that left her too weary to work this morning? ...then the gap on the production line is YOUR fault!⁶⁵

In this unusual ad, women war workers’ heterosexual recreation was depicted as a potential threat to the war effort. Their efficiency as workers might be reduced if the men with whom they socialized failed to appreciate their importance as labourers. Despite the warning, however, the ad does not suggest that men should not date women war workers or even take them out at night – just that they should exercise caution and good sense, making sure that women still got enough rest. In some ways, dating might have provided an important kind of restful recreation for women, the ad reminds us, “but in time of war we all must ration recreation and allow nothing to let our fighting men down. We must forgo excesses of any kind that might interfere with working hours or efficiency.”⁶⁶

Interestingly, there was no suggestion in this ad that women war workers were responsible for their own condition - for making sure to rest, for getting home on time, even when dating. Instead, men were assumed to have some control over these aspects of women’s lives. Perhaps the most important feature of this ad was its firm assumption that

⁶⁵ “Absent! Whose fault? Maybe yours?” *Globe and Mail*, February 12, 1943, 5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

women war workers would be appropriate to date at all – they were firmly assumed to be both appealing and heterosexual.

THE GLOBE AND MAIL, TORONTO, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1943. 5

Absent! Whose fault *Maybe Yours*



TODAY, there's a gap on the production line... an anti-tank gun will not be completed... an essential part of a warplane will not be delivered to the assembly line... a submarine detector will not reach its destination on time. An enemy tank may not be stopped—may yet crush the life out of shattered bodies... a warplane that might have saved a battle may arrive one day too late... a merchant vessel braving treacherous seas may be torpedoed.

All this may happen because a thoughtless deed... an irresponsible action on some one's part, heedless of the consequences, resulted in the absence of a war worker from a vitally important job.

Did YOU keep her out too late last night? Did you insist on that extra hour of fun at midnight that left her too weary to work this morning? ... then the gap on the production line is YOUR fault!

Or possibly you forgot that night workers must have absolute quietness during daylight hours to get much-needed sleep.

War workers need rest... they need relaxation, too... but in time of war we all must ration recreation and allow nothing to let our fighting men down. We must forgo excesses of any kind that might interfere with working hours or efficiency.

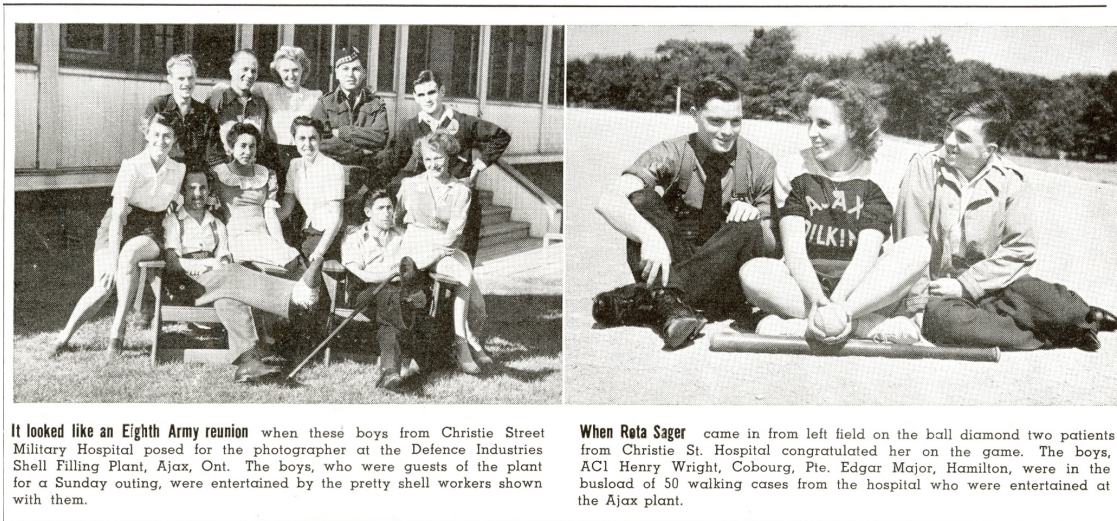
Saboteur is an ugly word... but every time a word or deed of ours interferes with production of urgently needed war material, we, thoughtlessly or not, perform the act of the saboteur.

A message made possible by a group of business and industrial advertisers.

Keep Fit for the Fight on the Home Front

Figure 34. "Absent! Whose fault? Maybe yours?" Globe and Mail, February 12, 1943, 5.

Women war workers' beauty and charm, in particular as assessed by men, was valuable to the war effort in another way - it was also used to raise morale. Several issues of the *Commando* described female DIL employees entertaining injured and recovering servicemen. Male employees visiting the wounded were not mentioned, but the women's efforts were highlighted. One article focused on the important effects of the visits of two



It looked like an Eighth Army reunion when these boys from Christie Street Military Hospital posed for the photographer at the Defence Industries Shell Filling Plant, Ajax, Ont. The boys, who were guests of the plant for a Sunday outing, were entertained by the pretty shell workers shown with them.

When Reta Sager came in from left field on the ball diamond two patients from Christie St. Hospital congratulated her on the game. The boys, AC1 Henry Wright, Cobourg, Pte. Edgar Major, Hamilton, were in the busload of 50 walking cases from the hospital who were entertained at the Ajax plant.

Figure 35. “It Looked Like an Eighth Army Reunion” and “When Reta Sager,” *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 1, August 1944, 2.

DIL women on a recovering soldier. Two Gatehouse employees, Pearl Porter and Catherine Main, originally from western Canada and both with brothers who had served or died overseas, focused on assisting and entertaining an injured westerner. Bringing the man, Jack Wegh, gifts of “cigarettes, magazines and chocolates as well as their smiles,” the newsletter affirmed, increased his chances of recovery significantly: “Nurses and doctors assure us that the girls are doing [sic] a wonderful work and this boy's whole future will be better because of the kindness of these two Gatehouse girls.”⁶⁷ The vague

⁶⁷ “Gatehouse Girls Cheer Christie Street Men,” *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 5, December 1944, 8.

but confidently beneficial effects of visits from young women, sympathetic because of their family connections to war and their similar geographical origins, may not have been connected to romance. It is possible that the visits had a more maternal or familial motivation. However, the salutary influence of women's visits to men, the emphasis on women's smiles, and the absence of similar coverage of men's visits to sick and injured men still suggests a heterosexual context.

Male soldiers recovering from wounds in Canada also visited DIL in person to spend time with women workers. A group of fifty "walking cases" spent a Sunday at the plant in August 1944, posing for photographs with off-duty women workers and with a member of the Ajax Dilkins – the women's ball team (see figure 35). The visiting patients of Christie Street Military Hospital "were entertained by the pretty shell workers," and also watched a women's softball game.⁶⁸ Although in the newsletter, the men in the photographs were identified only as hospital patients, and the women only as DIL employees, archival records accompanying a nearly identical shot of the same group provide names, hometowns, and ranks of the military men (see figure 36). The photo included Private John Daley, Private Vannie Danz, Irene Burke, Private Joe Fisher, Corporal Duncan MacDonald, Helen Preson, Private Thomas Leslie, Eileen Hunter, Terry McCarron, Sergeant Arthur Lacroix, and Marguerite Trowbridge.⁶⁹ In these two photographs, all of the men were servicemen. If male DIL employees were involved in cheering and visiting with the recovering servicemen that day, the newsletter did not

⁶⁸ "It Looked Like an Eighth Army Reunion" and "When Reta Sager," *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 1, August 1944, 2. Note, this is an example of the visual aestheticization described by Belisle and mentioned earlier in this chapter.

⁶⁹ Photograph, "Eighth Army Regiment – Women Employees – Defence Industries Limited," P-070-000-168, www.pada.ca, accessed August 11, 2015.

mention it. Women workers were strongly suggested, then, to be able to bring happiness and welcome distraction to men dealing with recovery from the traumatic injuries of war. The unpublished version of the photograph had a decidedly friendlier vibe: Arthur Lacroix and Marguerite Trowbridge, grinning, look directly into each other's eyes, while Arthur reaches across to grip Marguerite's arm. Eileen Hunter and Terry



Figure 36. Photograph, “Eighth Army Regiment – Women Employees – Defence Industries Limited,” P-070-000-168, <http://pada.ca/lib/images/1/3928.jpg>, accessed August 11, 2015.

McCarron, in the centre of the group, smile widely and gaze down at Private Leslie. Further, Helen Preson's long, bare legs feature prominently in both versions of the shot. It is notable that Irene Burke was a runner up for Miss Ajax in 1942, and competed in

Miss War Worker that year.⁷⁰ While there are no explicit statements about romance, it matters that women workers, not men, were those who entertained and cheered soldiers.⁷¹

Women war workers also heartened men still overseas. In a particularly memorable example, DIL Line No. 2 worker Annette Malakoff, who “wondered if the shells reached their destination and just what the boys were like who fired those shells,” added her name and address to a box of 25-pounder shells.⁷² The letter Annette received in return, months later, from New Zealand gunner Ian Snadden, was reprinted in its entirety in *The Commando*. Snadden’s letter began:

Dear Annette: I wonder if you ever expected to hear from a New Zealand gunner in this way? I was the fortunate one to receive your note enclosed in a box of charges and destined to reply to it... I can assure you that our gun crew were really thrilled to hear from you and keenly await more news of you. We trust that you will become a regular correspondent of ours and we will endeavour to keep you well posted as to our comings and goings.⁷³

The detailed letter described the crew’s activities in Italy, how Snadden found, kept, and read Malakoff’s note, and even a concert, put on by Canadians, which the New Zealanders had recently attended. Snadden commented favourably on both Canadian men and women, noting that, “We have found the Canadian soldiers fine fellows in line and if these concert girls are a fair sample of the maidens of your country they leave little to be

⁷⁰ *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 2, July 20, 1942, cover and 2, as well as “Maritimers Explore Ajax,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 1, July 1 1942, 5, where Burke is featured with four other women workers in a full page piece. Burke’s nickname, the article explained, was “Red.” Irene also participated in an event in which ten DIL women sold war savings stamps at a concert in Toronto. See “Ajax Girls Aid War Savings Drive,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 4, September 5, 1942, 3. This type of activity is not surprising after her success at the war worker pageants.

⁷¹ See Winchell, *Good Girls, Good Food*, on the USO, and ideas about women’s ability to entertain and make servicemen happy.

⁷² “New Zealand Soldier Replies to Line No. 2 Girl’s Note,” *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 5, December 1944, 8.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

desired.”⁷⁴ While it would be possible to interpret much of the letter as simply a soldier reaching out for news and encouragement from a fellow ally, the mention of attractive Canadian girls hints at the heterosexual inclinations of the New Zealand men. In the letter’s last paragraph, Snadden asked: “Could we hope for more news of you soon and possibly a photo?”⁷⁵ In combination with the favourable assessment of Canadian women contained earlier in the letter, this request for a photo suggests some romantic or sexual interest in Malakoff on the part of the soldiers, especially given the ubiquity of pinup culture during the war.⁷⁶

Canadian women were certainly strongly encouraged to send both letters and photos to servicemen overseas – and while all Canadians were told their letters would help the allied cause, married women were particularly pressured to write often and cheerfully. Letters from friends at home could even be “better than a pinup to keep a soldier’s chin up.”⁷⁷ This probably has more to do with the perceived appropriateness of letter writing than the desirability of pinups. Wives, in particular, and including war worker wives, were reminded that their letters could make a major difference in the performance of soldier husbands. In contrast to the fun, flirty, and sexy letters that might be sent by single women to servicemen, correspondence from wives represented more than the possibility of heterosexual relationships as a postwar reward. Wives’ letters were needed to reassure enlisted men that they had a happy future to return to, and that their

⁷⁴ “New Zealand Soldier Replies to Line No. 2 Girl’s Note,” *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 5, December 1944, 8.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ For pinup culture, see Meyerowitz, “Women, Cheesecake.”

⁷⁷ “Better Than a ‘Pin-Up’ to Keep a Soldier’s Chin Up,” *The Mosquito*, vol. 1 no. 8, 1, December 1944, 12, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-4, AO.

wives were remaining loyal to them. Both single and married women were expected to take on the emotional and caring labour of maintaining the morale of men overseas, albeit in subtly different ways.

The cover of the December 4, 1944 issue of GECO's *The Fusilier* featured a group of male soldiers celebrating the arrival of letters, with the headline, "Cheer 'em up! Write more and brighter letters!" The newsletter contained a detailed article describing GECO's Sunshine Club, a group organized to write letters to servicemen and disabled veterans, as well as sample letters to show wives how to best communicate about their lives. The sample letters for wives were accompanied by cartoons of two men's faces – Disconsolate Dan and Happy Harry, who had each received letters from their wives which affected their mood.⁷⁸ DeHavilland aircraft's newsletter, *The Mosquito*, included a cover story on letter writing in February 1945, titled "OUR LETTERS ARE IMPORTANT AS VITAL AS AMMUNITION."⁷⁹ The wife featured on the cover, smiling Mrs. Melba Self, posing with piles of letters, a photograph of her husband, flowers, and pen in hand, was reported to have written over 1100 letters to her husband, enlisted with the Tank Corps overseas – in fact, the article specified that she had written 1153 letters since May 1943. An accompanying article provided advice and exhortations on writing letters, including what kind of news to include and another reminder to "send snapshots" (emphasis in original). Women workers, then, especially those married to enlisted men, were reminded of the power of their words and the importance of their

⁷⁸ "'Sunshine' For Servicemen Everywhere," *The Fusilier*, vol. 3 no. 17, December 4, 1944, 2, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO. See also cover of same issue.

⁷⁹ "OUR LETTERS ARE IMPORTANT AS VITAL AS AMMUNITION," *The Mosquito*, vol. 2 no. 2, February 1, 1945, 1, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-5, AO.

relationships with men in their lives. Simply by writing letters, they might influence the course of the war.

This message, that women's communication with men overseas was critical to men's morale, to the war's success, and to the maintenance of successful heterosexual relationships, was constantly echoed in magazines as well. The Barber Ellis stationery company, for example, ran an advertising image in *Saturday Night* for months in 1943 and 1944 with the headline "YOU WILL HOLD YOUR MAN if you write often."⁸⁰ (see figure 37) The ad shows a woman at a writing desk, letter and pen in hand, with a photograph of a man in uniform conspicuously before her. Although this woman is not pictured as a war worker, the connection between correspondence or sending photographs and maintaining heterosexual relationships is clear. The bottom portion of the ad includes a smaller black and white line drawing showing the serviceman and letter-writing woman embracing, near text that reads: "Speed the Victory! And bring him home again." The ambiguity in the advertisement means that we are not completely sure whether the woman was a friend, girlfriend, fiancée, or wife; we cannot see whether either figure wears a wedding ring, but the phrase "hold your man" suggests a romantic relationship.⁸¹ Still, the ad directly attributed women's caring work with the power to hasten the end of the war and the return of husbands and boyfriends to Canada. Women's roles in

⁸⁰ See for example "You will hold your man," Barber Ellis, *Saturday Night*, October 16, 1943, 19. This ad appeared almost monthly, sometimes every other month, throughout 1943 and 1944. Emphasis in original.

⁸¹ There is also a slight threat implied in the phrasing – if women failed to write to their men overseas, it might be their own fault if they then "lost" that man, either to injury or death in the war, or to another woman who performed emotional labour more effectively. Again, this messaging attributed enormous power to women's care and correspondence as well as hinting at fears about the fragility of relationships and marriages experiencing the strain of extended separation and war.



Figure 37. “You will hold your man,” Barber Ellis, *Saturday Night*, October 16, 1943, 19.

maintaining the morale of men both on the home front and overseas, then, involved a number of types of emotional work – activities which may have helped to maintain women’s *own* morale, as well. Single women were tasked with visiting, entertaining, sending photographs, and flirting, and married women were reminded to send pictures as well as frequent, cheerful, and reassuring letters, while maintaining life on the home front in preparation for men’s return.

Many Canadian women war workers, then, participated in heterosexuality during the war. Single women, in particular, were expected to be flirting, socializing, dating, and corresponding with men overseas. Married women were expected to remain sexually

loyal and to provide regular, cheerful encouragement to their spouses. While war plant newsletters and national magazines documented these activities, they also spilled considerable ink chronicling an event which connected single female war workers even more firmly to heterosexuality: marriage. Extensive coverage of the frequent marriages among war plant employees served as a constant reminder of the employees' heterosexuality and of their future, postwar plans. Yet, in a context in which there were broad worries about the potential effects of war work on women, their bodies, and their allure, and even their morality, loud and constant celebrations of women war workers' respectable marriages likely helped to reassure Canadians that their concerns were unwarranted.

At their root, worries about women becoming unattractive or unhealthy because of their war work were connected to the centrality of heterosexual families in Canadian society. As one *Toronto Star* editorial letter argued,

The fact is that 'Miss War Worker's' group is one upon whom the nation depends to a considerable extent for its war production and for its future population. The female war worker combines a double function: she is an industrial worker and a potential mother.⁸²

The letter-writer went on to explain concerns about the effects of war work on women's physical health, concluding that "Not only industry but future generations will pay the cost of any neglect of women workers."⁸³ In order to become those future mothers, women war workers would need to remain healthy (meaning able to bear children) and to find a willing male partner and presumably get married. This concern about health was

⁸² "Miss War Worker," *Toronto Star*, July 25, 1942, 6.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

not about women as people, but about women's reproductive and sexual health.⁸⁴

Profiling war worker weddings, then, reassured and reminded Canadians that women were still attracted to men, still appealing enough to marry, and still engaged in forming the families that would provide the next generation of Canadians – those who would benefit from all the struggles and sacrifices being experienced in wartime.

It is worth noting that whiteness played a starring role in the visual and verbal discourses about war workers, heterosexuality, marriage, and motherhood. Although the existing literature on women war workers in Canada is rather silent on the question of race, my research suggests that whiteness was part of the idealized image of the woman war worker featured in all kinds of print media. This is in part because women war workers were framed as heterosexual, future wives, and future mothers, and the ideal Canadian mother was white. Eugenic thought flourished in late-nineteenth-century Canada: as the symbolic “mothers of the race,” white women were central to the project of making Canada a white nation. As Valverde argues in her work on turn-of-the-century discourses around race, reproduction, and sexuality, “Women did not merely have babies: they reproduced ‘the race.’ Women did not merely have just enough babies or too much sex: through their childbearing they either helped or hindered the forward march of (Anglo Saxon) civilization.”⁸⁵ After the First World War, there was renewed eugenic concern about “racial degeneration.”⁸⁶ During and after the First World War, “Racism,

⁸⁴ Focusing on women as sexual and reproductive beings suggests that these were considered to be their primary social functions: providing companionship for men and bearing children.

⁸⁵ Valverde, “When the Mother of the Race is Free,” 4.

⁸⁶ Cynthia Comacchio, *Nations Are Built of Babies* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 56-57.

which was exacerbated by the loss of Anglo-Saxon young men at the front, mass immigration, and a precipitous decline in marital birth rates, fuelled concern about the well-being of the nation's white children."⁸⁷ It is easy to see how similar concerns could arise during the Second World War, and could lead to fresh emphasis on the value of idealized young white women's reproductive capacities. Writing at the end of the First World War, W.L. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister during the Second World War, had his own concerns about the relationship between women's labour and their reproduction: "What physical and mental overstrain, and underpay and underfeeding are doing for the race in occasioning infant mortality, a low birthrate, and race degeneration, in increasing nervous disorders and furthering a general predisposition to disease, is appalling."⁸⁸ By the Second World War, worries about race degeneration manifested at least in part in the public celebration of young, white womanhood, heterosexuality, and maternity. Promoting the happy heterosexuality of the white woman war worker helped to ensure the continued whiteness of the Canadian nation.⁸⁹

It is almost impossible to read war plant newsletters without encountering marriage. Engagements and marriages among employees, frequently recorded in the pages of these publications, were celebrated constantly. Most commonly, news about

⁸⁷ Lori Chambers, *Misconceptions: Unmarried Motherhood and the Ontario Children of Unmarried Parents Act, 1921-1969* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 14.

⁸⁸ W.L. Mackenzie King, *Industry and Humanity: A Study in the Principles Underlying Industrial Reconstruction* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1918), cited in Valverde, *Age of Light, Soap, and Water*, 109. Valverde mentions that it is possible King was using "race" as in "human race" rather than "white race." Whether he espoused eugenic ideas about white motherhood or not, King was undoubtedly aware of them.

⁸⁹ This connection between foregrounding whiteness in representations of youthful heterosexuality and family life also extended into the postwar period. For an example of the persistence of dominant whiteness in postwar sex education materials in Canada, see Mary Louise Adams, *The Trouble with Normal: Postwar Youth and the Making of Heterosexuality* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 90.

relationships appeared in the local news sections or on the women's pages of newsletters – for example, the general line news columns in *The Commando* and *The Fusilier*, usually sub-divided by department, and the “Feminine Angle” and “What’s Cookin’” columns in *The Mosquito* or the “Powder Puffs” section in *The Commando*.⁹⁰ These columns mentioned the names of those engaged or married, frequently describing gifts they were given or mentioning women's engagement rings. Typical of such announcements is this description, from the Line No. 1 column in *The Commando*:

Isobel Wilson, Room 125, has been with D.I.L. for two years and has not missed a shift. Comes the sunny month of June, however, Isobel will be trading the blue coveralls for a dainty gingham apron. For she now sports a lovely diamond on that certain finger.⁹¹

While not all married women left their wartime jobs to become full time homemakers, some clearly did, at least for a time. The image of a woman's clothing symbolizing her shifting occupation - from coveralls to diamond ring to gingham apron, from worker to fiancée to wife – was a compelling one.⁹² Isobel, in any case, was not an anomaly by any means: on the same newsletter page alone, the marriages or engagements of employees Rose Castree, Hazel Little and Gordon Jarvis (both employees on Line No. 2, who married each other), Doris Woods, Helen Hewitson, Viola Perkins and George Murphy (another couple employed on the same line, Line No. 3), and Velma Young of Line No. 4 and Robert Barlow of Line No. 1 (a third couple) were all announced. Newly married Carl Bell of Line No. 1 was mentioned because he found it impossible to “keep his mind

⁹⁰ CanCar's newsletter, *The Aircrafter*, also had a women's column entitled “The Feminine Touch.” Smith and Wakewich, “Beauty and the Helldivers,” 94.

⁹¹ “Line No.1,” *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 7, February 1944, 6.

⁹² This shift from coveralls to apron brings to mind the evocative conclusion of Pierson's book: “When Fluffy Clothes Replaced the Uniform,” in Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 215.

from wandering constantly over to Whitby where the lovely new bride... keeps spick and span their cute little hive.” Although men were less frequently the focus of matrimonial excitement, they were not excluded. Similar lists appeared in other plant newsletters: October 1942’s *Mosquito* listed DeHavilland “Brides of the Month” Eleanor Ferguson, Isabel Cummings, Bessie Yakely, Muriel Nelson, Lorraine Tugwell, Kay Hunter, “Hildred Culton” [sic], Marion Richardson, and Julie Sitarski, as well as describing a “cafeteria shower” for bride June Van Allstyne, a shower for Pearl Cotton, and the marriage of Mary Ellis to James O’Connor, supervisor for the Inspection Board of the United Kingdom in Canada at Defence Industries in Ajax.⁹³ The February 1942 edition of *The Mosquito* included congratulations for couples in which both members were employees: “Mr. Howie Kerr of Sheet Metal and Miss Betty Gummersall of Fabric; Mr. Al Pringle of Woodshop and Miss Margaret Kenyon of Fabric... Mr. Gordon Stone and Miss Thelma Holmes of the Fabric Department.”⁹⁴ The frequency and constancy of marriages and engagements among plant employees reinforced how vibrant the heterosexual culture was, and how “marriageable” women war workers were, despite all of the concern about rough hands, grease, and pants. Further, relationships between male and female employees at war plants were strikingly common, suggesting that, despite the numerical dominance of women workers, heterosexual relationships could still flourish.

⁹³ Millie Smith, “The Feminine Angle,” *The Mosquito*, vol. 1 no. 9, October 1942, 9, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-1, AO. The column also listed the department in which each woman worked. For another list of pairs of employees being married, see “Personals,” *The Mosquito*, vol. 2 no. 1, February 1943, 3, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-2, AO. Clearly, inter-plant relationships were also possible!

⁹⁴ “Personals,” *The Mosquito*, vol. 1 no. 1, February 1942, 3, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-1, AO. It seems that the Fabric department was especially prone to co-worker romances.

War plant communities could not help but recognize the large number of marriages occurring in these years. One newsletter item, offering congratulations on a 22nd wedding anniversary, speculated about the future of these new marriages:

I'm sure it is encouraging to these youngsters that are going about nowadays with brand new gold bands on their fingers. There seems to be so many of them too. Must be the influence of the War again, eh? Well I just hope they can all dance at their 60th anniversaries...⁹⁵

References to war plant marriages were not restricted to the newsletter's gossip columns, either – photos, feature stories, and even covers were devoted to marriage, engagements, and bridal showers among employees. War plant newsletters not only mentioned that employees were getting married, but also highlighted celebrations of unions and set up expectations for couples' futures. For example, a photograph of bride and de Havilland fabric shop employee Bessie Oakley at her wedding shower appeared in *The Mosquito*. In the photo, Bessie wears a wreath of flowers on her head, and stands behind a table covered with household items, including dishes, which are very likely gifts (see figure 38). The photo caption draws readers' attention to “the huge cartoon ‘card’” featuring a bride and groom that stands taller than Bessie herself.⁹⁶

In June 1944, DIL's *The Commando* published a nearly full page story and photo spread featuring six women workers, residents at the plant, who met and married husbands after coming to work there (see figure 39).

⁹⁵ “Line News – Stores,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 13, March 15, 1943, 7.

⁹⁶ Millie Smith, “The Feminine Angle,” *The Mosquito*, vol. 2 no. 1, February 1943, 9, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-2, AO.



Figure 38. Millie Smith, "The Feminine Angle," *The Mosquito*, vol. 2 no. 1, February 1943, 9, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-2, AO.



The Six Bridal Couples shown here are well-known Ajacians. The young people all met in Ajax and the girls have been among the most popular and attractive occupants of Residence 728. Back row, left to right, the happy couples are Margaret Georgene Hay and Sapper Clifford Jarvis, Elda Mildred McCreary and Ervan Rainey, Marian Ingram and Les King. Front row, Ellen Morden and Finley Shaw, Margaret Elizabeth Francey and Bernard Runions and Nancy Wayda and Clifford Randall.

Figure 39. "Popular Girls Are Brides At Ajax," The Commando, vol. 2 no. 11, June 1944, 3.

Though not all of the couples met on the job, most did, and Ajax is described as a frequent setting for marriages:

It's June again and along with it have come romance and roses, graduations and weddings. Now one of the many nice things about Ajax is that since its beginning it has been a background for just such happy events. The month of brides has been looked forward to this year by many happily engaged girls throughout the village, at the Staff Hotel, and in every Residence in the girls' area. And it is interesting to note that most of these charming girls met their fiancés right here in Ajax.⁹⁷

The lengthy article profiled each couple, mentioning where they work, how they met, and the date of their marriage. Further, the piece described a joint shower given for the six women, the gifts they were given (“cups, saucers, and cream and sugar bowl in the distinctive Silver Birch pattern”), and a “screamingly funny mock wedding” staged at the event. Significantly, the article not only celebrated heterosexual matrimony, but suggested that romantic matches were a bonus that women earned *through* their wartime labour:

Each of these girls came to work here with just one thought uppermost in her mind—to do a war job. Now every one of them is thanking that lucky star that guided her to Ajax where she found not only a grand place in which to live and work but also someone to share the road to romance and happiness as well.⁹⁸

The article strongly connected women's decision to take up war work with their eventual engagements and marriages: several couples included women who moved to Ajax from western Canada and men raised in Ontario – people who, the article pointed out, if not for their common employment at DIL, would not have met. Stories like this one held heterosexual relationships and marriage up as extremely positive and desirable activities,

⁹⁷ “Popular Girls Are Brides At Ajax,” *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 11, June 1944, 3.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

to be pursued and celebrated. They also reminded newsletter readers that women workers were desirable and marriageable, despite their status as labouring people. The title of the piece, “Popular Girls Are Brides At Ajax,” focused on women’s achievement in getting married, rather than men’s.⁹⁹ Finally, this article conveyed the message that war work and heterosexuality were not at all incompatible; instead, they were perfect partners.¹⁰⁰

Weddings were such an important part of war plant life, the theme even made the cover of one issue of *The Commando*. The June 1945 issue, the second to last ever published, suggested possible future tensions that might await many war working couples. A bride, with a white dress and white veil, holding a bouquet of flowers, and a groom, with patterned pants, a dark jacket, and a bowtie, stand together beneath an arch. The figures, created out of cut paper, both have unhappy expressions; the groom carries a book labeled “cook book.” In the newsletter, the cover is explained: “Our Front cover this month depicts the June bride. Possibly there are some of the husbands that have to handle the cooking in order to get a meal, but we really doubt that many of them will carry their cook-book to the altar.”¹⁰¹ The combination of image and description suggests that marrying a woman war worker might entail more domestic duties for husbands, at least

⁹⁹ This type of narrative ignored the experiences of working-class women whose waged labour did not disqualify them from having romantic or sexual relationships or families. The iconic woman war worker was a middle-class woman choosing to work at least partially for patriotic reasons, so alternative discourses about the wartime work of women who were already involved in jobs not perceived to be respectable and feminine (pink-collar jobs like teaching, nursing, and secretarial work, which were more likely to be done by young single middle-class women rather than working-class women of all ages).

¹⁰⁰ For similar coverage of weddings, see for example: “Powder Puffs,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 5, September 28, 1942, 4; “Miss Alice Veitch Weds Gordon Muir At Whitby Manse, June 14th,” *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 12, July 1944, 3; “Weddings” and “Double Wedding,” *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 10, May 1945, 3; “The Feminine Angle,” *The Mosquito*, vol. 1 no. 5, June 1942, 6, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-1, AO.

¹⁰¹ *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 11, June 1945, 1; see also “Miniature Front Cover,” *The Commando*, vol. 3 no. 11, June 1945, 2.

for a time. It hints at gendered tensions in the relationships of war workers, and the previously described fears about gender inversion. If women could take on jobs in factories, which were coded masculine, would they also take on other masculine traits, and force their husbands to take on some roles or task assumed to be feminine – like cooking? The war did provide some men with expanded opportunities for voluntary, transgressive gender performance; for example, Jackson describes male entertainers who dressed and acted as female impersonators in the Canadian armed forces, something which was likely only permissible in the fluctuating context of wartime.¹⁰² For many other men, however, transgressing the powerful norms of dominant masculinity could prove troubling. This cover image suggests that war worker marriages, while almost universally celebrated, could also pose challenges. As women married, if they continued their work, they would have to balance the expectations of married life – including cooking, cleaning, and for most, eventually, childcare – with their waged labour. The visual discourse here reminded both women and men of the assumed and expected gendered duties of husbands and wives. By portraying the couple as unhappy about the subtle trade in tasks, the image moralizes about who should *really* be carrying the cookbook.

Oral history records suggest that romantic and sexual relationships at war plants did include happy couplings, but they could also be more complex. According to Louise Johnston, a DIL employee who met and married her husband while working her war job, while most of the single people at the plant were women, romances were still common:

¹⁰² Jackson, *One of the Boys: Homosexuality in the Military in World War II*, 160.

I think wild was the ah, word that I would use. But you see, again, the single young people were women. The men who worked here were men not, um, eligible for uh military duty, for some reason they uh, not serving in the war. But of course there were very young men who were not yet old enough to go to war and, well, there was some social life. I didn't get in on it but I, I saw it going on around me.¹⁰³

Johnson's comments indicate that, in contrast to the "safe" heterosexuality being associated with the image of the woman war worker in newspapers, magazines, and war plant newsletters, there may have been some more transgressive heterosexual or romantic relationships happening too. According to auto workers Joan Jackson and Elsa Goddard, "You could see them in the cutting room... having their little smooching time... You couldn't help but know about... 'Where's so and so?'... Oh, lots of gossip."¹⁰⁴

Relationships taking place outside of marriages were particularly controversial. GM employee Helen Graham remembered: "there were different little affairs going on... I know of two or three men in the cutting room, they were single fellas. [They] had a romance going [with]... married girls that worked in the sewing room."¹⁰⁵ A

DeHavilland employee, Dorothy Wilton, said that married men's extra-marital activity at the plant had even led to divorces: "She recalls: 'A fellow would come up and say 'How'd you like to go out tomorrow night?' and my favourite saying got to be 'Would your wife let you?' They'd say 'What do you mean?' Their faces would go red.'"¹⁰⁶ Smith and Wakewich also uncovered evidence of sex between employees at CanCar:

There were rumours of unhealthy sexual relations among the Can Car workers... In a frequently retold story, a worker in the cockpit of a Helldiver plane accidentally opened the bomber doors and a couple in the

¹⁰³ Louise Johnson interview, cassette tape, Town of Ajax Archives.

¹⁰⁴ Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*, 88.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Endicott, "Woman's Place (was) Everywhere," 101.

throes of passion dropped out. One of our interviewees extended this story to include the use of a water hose to separate the couple.

Planes, apparently, also served as a space for sexual liaisons at DeHavilland, where, fabric worker Kay Neal recalled that, “‘the night shift was the rough time’ ... the men ‘could always find some woman willing to climb in the back of the aircraft with them,’ though Kay never witnessed any of this herself.”¹⁰⁷

An anecdote in Jean Bruce’s *Back the Attack*, credited only to “Toronto,” points directly to sexual “immorality” at war plants by suggesting that men in war plants “took advantage” of their female coworkers, leading to less than respectable relations:

After I went to work at a war plant I saw a lot of immorality and it kind of shocked me. I saw a lot of affairs between the plant supervisors and the girls. These were guys who were exempt from the forces because they were too old, or they had health problems or something.¹⁰⁸

This story might reflect a particular predatory instinct among male war plant workers, who could have felt additional pressure to be heterosexually successful as a way to reinforce their masculinity, having been denied the chance to serve overseas. There is also a subtle hint that the women involved, some of whom “had only been married a couple of weeks before their men went overseas,” might be motivated by loneliness or desire for male companionship or sexual release.¹⁰⁹ Despite these whiffs of active and transgressive sexuality at war plants, public-facing sources rarely addressed anything other than respectable marriages, engagements, and chaste dating. This is unsurprising, considering that war plants needed to recruit large numbers of women workers. If war

¹⁰⁷ Endicott, “Woman’s Place (was) Everywhere,” 101.

¹⁰⁸ Bruce, *Back the Attack!*, 60.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

plants had been subject to rumours about sexual looseness to the same degree that women's armed services were, this would have become more difficult. Instead, war work was promoted as a safe and supervised activity for young, single women. At DIL, on-site residences were gender-segregated and monitored by same-gender minders. In the women's residences, older women referred to as "housekeepers" or "housemothers" looked out for women and enforced the rules. Perhaps because men were perceived to need less moral supervision, men's residence staff were known as "caretakers" instead.¹¹⁰ At DeHavilland and at Can Car, women matrons supervised female employees' trips to the washroom, preventing too much flirting and promoting productivity.¹¹¹ At Courtauld's, "floor ladies" were "responsible for recording the name of each 'girl' who came in and for ensuring that nobody spent too much time" in the washroom, as well as cutting women's nails when they were too long.¹¹² Despite these attempts at regulating women's bodies and behaviour, and although they are not part of the officially promoted record of wartime workplaces, at least some employees experienced sexual adventures outside the scope of morally sanctioned dating and marriage.

Evidently, the NSSWD was concerned about possible immoral activity in war plants, too. Women workers were to be supervised not only during their labouring hours,

¹¹⁰ On women's residence staff, see "Housekeepers Are An Important Link in Girl's Welfare," *The Commando*, vol. 1. no. 11, February 1, 1943, 5. On men's residences, see, for example, "Men's Camp is Modern, Comfortable," *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 13, March 15, 1943, 3. For "housemother," see, for example "New Housemother Has Been a World Traveller," *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 10, January 15, 1943, 2; see also Louise Johnson interview, cassette tape, Town of Ajax Archives – she also refers to "housemothers" specifically.

¹¹¹ For DeHavilland, see Endicott, "Woman's Place (was) Everywhere," 50. For CanCar, see Smith and Wakewich, "Regulating Body Boundaries," 62.

¹¹² Scheinberg, "Tessie the Textile Worker," 174-175.

but after work as well, to prevent boredom and any resulting immorality. Jennifer

Stephen points out that,

Attention to leisure activities contributed to safeguarding the young women's morality as well as their morale. NSSWD staff were concerned that young women, unaccustomed to urban life, should be supervised during off hours, directed towards wholesome recreational activities such as bowling, roller skating, and similar innocuous pursuits. The Women's Division fielded numerous reports recounting 'sordid details of events that had occurred amongst women in war industries' and was as concerned about protecting the reputation of the NSS as it was that of the woman war worker.¹¹³

In fact, one can read the constant focus on respectable heterosexuality in wartime media as a way to distract from or cover up any instances of problematic partnerships or activities. There were certainly worries about wartime sexual relationships among women and men in the armed services. Carolyn Gossage documents perceptions and procedures for handling promiscuity in the Canadian women's armed services, from pregnancy (which was grounds for discharge) and abortion to extramarital affairs and sexually transmitted illnesses.¹¹⁴ Ruth Roach Pierson's work goes further, chronicling the growing concerns with the possibly dangerous sexualities of CWACs, and in particular, the likelihood that they might carry venereal diseases and pass them along to enlisted men.¹¹⁵ Describing worries about servicewomen's "femininity and morality" as a moral panic, Pierson shows that there was widespread consensus and fear that "a woman's femininity and sexual respectability might not survive enlistment."¹¹⁶ This concern was strikingly

¹¹³ Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl*, 42. Stephen notes that safeguarding young women's morality was a particular concern in Quebec.

¹¹⁴ Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 156-159.

¹¹⁵ Chapter 6, "VD Control and the CWAC in World War II," in Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 188-214.

¹¹⁶ Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 186. For a direct reference to "moral panic," see 187.

similar to worries about women war workers, whose sexual morality and femininity were similarly scrutinized and valorized above their abilities as workers. Although she does not use the term “moral panic,” Marilyn Hegarty’s work on women, sexuality, and danger shows that there was comparable alarm about women’s morality in the United States – although she contends that women were perceived as a threat rather than a vulnerable group in need of protection. Addressing the dual pressures women faced, Hegarty argues that, “in meeting their wartime obligations to labor both in the factory and in the dance hall, many women came to be viewed as dangerous individuals, in the first case too masculine and in the second too sexual.”¹¹⁷ Women’s supposedly voracious wartime sexual appetites were an issue in Canada as well. Although he focuses more on the experiences of enlisted men with VD and prostitution, Jeff Keshen highlights the “not unfounded belief that young women desperately wanted to date men in uniform, who seemed more handsome, courageous, noble, and manly.”¹¹⁸ Whether women were perceived as vulnerable, chaste, and in need of protection, or as actively chasing transgressive sexual experiences, their respectability and sexual activity was a constant focus of attention during the war.

Although it is unlikely that women war workers would have identified such behaviour the same way we do today, sexual harassment also took place at war plants. Harassment ranged from unpleasant teasing and unwelcome visual scrutiny to physical assaults. The constant focus on women workers’ beautiful bodies, and the sexualization of woman war worker imagery in general (detailed both earlier in this chapter as well as

¹¹⁷ Hegarty, *Victory Girls, Khaki-wackies*, 111.

¹¹⁸ Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 133.

in chapters 3 and 4), undoubtedly contributed to encouraging and normalizing the behaviour of harassers. Women's bodies were constantly on display and presented as sexually appealing and available, a process which could easily lead some men to cross boundaries with less inhibition. Pamela Sugiman notes that, "Given the sensitive nature of the topic, it is difficult to ascertain the extent of sexual harassment in the auto plants."¹¹⁹ Although the same holds true for war plants, oral history has been particularly helpful in demonstrating that aggressive sexual advances did happen. Takaia Larsen notes that the majority of her interviewees described "pranks" that they characterized as fun rather than problematic: "Some jokes seemed good natured, others flirtatious, while some seemed to hide resentment on the part of men having to work with women." Despite this assessment of pranks as harmless, Larsen describes one "prank" in which "two different women mentioned being 'soaked' by hoses while on shift and although neither of them [connected] these pranks to flirtation, the connection can clearly be made."¹²⁰ This incident could easily be understood more as an assault on these women's bodies than a pleasant flirtation.

Some cases of harassment clearly went far beyond flirtation. Ellen Scheinberg documents several cases of harassment by foremen at textile mills in Cornwall, Ontario during the war: "While many of these foremen were married men in their mid-thirties or forties, and supposedly respectable individuals, there were a number at the mills who took advantage of their powerful position by verbally and physically harassing their

¹¹⁹ Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma*, 89.

¹²⁰ Larsen, "Sowing the Seeds," 51, 51nn38, and 51nn39.

female workers.”¹²¹ Scheinberg also points out that the vulnerable position of young women workers meant that many did not report their experiences, and that for those who did, punishment of the harasser was not assured.¹²² Victory Aircraft employees remembered violent harassment as well. Recalling a New Years’ Eve party, VAL riveter Bertha Curry said,

‘I went home from there... I had to hold my lip down with my fingers because... I’d been kissed.’ The men were very rough: ‘They’d grab you. You couldn’t even get a way from them – like that was their right – or so they thought... My upper lip was swollen right up. You’d almost think I had a punch in the mouth.’¹²³

Curry also cited cases of sexual harassment by supervisors. One incident occurred at a wiener roast, and after being “bothered” by the man, Curry “hailed off – and I was very strong – and gave him a punch in the face... and threw him over.”¹²⁴ Defending oneself in such a bold manner was bound to be a risky move, but women could not necessarily count on harassers being stopped or held to respectful behavioural standards otherwise. Given the existence of these few but convincing accounts, it seems clear that sexual harassment of women war workers took place in much higher proportions than “official” sources suggest, complicating the comfortable narrative of happy war plant flirtations and romances.

¹²¹ Scheinberg, “Tessie the Textile Worker, 175.

¹²² Scheinberg describes one particularly dramatic situation, in which a foreman, Louis Cinquini, was accused of verbal and physical harassment by six women, aged 17 to 24. The matter went to trial, and Cinquini was found not guilty, with the judge stating: “even if the story told by the six girls who testified against him is true in every detail, the acts of impropriety imputed him are of such trivial character that they do not warrant his reputation being seriously besmirched on that account.” See Scheinberg, “Tessie the Textile Worker,” 175-176.

¹²³ Endicott, “Woman’s Place (was) Everywhere,” 100.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 107.

Falling somewhere between aggressive advances and happy couples, war plants also facilitated respectful, friendly, and even fatherly relationships between women, men, and sometimes supervisors. Sugiman reports that at GM, “Many women affectionately referred to their general foremen as ‘father’ and described male supervisors as ‘real fatherly types,’ ‘old and comical.’”¹²⁵ Vi Connolly, who worked at both the Norman Slater Company and Small arms, had this to say about her bosses:

I think they were all talked to before they started hiring the women... They were very respectful, never used a swear word in front of us. They were just wonderful. I thought, this is a factory and I’m here and, and I don’t hear any of those cuss words that I hear on the street? And it was very, very nice, pleasant actually.¹²⁶

In contrast to the accounts of violence and harassment given by some aircraft workers, others from DeHavilland remembered an atmosphere of cordiality more like what Connolly described. Both Kay Neal and Mary Longhurst remembered their experiences this way. Neal said that the DeHavilland owner “was like a daddy to everybody,” while Longhurst described her supervisor as “a father image, or a grandfather.”¹²⁷ Clearly, relationships with men in power at war plants were complex and varied, including not only romance and violence, but also paternal kindness.

Unlike reports about wild behaviour, problematic ‘romance’, harassment and abuse, positive depictions of heterosexual relationships were extremely common in accounts of wartime work, and did reflect reality for many women. Reports of pleasurable heterosexual relationships were not all media spin; many people did find

¹²⁵ Sugiman, *Labour’s Dilemma*, 91.

¹²⁶ Vi Connolly interview, www.warstory.ca, http://www.warstory.ca/video.php?story_id=36, accessed June 24, 2015.

¹²⁷ Endicott, “Woman’s Place (was) Everywhere,” 107.

spouses or enjoy flirtations at work. Sugiman cites the experience of Kay Anderson, arguing that, “For young single women, relations between women and men were ‘just super.’ ‘I was young and blonde and not bad to look at,’ said Kay Anderson. ‘And I was the youngest woman up there.’” Anderson also remembered that some women were lucky enough to date an Oshawa Generals player, since GM sponsored the team and gave some of the players jobs: “If you went out with an Oshawa General you just had it made. You were big time.”¹²⁸ In fact, the imbalanced ratio of women to men at war plants led many women who did find partners to count themselves particularly lucky. Louise Johnson’s own husband, ineligible for military service for health reasons, came to work at DIL transporting loose cordite to be weighed by women workers, including Louise. In her own words,

The man who was wheeling the cordite in was Russell Johnson, and I was weighing. So it wasn’t a big problem for him to sort of pause while, from the time he dumped the cordite into the container that I was dipping it out of it wasn’t impossible for him to stop and exchange the time of day before he left... we were married in 1944.¹²⁹

In another interview, Louise described her attraction to “the man who wheeled in the cordite”:

And I don’t know about love at first sight but I looked at this guy and thought “wow”, and eventually we were married so... well, for me, you know the um, what is it they call it, the chemistry is there, you know, he was such a good looking fellow, and he had a wonderful smile and black curly hair, and tall, he was very appealing actually you know, in his white coveralls and his cap, he had to wear.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Sugiman, *Labour’s Dilemma*, 89.

¹²⁹ Video, “Louise Johnson describes how she met her husband at Defence Industries Limited,” <http://images.ourontario.ca/ajax/2396286/data?n=48>, accessed June 25, 2015.

¹³⁰ Interview with Louise Johnson, “Female factory workers kept army supplied during WWII,” YouTube video, 4:34, posted by NewsDurham, November 11, 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKBR4GcrNYk>.

Other women war workers reported similar experiences. Marie Pinon of DeHavilland met her “handsome Cuban” husband after teasing her friend about him.¹³¹ Anna, Carol, and Clara all met their husbands at CanCar and viewed their wartime work primarily through the lens of those happy relationships. Reflecting on her time as a war worker, Clara concluded: “[Can Car] changed my whole life. Where would I have met a guy like John. He was the best thing that happened.”¹³² The proximity of men and women like Louise and Russell Johnson (among many others) in Canadian war plants certainly led to a large number of relationships and, ultimately, marriages.

While marriage itself was celebrated at war plants, these heterosexual unions did hold meaning beyond the excitement of romance. New families were being formed, which would carry the country into the postwar period. War plant newsletters also reported on the procreative potential of newly married couples, usually teasing about when children would appear. In *The Mosquito*, for example, one couple is reported to have received significant attention from co-workers:

The newly wedded Frank Warrens are enjoying as much privacy as gold fish in a bowl. They arrived back from their honeymoon to find the house humorously decorated and it took a half hour to peel off the trimmings and cartoon posters. A seventy inch stork had been wired to the chimney.¹³³

The image of a stork, usually the symbol of married fertility, suggests that this couple’s co-workers fully expected them to have children right away. Though this story likely

¹³¹ For Marie Pinon’s experience, see Endicott, “Woman’s Place (was) Everywhere,” 100-101.

¹³² For CanCar workers Anna, Carol and Clara, see Smith and Wakewich, “The Politics of ‘Selective’ Memory,” 64-65. Quotation from Clara is on 65. Another CanCar worker, Mariella, also met her husband at work: “Wearing her special overalls, Mariella met her future husband while walking past ‘those sheet-metal guys to get back and forth to the [toilet].’” Smith and Wakewich, “Regulating Body Boundaries,” 64.

¹³³ “The Feminine Angle,” *The Mosquito*, vol. 1 no. 6, July 1942, 3, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-1, AO.

amounted to gentle teasing between friends, the social appropriateness of assuming childbearing would follow marriage was significant. Women war workers, like women employed in other industries or not employed at all, were expected to marry men and become mothers. Such imagery reminded newsletter readers and war workers themselves that women workers were still (or should ideally still be) heterosexual.

The iconic woman war worker was portrayed as a heterosexual person, interested romantically and sexually in men and destined for marriage and childbearing after her time as a labourer. A broad spectrum of evidence demonstrates the ubiquity of heterosexuality in war plant publications and imagery. Significant silences exist around same-sex relationships, although it is likely that at least some war workers capitalized on the changing social rules of wartime to engage in intimate same-sex relationships. Any relationships or aspirations that hinted at non-heteronormative postwar futures were erased from war plant newsletters: this included both lesbian relationships as well as any narratives that suggested a woman's life could be focused on her career instead of on marriage and motherhood. Pinups appearing in plant newsletters foregrounded the (assumed) male erotic gaze and made the female body an appropriate object of scrutiny, appreciation, and pleasure. Wartime visual discourse focused on women's bodies and beauty instead of their skills or thoughts, framing them as temporary workers. "Safe" and respectable versions of heterosexuality were relentlessly broadcast, while more risqué sexual activities were generally erased from the official record, surviving only in oral histories. Flirting, dating, and heterosexual socializing were common and acceptable recreational pursuits, part of keeping up morale among workers. However, sexual advances were not always welcome. The constant focus on women workers' attractive

bodies may have contributed to an increase in sexual harassment. Still, consensual casual romance often led to firmer commitments to heterosexuality among workers: engagements, marriages, and the promise of future motherhood helped to solidify the place of the woman war worker as an icon not only of femininity, but also of reassuring, morale-boosting, and even matrimonial and reproductive heterosexuality.

Chapter 6: “She Should Be a Curvesome, Oomphish Young Lady”: War Worker Beauty Contests and Toronto’s Miss War Worker Competition

The *Globe and Mail* described the Miss War Worker contest in 1942, the first year it was held, as: “A beauty contest to decide the best looking girl among the thousand [sic] of young women engaged in war work throughout the city and Province...”¹ The contest took place that year on July 18, 1942, at Toronto’s Canadian National Exhibition grounds. In the course of the contest, young female war workers publicly paraded before a panel of judges and a huge crowd of excited spectators, wearing trim, clean factory uniforms and specially fastened kerchiefs or turbans, holding numbered cards and smiling broadly. In total, three Miss War Worker titles were awarded over the course of the war - in 1942, 1943, and 1944. Many more war worker wins took place at smaller, plant-wide beauty contests that allowed women to qualify for Miss War Worker and all three of the companies studied closely in this dissertation, DIL, GECO, and DeHavilland, participated.² The contests tell us a great deal about gender, beauty, bodies, sexuality, labour, community, recreation, and the complex relationship between image and experience during the conflict.

This chapter examines war worker beauty contests held in Ontario during the Second World War, including both Miss War Worker and the preliminary contests held at individual war plants. These contests have been all but ignored by historians; only

¹ “Pick Miss War Worker In Police Beauty Contest,” *Globe and Mail*, June 10, 1942, 4. Note that a version of this chapter was presented at the Canadian Historical Association’s June 2013 meeting in Victoria, BC.

² Many other companies also participated, including Inglis and Research Enterprises Limited (REL). For more on contest participation at the John Inglis Company (which selected ‘Miss John Inglis’ in a contest where the personnel manager was the Master of Ceremonies), see Sobel and Meurer, *Working at Inglis*, 73-75.

Patrizia Gentile has provided any analysis of the events, in her excellent doctoral dissertation on beauty pageants in Canada more broadly.³ I argue that these beauty contests clearly demonstrate the power of the glamorous image of the woman war worker that populated the visual landscape. These beauty contests show the intersection of ideals and real people, as a version of how the visual representation of the glamorous, feminine war worker was performed and displayed on some women's bodies in a very public way. Through the contests, we can see complex negotiations around gender, bodies, and power, but they also provide a window into wartime recreation, public expressions of patriotism, pleasure and performance, and workplace group identity. Overall, wartime beauty contests indicate concrete connections between the idealized visual representations of women war workers, present in myriad print media, and actual wartime performances of femininity by working women. Families, coworkers, spectators, and competitors themselves observed, scrutinized, praised, and rewarded the efforts of war workers to be beautiful. Participating in beauty culture by taking part in, reading about, or watching the contests had some important positive features. At the same time, commentary on the contests, through its emphasis on the importance of workers' beauty, tended to minimize the value of women's *labour* and skill. Further, close surveillance of women workers' bodies by other workers, reporters, and ultimately contest judges could be coercive and unwelcome, and the contests recognized only a narrow vision of femininity and beauty. Wartime beauty contests expose some ways that Canadians on the home front coped with the stresses of global conflict, by convincing themselves that women's wartime labour did not threaten gender roles and by consuming and

³ Gentile, "Queen of the Maple Leaf," chapter 4.

participating in gendered performance as a recreational and morale-boosting activity. All of these forces converged on women's bodies, making them intense sites of meaning and objects of close observation.

In Canada and elsewhere, historians of the Second World War have convincingly demonstrated that women's increasing presence in the waged work force during the conflict, especially in 'rough' masculine fields and factory settings, created anxieties about the way such work might affect women's femininity.⁴ As this dissertation has shown, in order to combat worries about the potentially masculinizing effects of women's factory labour, the figure of the woman war worker was frequently associated with glamour, youth, physical beauty, and femininity in both visual and textual media. Magazines and newspapers carried advertising and other images of women war workers looking well groomed, carefully made up, and wearing trim uniforms that contrasted with those worn by men. Visual and verbal representations of women war workers strongly suggested that among actual working women, beauty and femininity could and should be maintained.⁵ Images of women war workers virtually always featured young, heterosexual, white women, and framed war work as a choice undertaken primarily for patriotic reasons rather than because of economic need. The title of Ruth Roach Pierson's influential account of Canadian womanhood in the Second World War, *They're Still Women After All*, refers to a magazine article which focuses on Canadian women's ability

⁴ For Canada, see Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*; Stephen, *Pick One Intelligent Girl*; Smith and Wakewich, "Beauty and the Helldivers," "Regulating Body Boundaries," and "Trans/forming the Citizen Body." For America, see McEuen, *Making War, Making Women*; Adkins Covert, *Manipulating Images*; Anderson, *Wartime Women*; Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited*; Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter*; Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War*. For Australia, see Montgomerie, *The Women's War*. For the UK, see Braybon and Summerfield, *Out of the Cage*; Waller and Vaughan-Rees, *Women in Wartime*.

⁵ See chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation.

not only to combine factory labour with *femaleness*, but with physical *femininity*. In fact, femaleness and femininity were hardly separated at all, in particular for young women: to be a young woman *was*, in the visual discourse of the Second World War period, to be feminine and beautiful in body and in manner. Ads for a wide variety of products, from hand lotion to girdles and menstrual pads to breakfast cereal, sold the idea that women war workers' bodies were feminine, heterosexual, and only temporarily engaged in waged work. Both advertising and editorial content suggested that by remaining physically beautiful and feminine, women workers could keep their own morale up, encourage both servicemen and fellow citizens, and ensure a happy postwar future for themselves and for the Canadian nation.

Did any female war workers really look like the ads and imagery? Did they ever take on this glamorous appearance and feminine persona, as women and as workers? The answer is that at least some women did embrace the glamorous war worker look, mirroring it on their bodies in a concrete, public, and intentional way. War worker beauty contests provide the most convincing evidence that they did so. I argue that beauty contests for war workers served as a way to minimize the threat posed by women's factory work to established ideas about femininity and women's bodies, by connecting idealized visual discourses with actual bodies. The prescriptive visual discourse was powerful enough to lead to efforts to embody the ideal. This process had coercive elements, but it is critical to keep in mind the subjectivity of participants and the potential for pleasure even in oppressive contexts. Women's public performances of beauty and femininity also served as a way to boost morale – both their own and that of Canadian

society more broadly.⁶ In a period of chaos and uncertainty, beauty contest participants' reassuring femininity and heterosexual appeal served to buttress hopes that when the war was over, gender roles might still be stable and recognizable.

Wartime beauty contests also helped to boost morale by providing opportunities for community leisure and recreational consumption of gendered spectacle. They supported the growth of group solidarity among groups of workers and their families and friends; workers were encouraged to be proud of the beauty and achievement of their fellow employees. War worker beauty contests could also stimulate community growth and benefit the war effort by making war work seem less intimidating and more exciting. Labouring beauty queens could serve as a tool in worker recruitment by making war work more appealing, especially to young women.

Whether commentary on women war workers' bodies took the form of compliments or critiques, attention to women workers' appearance and ability to remain feminine was intense. Women were pressured to spend time and energy thinking about and cultivating a feminine appearance, but participating in gender performance or paying attention to style could also be enjoyable for women workers. Increasingly, historians agree that condemning beauty contests and beauty culture is neither productive nor necessary. Rather, beauty is increasingly seen as a realm in which women have been able to make choices that were important to them. In her groundbreaking study of women garment workers, fashion, and popular culture, Nan Enstad argues that "mass-produced

⁶ For beautiful women workers as morale-boosters, see Smith and Wakewich, "Beauty and the Helldivers," 16.

narratives and fashion can allow women to actively create leisure and personal spaces that are female-centered, and are locations for developing positive identities.”⁷ Others have shown that thinking about, choosing, purchasing, and wearing clothes and shoes can be part of women’s (and men’s) process of communicating about themselves to the world. Focusing on consumption by working women during the Depression, Katrina Srigley has shown that “women used clothing to assert or construct their identities,” or even to “contest...the identities that outsiders might confer upon them.”⁸ Donica Belisle and Vicki Howard’s work suggests that women’s intentional self-fashioning extended to their willing participation in workplace pinup publications and other “self-spectacularizing” activities.⁹ Jane Nicholas’ recent and excellent work on beauty, representation, and the Modern Girl demonstrates that “Beauty contests...allowed participants a chance to reveal how well they matched up to modern beauty standards. This was a very literal performance in occupying images.”¹⁰ In other words, beauty contests offered women the opportunity to be judged publicly on how well they embodied contemporary visual ideals of beauty and femininity – how closely did they resemble ideal images of womanhood in print culture and other visual media? These studies are important because they counter simplistic understandings of beauty culture as *only* oppressive, rather than concurrently exploitative and pleasurable.

⁷ Enstad, *Ladies of Labour*, 7, citing Angela McRobbie; Cohen, Wilk, and Stoeltje, *Beauty Queens on the Global Stage*.

⁸ Srigley, “Clothing Stories.”

⁹ For “self-spectacularization,” see Belisle, “Sexual Spectacles,” 146-149. Howard, “At the Curve Exchange.”

¹⁰ Nicholas, *The Modern Girl*, 134.

Even more than beauty culture, feminist historians have hotly debated beauty pageants. Joan Sangster's analysis of beauty contests in the postwar labour movement exposes the simmering tensions that can characterize beauty and pageant historiography. Sangster's piece acknowledges that "some working women clearly welcomed these events [beauty contests] as validation, diversion, and entertainment," but the overall tone condemns the contests themselves and the historians who see something positive in them, because, in her view, beauty contests are unavoidably oppressive.¹¹ Defensively positioning second-wave feminists against "problematic... 'post'- or 'third-wave' feminist perspectives embracing a liberal individualist agnosticism, if not celebration of the beauty business complex," Sangster concludes that enjoying the study of beauty contests and beauty culture is dangerous.¹² In contrast, I find Donica Belisle's clear assessment of the historiographical landscape around beauty and power to be more compelling:

Although earlier approaches to women's objectification emphasize the ways in which sexualization serves capitalism and patriarchy while more recent ones play up women's agency in the construction of alluring appearances, both generations of research ultimately ask the same questions.

In this chapter, I echo Belisle's call for "an alternative feminist perspective, one that is cognizant of both the exploitative elements that can be inherent within sexual objectification as well as the yearnings for transformation and empowerment that can exist among those who participate in it."¹³ Power, oppression, and agency are critical to

¹¹ Sangster, "Queen of the Picket line," 85. For example, she maintains that, "Competition for the title of labor beauty queen may have involved many things for working women in postwar Canada, from personal indulgence to a desire to escape one's class background, to youthful celebration of new styles of dress, to support for one's union, but beauty contests, at their heart, were still disciplinary cultural practices that reproduced hegemonic relations of class, race, and gender subordination." Sangster, "Queen of the Picket Line, 89," – emphasis mine.

¹² Sangster, "Queen of the Picket Line," 86. See also 89, 105-106.

¹³ Belisle, "Sexual Spectacle," 136.

any study of beauty culture and beauty contests, but attempting to definitely categorize them as productive or pernicious is short-sighted. Instead, historians should be exploring these complexities and emphasizing multiple meanings.

One way to spotlight the inherent intricacy of the beauty contest is to consider its participants. While Sangster claims not to condemn “the false consciousness of the contestants, whose agency, desires and pleasures are well recognized,” her study contains none of the words or perspectives of the women themselves.¹⁴ Work dealing with a wide variety of beauty contests shows that participants often understood their experiences differently from how historians or even audiences did.¹⁵ News reports and interviews with participants during the war, used as sources in this chapter, can provide evidence as to the reasons why women might have chosen to participate. In her study of beauty contests in Canada during the 1920s, Jane Nicholas writes,

Few beauty contestants left records about their thoughts on the contests, but the number of women participating in them during the decade, combined with what we must acknowledge as the possibility of young women’s agency, should suggest that women saw benefits and rewards in line with modern ideas of morality and respectability.¹⁶

Historians must take seriously the possibility that women enjoyed activities like beauty contests, even if contemporary feminist contexts or theoretical perspectives would find

¹⁴ Sangster, “Queen of the Picket Line,” 105. Sangster speculates that women may have understood their experiences in different ways, but she does not focus on comments from participants at all. This omission is regrettable because Sangster could have used an NFB film in which a working woman becomes queen of the dressmakers’ ball; cited by Yvonne Mathews-Klein as “Needles and Pins,” 1955, and by Sangster as “Pins and Needles,” 1954.

¹⁵ Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl*; Tzu-Chun Wu, ““Loveliest Daughter of Our Ancient Cathay!””; Yano, *Crowning the Nice Girl*. See also Donelle R. Ruwe, “I was Miss Meridian 1985,” in Watson and Martin, “*There She Is, Miss America*,” 137-152.

¹⁶ Nicholas, *The Modern Girl*, 149.

these activities odious and incompatible with feminist ideas about empowerment. Sarah Banet-Weiser describes the “dilemma” of the beauty historian thus:

I must find a way to critique cultural discourses and practices that objectify, alienate, or otherwise fragment the female body without treating the contestants themselves as somnolent victims of false consciousness. This dilemma results from the distinction between my critique of gendered rituals and my own involvement within certain aspects of the dominant beauty system.¹⁷

Considering our own relationship with and attitudes towards beauty culture is an important step in understanding our biases. Further, listening for the words of our historical subjects and reading between the lines, as historians do in so many other contexts, are important strategies.

War worker beauty contests provide us with an excellent opportunity to take beauty culture seriously, while connecting visual discourse with public spectacle and national ideals. In this chapter, I describe the contests and then explore the ways that contests themselves and media coverage of the events both celebrated and scrutinized women war workers’ bodies, femininity, and heterosexuality. The Miss War Worker contest was organized to complement the much longer running Miss Toronto competition, which dates from at least 1926.¹⁸ The likely starting date of the Miss Toronto contest is well in line with the North American history of beauty contests. Miss America was first run in 1921, and the popularity of pageants was growing during this period, in which gender roles were in flux and the cause of significant social anxiety.¹⁹ In

¹⁷ Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl*, 14.

¹⁸ The Toronto City Archives has archival photos of Miss Toronto beginning in 1926. Whether the contest was run before that year is uncertain. See also Gentile, “Queen of the Maple Leaf.”

¹⁹ Sarah Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl*.

the prosperous 1920s, as some North American women increasingly had access to formal voting rights and the ‘New Woman’ was identified as a symbol of both ‘progress’ and concern, women and their bodies came under increased surveillance. Some historians have argued that the early Miss America pageants intentionally snubbed contestants who resembled the New Woman or even the jazzy flapper. Instead, early victors were childlike and unthreatening. For example, the first winner of Miss America was petite, long-haired, sixteen-year-old Margaret Gorman. Choosing someone like Gorman undermined the idea that young women were becoming more independent and powerful.²⁰ In Canada, during the 1920s, “The Modern Girl continued the trend of symbolizing the desires and fears of the nation in a young woman’s body, but in the context of a consumer culture that increasingly sexualized the female body for the pleasure of visual consumption.”²¹ The Second World War was also a period in which potential changes to gender roles caused anxiety – so it is unsurprising that an increased interest in beauty contests arose simultaneously.

As at most beauty contests, including Miss America (in which state titles gained women a spot on the big stage), competitors in Miss War Worker had to prove themselves before proceeding to the ultimate beauty battle. While the young, single, and usually employed participants in Miss Toronto generally represented a neighbourhood, Miss War Worker contestants represented their place of employment.²² In order to

²⁰ Kimberly A. Hamlin, “Bathing Suits and Backlash: The First Miss America Pageants, 1921-1927,” in Watson and Martin, “*There She Is, Miss America*,” 34-36.

²¹ Nicholas, *The Modern Girl*, 6.

²² For example, Miss Toronto contestants included representatives such as Miss Gerrard or Miss Oakwood; see “Betty Ford, Phyllis Kean Beauty Contest Winners,” *Globe and Mail*, July 15, 1941, 5.

qualify to participate in the Miss War Worker contest, women first had to be recognized in a smaller elimination contest at one of Ontario's war plants. Each company that sent employees to Miss War Worker either held their own preliminary pageant, selecting as winners those they hoped would have the best chance of securing the ultimate title, or sent representatives to local elimination events. Local war plant newsletters advertised these smaller competitions as well as noting rules and promoting the final contest in Toronto as a chance to show the merits of each company's community. Local war plant newsletter coverage of Miss War Worker and the elimination contests that preceded it emphasized company-based pride and the achievements of workers, but also included themes which are equally evident in visual and textual descriptions of war worker beauty contests in nationally circulated media. Both the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star* contain assertions of the reassuring beauty of female war workers, their heterosexuality, and their feminine hobbies, interests, and attitudes. National coverage also underscored the entertaining nature of wartime beauty contests.

In Ajax, Ontario, Defence Industries Limited's employee newsletter *The Commando* provided extensive coverage of the Miss Ajax contest, a qualifier for Miss War Worker, from 1942 to 1944 (and so named because "Miss DIL" was felt not to sound as nice).²³ The DIL qualifying contest was open to girls over the age of sixteen doing hourly work. Two separate preliminary contests were held at Ajax; winners at the two

²³ Note the origins of the town name as the town of Ajax did not exist before the war. Land was expropriated in Pickering Township for the large munitions compound, and employees and local residents had the chance to enter a contest to name the town. "Dilco" and "Dilville," incorporating the initials of the company, were rejected. Instead, the winning name was "Ajax," after both an allied warship, the HMS Ajax, and the Greek god. See McDonald, *A Town Called Ajax*, 25, 33, 42-43. Despite the dislike for the name "Miss DIL," the women's softball team was called "The Dilkins."

preliminary level events would then move on to Ajax's final round of competition, where the delegates to Miss War Worker would be selected. In both preliminary and final rounds of competition at DIL, women were required to wear specific attire: "During the two preliminary contests...the girls will be expected to dress in simple afternoon frocks. In the finals, they are to dress in their coveralls which is how they will have to dress at the Toronto show."²⁴ Expert judges were secured to preside over the contest. In 1943, for example, a member of the Ontario Society of Artists, a beautician, and a radio personality decided the winner of Miss Ajax. Significantly, women employed at war plants as office staff were not eligible to compete in war worker contests – instead, they were encouraged to contest the Miss Toronto title.²⁵ The Miss War Worker regulations were extremely clear, stating,

This contest is open only to women actively employed in FACTORY War Work and the contestant *must on the day of the contest appear in the costume in which she works...* Proof of employment as a War Worker, must be produced upon filing application for entry to this contest, and also at the Exhibition Grounds on the day of the contest.²⁶

This demonstrates that factory attire (coveralls or jumpsuits) was central to the function of the Miss War Worker contest. The regular work clothing of office workers did not threaten the womanliness of their bodies the way that the coveralls and greasy hands involved in factory work might. Only the physical femininity of industrial workers needed additional, strategically targeted recognition and celebration in the context of war.

²⁴ "Girls Urged to Register Now For Preliminary Competitions To Be Held At Recreation Centre," *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 18, July 1, 1943, 2.

²⁵ "Beauty Contest to be Held June 15 & 19 at Rec. Centre," *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 11, June 1944, 5.

²⁶ "Miss War Worker Contest – Rules of Contest," *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 18, July 1, 1943, 2; emphasis in original.

In advance of the contests and field day, photo features in newspaper coverage reminded people of the main attraction: beautiful women on parade. Photos of war workers chosen to participate in the province-wide competition were featured along with reminders about the upcoming event. The first Miss War Worker contest was held on July 18, 1942 and newspaper coverage began well in advance, on June 20, 1942. More photos of women chosen to compete appeared in the July 3, 1942 edition of the *Globe and Mail*: eight contestants appeared clad in their GECO factory uniforms and kerchiefs, smiling widely. The paper even announced some of the smaller preliminary competitions that would lead to Miss War Worker. On July 14, 1942, a small article mentioned the Research Enterprises Limited preliminary beauty contest to select Miss R.E.L., which was to be part of a broader recreational evening and charity benefit gala for employees of the company, including a softball game.²⁷

National coverage in the *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail* underscored the recreational and entertaining nature of wartime beauty contests, comparing their appeal with the type of spectacle offered by the concurrent and complementary display of masculine athletic prowess offered at the Toronto Police Amateur Athletic Association (TPAAA) Games, which ran at the same time and same location as Miss War Worker and the parallel Miss Toronto contest. Like the local elimination contests, the Miss War Worker competition was part of a larger recreational event: the TPAAA Diamond Jubilee track and field competition and the Miss Toronto contest, held on a weekend every July

²⁷ “Arms Plant Employees Staging Benefit Tonight,” *Globe and Mail*, July 14, 1942, 15. For photos of contestants from Scythes & Co. and the Aluminum Company of Canada, see also “Will Compete for ‘Miss War Worker’ Title” and “War Worker’s Dimples Help in Beauty Contest,” *Globe and Mail*, July 14, 1942, 4.

and generating proceeds from ticket sales that would support the Toronto Police Widows and Orphans fund.²⁸

The entire event involved gendered spectacle - women paraded on the pageant stage, while men competed athletically. The Toronto Police Games featured public athletic competitions between male police officers, sometimes including officers from outside Toronto as well. In 1942, competitors from Detroit and Montreal participated. Some events at the field day featured male or female members of the Canadian forces.²⁹ The TPAAA field day included a variety of sporting events, including races, bicycle demonstrations, javelin throws, and a tug of war. Despite the variety of athletic events featuring mostly male bodies, the *Globe and Mail* suggested that "... the biggest attraction for many of the spectators will be the parade of those redheads, those brunettes, those blondes—exotic, dazzling, alluring, beautiful, gorgeous. Bring your sun-glasses."³⁰ Referring to both the Miss Toronto and Miss War Worker contests, this article highlighted the appeal of viewing women's bodies on display above the interest in sporting events.

Photos of the competition each year it was run show large crowds filling the Canadian National Exhibition grounds, with union jack flags strung along the edge of the stage on which contestants paraded. Photo records of the contest held at the Toronto City archives indicate a predictable pattern of performance each year: women in trim, tidy factory uniforms with tight waists and short sleeves, wearing kerchiefs or turbans on their

²⁸ "Brunette Trio Qualify for Miss Toronto Final," *Globe and Mail*, July 6, 1943, 4.

²⁹ "Cops, Blondes, Troops On Police Games Card," *Globe and Mail*, July 18, 1942, 4.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

heads, smiling broadly and holding numbered cards in front of them line up and parade along the stage in front of men, women, and children and a panel of judges. The winners were selected, given bouquets of flowers, and photographed with the police chief, whose duty it was to place the “Miss War Worker” sash on the winner.³¹ Archival photographs of the war worker contestants often emphasize the similarities between the large numbers of women competing, showing them standing in long, consistent lines before spectators, wearing uniforms that are extremely similar but for a few details – a different patch on the pocket, a slightly different turban shape.

Although Miss Toronto and Miss War Worker served similar entertainment functions and would receive equivalent prizes, there were differences between the two contests. Most importantly, unlike women participating in Miss War Worker who competed in their uniforms, Miss Toronto contestants appeared in swimsuits, which have been iconic beauty pageant attire since the dawning of the Miss America contest in its first incarnation as Atlantic City’s bathing beauty revue.³² Aside from the contrasting attire on display in the two contests, Miss War Worker was also suggested to be the more patriotic of the two events. According to police inspector Douglas Marshall, president of the Police Association, “Not only will there be a contest for lovely women but also one for those who are doing lovely work to defeat the enemies of our country.”³³ Perhaps part of the women’s “lovely work” included their efforts to be attractive. Marshall’s

³¹ Photograph, “Miss War Worker Beauty Contest 1942, C.N.E. Grandstand: Police Chief D.C. Draper presents ribbon to Dorothy Linham, R.E.L., Miss War Worker 1942,” July 18, 1942, Alexandra Studio fonds, Fonds 1257, Series 1057, Item 1856, Toronto City Archives.

³² Banet-Weiser, *The Most Beautiful Girl*.

³³ “Pick Miss War Worker In Police Beauty Contest,” *Globe and Mail*, June 10, 1942, 4.

comments are typical in their positive view of war worker beauty pageants, an attitude which comes through clearly in media coverage of the events, whether local or national.

In war plant newsletters, war workers expressed pride in the beauty and femininity of their coworkers. In the June 20, 1942 GECO *Fusilier* under the headline “Attention All Ye Maidens Fair Fame And Fortune Ye May Share,” the plant community was encouraged to identify beautiful female bodies as a way to prove the plant’s worth:

It is understood that most if not all of the other war plants in the Toronto area will be represented, and it was felt by both management and the M.W.A Executive that ‘Scarboro’ has no reason to take backwater from anybody in the matter of feminine pulchritude. So, as was said at the start, it looks as if we’ll be ‘in’ there with a contestant that will take some beating.³⁴

As Patrizia Gentile argues in her study of beauty contests in Canada, “One of the underlying functions of the Miss War Worker contest was to facilitate a ‘friendly’ competition among the munitions plants in Toronto.”³⁵ Thus, selecting the most beautiful representative of each company was an important part of ensuring success and securing company status. The pre-contest predictions of success among GECO contestants in 1942 were not misplaced, and the post-contest commentary continued to express the desirability of having employees at least as beautiful as those employed elsewhere:

Our Scarboro contingent in their natty white uniforms with the embroidered Geco diamond made a very favorable impression, if one can judge from comments heard. Our girls survived several eliminations—we had four left in the last twenty-five—and therefore gave the other contestants formidable opposition. We admit being somewhat prejudiced, but we still think our girls were the smartest.³⁶

³⁴ “Attention All Ye Maidens Fair Fame And Fortune Ye May Share,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 1 no. 7, June 20, 1942, 3, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

³⁵ Gentile, “Queen of the Maple Leaf,” 131.

³⁶ “K. Russell, Finalist in Beauty Contest,” *The Fusilier*, vol. 1 no. 10, August 1, 1942, 1, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

This interpretation of the event celebrated the display and positive evaluation of women's femininity and beauty. Women's work uniforms, occasionally the subject of critique, were praised instead. The "elimination" organization of the contest was also highlighted: women were progressively cut from the competition until only the winners remained.

Other war plants also expressed competitive pride in the ability of employees to be judged beautiful, whether at local contests or at Miss War Worker. Photographs of the finalists were usually featured prominently, along with details about their lives and affirmations that they were indeed the most beautiful, regardless of who won. In each year that Miss War Worker was held, *The Commando* featured the winner of DIL's Miss Ajax (and, in 1943 and 1944, her "Court of Beauty," or runners up) on the cover of one issue, with additional coverage inside the newsletter. Publishing carefully posed photos of the beauty contestants allowed not only those who had attended contest events to view and judge their faces and bodies, but provided the same opportunity to anyone reading the newsletter. Community members, then, had the opportunity to judge for themselves the beauty and femininity of those women chosen to represent them. Women workers' attractiveness was valued and displayed, and perceived as an achievement. Women's participation in the contests was clearly approved of and considered respectable by their employers. As Donica Belisle puts it in her study of company magazine coverage of saleswomen's beauty contest participation,

By featuring photographs of beauty contestants in store magazines, and especially on their covers... both Simpson's and the HBS suggested that it was appropriate for female employees to parade their bodies and compete for beauty titles. Through their magazines, they implied that women's

beauty could be measured and objectified, and they encouraged their female staff to cultivate a slim, poised, and agreeable appearance.³⁷

Belisle's argument holds for wartime workplaces, too. However, while saleswomen needed to look good in order to help stores sell goods and impress customers, war workers only needed to look good in order to sell the idea of factories as an appropriate place for women, where femininity would not be threatened. War workers' attractiveness did not help support the sale of ammunition, but it did allow management to recruit effectively and to publicly defend their employment of women in industrial contexts. War plant management's explicit support and celebration of their employees' participation and success in these contests communicated the respectability of the activity, as well as pressure for women to care about and participate in beauty culture.³⁸ This reinforced the message already found in the newsletters, through advice about beauty culture and images of war workers that match the glamorous, woman war worker iconography of the period.

The community pride evident in *The Commando* shows attitudes towards contest participation were positive: "That Ajax has its share of pulchritude is evidenced by this array of pictures of its recent beauty winners. Charming and gracious, they are truly representative of the girls employed on our lines... Worthy winners, they are to be congratulated."³⁹ This comment emphasized that not only were the contest participants attractive, but that all female employees were as well. Further coverage in the newsletter

³⁷ Belisle, "Sexual Spectacles," 151.

³⁸ The uniform celebration of beauty pageants, participants, and winners also acted to silence the idea of disinterest in or dislike of beauty culture.

³⁹ "A Queen of Beauty and Her Court," *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 1, August 1943, 1.

included an article describing the success of women from Ajax who were chosen as delegates. The descriptive prose focused on the consistent attractiveness of the elimination contest participants: “Not all winners but very attractive, are these luscious lovelies, all aspiring winners of the coveted Miss Ajax crown which they contested at the Recreation Centre.”⁴⁰ More than sixty women participated in Miss Ajax, and five were sent to represent Defence Industries Limited at Miss War Worker in 1943.

Beyond the praise and admiration of coworkers and friends, contest participants’ beauty was also rewarded tangibly. Reports of the results of Miss War Worker in local plant newsletters frequently described the prizes won by competitors in great detail, perhaps as a way of emphasizing and quantifying the success of the company’s female representatives; not only accolades but material wealth could be gained as a reward for physical performances of beauty and femininity. In its 1943 coverage of the contest, GECO’s *The Fusilier* noted prizes including cash and, in one case, a chest of silver.⁴¹ 1942 Miss Ajax winner and third place Miss War Worker competitor Irene Brayley received fifty pieces of silver in a walnut case and a cheque for \$25.⁴² In 1943, DIL employee Sadie Brown’s prize for her success at Miss War Worker was a “beautifully engraved sterling silver compact.”⁴³ Photos of contest winners in newsletters and newspaper coverage consistently showed women workers holding bouquets of flowers and wearing sashes, smaller prizes but still significant ones, given the particularly

⁴⁰ “Beauty Contenders,” *The Commando* vol. 2 no. 1, August 1943, 4.

⁴¹ “Scarboro Girls Prize-Winners...” *The Fusilier*, vol. 2 no. 9, July 31, 1943, 3, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

⁴² “Irene Brayley Wins Third Prize in “Miss War Worker” Contest,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 2, July 20, 1942, 2.

⁴³ Midge, “Powder Puffs,” *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 1, August 1943, 13.

gendered nature of flowers and sashes as gifts. Even the act of posing for photographs wearing a sash and cradling flowers helped winners to continue performing femininity. Tangible rewards given to war worker beauty pageant winners also provided an opportunity for them to express patriotic sentiments. In DeHavilland aircraft's *The Mosquito*, 1944 Miss War Worker winner Dorothy Stone explained her plan to marry after the war and her intention continue working at DeHavilland in the meantime: "I've got a job to do, like others... and I'd like to do my share 100 per cent. I'm going to put my prize money in the bank or in war bonds and save it for my future home."⁴⁴ The winner in 1943, Dorothy Dales, had strikingly similar plans: "'The prize money goes into war bonds,' she said thoughtfully. 'After the war I'll be able to finance quite a trousseau with it.'"⁴⁵ Connecting rewards for evidence of femininity and beauty with the future establishment of a family suggests that lauding women's beautiful bodies contributed to the view of women's wartime work as temporary. It also strengthened the perception of war workers as future wives and mothers. Alternatively, substantial cash prizes could also suggest a motivation other than interest in beauty culture or feelings of patriotism for women's involvement in the contest, something that is never suggested in the print coverage of the events.

War worker beauty contests' celebration of beautiful, feminine bodies also served wartime patriotism in another way: by raising morale and providing recreation. In the June 1944 issue of *The Commando*, a writer opined: "In these days of ration, restrictions

⁴⁴ "Dorothy Stone Captures 'War Worker' Crown," *The Mosquito*, vol. 1 no. 1, August 15, 1944, 6, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-4, AO.

⁴⁵ June Callwood, "Contest Judges Turn Down Blondes; Brunettes Steal Police Games' Show," *Globe and Mail*, July 19, 1943, 4.

and priorities, there is still no priority on smiling, pretty girls and Ajax has more than its share of them.”⁴⁶ The ability of women’s physical beauty, cheerfulness, and femininity to uplift people despite the challenges posed by total war on the home front was recognized and valued.⁴⁷ The contests could also serve as a welcome distraction, an entertaining respite from wartime work and worry. Writing in 1943 and recalling the 1942 contest, one newsletter writer emphasized the strong interest and personal stake non-participating employees had taken in the event:

Few events, before or since, have equalled the enthusiasm which was generated then. Nearly every line and department had representatives entered and they all turned out on masse to cheer for their favourites... As much enthusiasm and interest is anticipated this year...⁴⁸

Significantly, in 1942, all three of the elimination events at Defence Industries Limited had included other entertainment as well – at one event, a fashion show presented by Eaton’s and featuring “twenty beautiful models, and orchestra, and a dance team,” and at the others, “vaudeville skits and a burlesque on men’s fashions.”⁴⁹ These events were, the paper claimed, extremely popular among community members, allowing workers and the local community in Ajax to enjoy themselves, to relax outside of working hours but still remain connected to their workplace community, to demonstrate patriotism, and to become invested in the beauty queen selection process. Although the winners were chosen by judges, not spectators, witnessing the selection process still allowed audiences to participate by watching and cheering on their peers. Employees at Defence Industries

⁴⁶ “Beauty Contest To Be Held June 15 & 19 at Rec. Centre,” *The Commando*, vol. 2 no. 11, June 1944, 5.

⁴⁷ For more on attractive female munitions workers as morale-boosters, see chapter 5 in this dissertation. Both pinups and visits with recovering veterans fit this pattern as well.

⁴⁸ “Recreation Department Seeks Candidates to Contest ‘Miss War Worker’ Title at Toronto Police Games,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 18, July 1943, 2.

⁴⁹ “Employees Enter Contest for “Miss War Worker’,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 1, July 1, 1942, 2.

Limited, then, had participated in the contest as enthusiastic spectators, observing and evaluating the bodies of their co-workers and expressing excitement and pride at knowing those who were competing. Even in the first year that war worker beauty contests were held, print media emphasized the pleasure and interest of the spectators at the preliminary Miss Ajax contests – including photos of the spectators and judges, both women and men, with captions noting their applause and encouragement of the women competing: “Rapt interest in the decision of the judges is displayed on the faces of these onlookers. Each of the three contests were well attended by enthused audiences...”⁵⁰ Even children from the community were shown enjoying the contest – the newsletter contained an image of three young boys watching the Miss Ajax eliminations: “Interest in the recent beauty contests wasn’t confined to grown-ups,” it noted.⁵¹ The recreational and morale-boosting effects of war worker beauty pageants suggest that women’s beauty was viewed as a commodity to be valued, validated, and consumed as spectacle.

Pageants, and women’s participation in them, served as recreation both for the women themselves and for their workplace communities – potentially pleasurable activities that could help to raise morale and reduce anxieties around young, white women’s increased presence in the industrial, waged wartime workforce. Celebrating women’s beautiful bodies also contributed to stimulating war plant recruitment by making factory labour less intimidating and the war worker role more desirable through its association with women of high social value and status. After the contest was over,

⁵⁰ “Employees Enter Contest for “Miss War Worker’,” *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 1, July 1, 1942, 2.

⁵¹ *The Commando*, vol. 1 no. 2, July 20, 1942, 5. The caption continued: “The Lynham boys and John Daggett are pictured here as they watched a tense moment in the career of some favourite as she paraded before the judges. Their groans as their choice was eliminated were heart-rending.”

some companies attempted to capitalize on the positive associations between women and war work created by the contests to boost employee recruitment. In 1942, an ad promoting employment of young women at the John Inglis Company appeared in the same edition of *The Globe and Mail* as reporting on the beauty contest – just five pages after coverage of the event.⁵² Under the headline “Girls! Inglis Needs You for Vital War Work,” the ad explained: “If you are between 18 and 35, and single or a soldier’s wife, you can have an important part in helping to shorten the war, as an Inglis war worker.”⁵³ Selling women’s war work by associating it with women war workers deemed to be feminine and attractive might have helped to make industrial labour less intimidating and more exciting to young women. In her analysis of Miss War Worker, Patrizia Gentile refers to a memo circulated among executives at Inglis noting the importance of the contest as publicity for the company and as a chance to attract workers, which were sorely needed: “If a ‘frivolous contest during wartime’ proved to be a successful recruiting drive strategy to fill the assembly lines at his munitions plant, then [Inglis executive A.L. Ainsworth] was willing to do whatever promotion was needed.”⁵⁴

Participation in war worker beauty contests could also be positive for women, providing both fun and a boost in confidence, in particular through the affirmation of their heterosexual desirability – a quality which print media during the war constantly reminded women to worry about.⁵⁵ Newspaper descriptions of Miss War Worker winners

⁵² “Girls! Inglis Needs You For Vital War Work,” *Globe and Mail*, July 20, 1942, 9.

⁵³ This also reveals the age range and demographics that Inglis was most interested in – young, single women, and the wives of soldiers.

⁵⁴ Gentile, “Queen of the Maple Leaf,” 129.

⁵⁵ See in particular beauty ads in chapter 3 of this dissertation. Also, Belisle, on working women’s longing to be perceived as “more than drudges” by their coworkers. See Belisle, “Sexual Spectacles.”

frequently emphasized their heterosexuality. During the 1943 contest, “As part of their careful scrutiny, the judges asked to see the hands of the finalists and found six of the war workers wore engagement rings...”⁵⁶ Here, the wearing of an engagement ring helped contestants to perform heterosexual femininity. The image of the woman war worker as a heterosexual icon was connected to the real engagements of women competing in Miss War Worker.⁵⁷ In 1944, the winners of both Miss War Worker and Miss Toronto were profiled under the headline, “2 Beauty Prize Winners Are Engaged to Soldiers.”⁵⁸ The 1943 winner of Miss War Worker, Dorothy Dales, was also engaged to a soldier named “Bud.” Media coverage of Dales’ win strongly foregrounded her engagement to the lieutenant, describing her, for example, as “marking time at Research Enterprises Limited waiting for her fiancé... to return from overseas.”⁵⁹ Associating beautiful, feminine women with enlisted men served to draw connections between celebrated performances of both femininity and masculinity – women were beautiful and men were brave. Further, having chosen an enlisted man as a romantic partner suggested patriotism and support for the armed forces. Canadian women were encouraged to maintain their physical beauty and femininity throughout the war, in order to sustain the morale of male troops – having an attractive heterosexual partner to spend the postwar period with would, it was hoped and expected, inspire men to continue fighting. It is significant not only that both of

⁵⁶ June Callwood, “Contest Judges Turn Down Blondes; Brunettes Steal Police Games Show,” *Globe and Mail*, July 19, 1943, 4. It is possible to speculate about whether they asked to see women’s hands in order to look for engagement or wedding rings, or, instead, to scrutinize the cleanliness and softness of women workers’ hands, since this was a major concern (see chapters 3 and 4 for more on worries about femininity and hands).

⁵⁷ For more on the woman war worker as a heterosexual icon, see chapter 5 in this dissertation.

⁵⁸ “2 Beauty Prize Winners Are Engaged to Soldiers,” *Globe and Mail*, July 17, 1944, 13.

⁵⁹ June Callwood, “Contest Judges Turn Down Blondes; Brunettes Steal Police Games’ Show,” *Globe and Mail*, July 19, 1943, 4.

winner in 1944 – Miss War Worker Dorothy Stone and Miss Toronto Carolyn Ryan - were in romantic relationships with soldiers, but also that this was so strongly foregrounded in news coverage. It served to underscore their heterosexuality – further reassurance that masculine labour had not affected the sexual appeal of Miss War Worker. It also suggests the appeal of men in uniform. As idealized masculine figures, imbued with symbolic ideas about honour, courage, and service to nation, male servicemen were a particularly strong and respectable heterosexual romantic partner choice for women. The attractiveness of men in uniform to heterosexual women extended far beyond war workers - over 48,000 war brides overseas chose to marry Canadian men in uniform.⁶⁰ The rapid rate of wartime marriage more broadly signalled the important role of romance as a morale booster and a way of coping with the stresses of wartime.⁶¹

The emphasis on women war workers' beauty in the context of these contests, though almost universally celebratory and positive, could also be problematic. For some socialist feminist historians, analyzing these events with the history of women's oppression in mind makes the accolades given to war workers seem more sinister. In Joan Sangster's work on beauty pageants for working women in Canada, the problematic and oppressive nature of beauty culture in workplaces with gendered hierarchies is clearly revealed.⁶² Although the actual labour performed by women war workers was sometimes mentioned in news articles covering the contests, the much greater focus on women's appearance as an achievement and as a significant part of their value as people shows that

⁶⁰ Ladouceur and Spence, *Blackouts to Bright Lights*, xi. See also Horosko, "Deliciously Detailed Narratives"; Wicks, *Promise You'll Take Care of My Daughter*.

⁶¹ Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers*, 121-123.

⁶² Sangster, "Queen of the Picket Line."

these women were being scrutinized and evaluated in ways their male coworkers simply were not. This points to a foundational difference in understandings of men and women's value, and contributes to a trivialization of women war workers' labour. That coworkers, especially men and even management, felt comfortable watching, judging, and commenting on the bodies of female employees, even to the point of pressuring them to compete in beauty contests, is evidence of a power imbalance. The contests also rewarded a narrow vision of beauty, a process that could negatively affect women whose appearance did not match the ideal – and the ideal was young and white. There were few women of colour among the ranks of Ontario's war workers, and there is no evidence that any non-white women participated in Miss War Worker. Winner of Miss John Inglis 1943, June Pattinson Lake, reported, "I was excited when I won, yes. The only thing I didn't like was that I never wore make-up to work, and after I won they told me I had to wear make-up to work. I guess so I looked a bit better."⁶³ Pattison, despite her success in her plant contest, was not beautiful enough on her own; perhaps her employer wanted her to look particularly feminine and beautiful in order to motivate and inspire other women workers to emulate her. In these ways, despite the positive and celebratory aspects of war worker beauty contests, the events could distract from women's labour and skills, instead drawing focus to their bodies as ornamental parts of gendered spectacle and emphasizing their role as cogs in the machine of heterosexuality.

While the coworkers of beauty contest participants had the opportunity to enjoy the pageants as recreational and morale-boosting spectacles, their close surveillance of

⁶³ Sobel and Meurer, *Working at Inglis*, 75.

women's bodies could also be intrusive, aggressive, or unwelcome. Spectators could thus exercise power both through a positive gaze and through oppressive scrutiny. Several women who participated in the contests reported that they had been uninterested in taking part or were unlikely to take part, before having been identified as a possible beauty queen by a co-worker – often a male co-worker – or having been pressured in some other way in the course of their involvement in the contests. In the case of 1944 winner Dorothy Stone, a senior male employee intervened: “Dorothy had been prevailed upon to enter the contest by Robert Goodings who has charge of the Personnel Division on night shift.”⁶⁴ This showed that assessing the beauty of one's co-workers was acceptable in this context: a male supervisor looked at Stone, judged her attractiveness, and encouraged her to use her beauty to represent DeHavilland publicly. The 1942 winner, Dorothy Linham of Research Enterprises Limited, admitted that she would not have entered without the intervention of coworkers either – in her case, female coworkers.

Dorothy Linham did more than win a beauty contest, however. She was featured in an advertisement for Palmolive soap after her win, under the headline, “Me – enter a beauty contest? Don't be silly, I said!”⁶⁵ The ad copy went on to explain, in Linham's voice,

Beauty contests were the farthest thing from my mind... but the girls at the plant kept egging me on. I just laughed at them; Listen, I argued, be reasonable, who in the world would look twice at me since I've become a

⁶⁴ “Dorothy Stone Captures “War Worker” Crown,” *The Mosquito*, vol. 1 no. 1, August 15, 1944, Fred W. Hotson fonds, F 4531, box 3, file F 4531-25-2-4, AO. Note that in its new format, *The Mosquito* began numbering its newsletters from Volume 1 again.

⁶⁵ “Me – Enter a Beauty Contest? Don't be silly, I said!” Palmolive, *Globe and Mail*, April 7, 1943, 10. This ad also appeared in *Chatelaine*, March 1943, 29. See also Molyneaux, “Temporary Heroes,” 89.

‘no-time-to-fuss-soap-and-water-girl.’ Anyway, I’ve got a little contest with the Axis right here on my inspection bench!⁶⁶

These words, attributed to Linham in the context of ad copy, further demonstrate social concerns about the effects of a war worker’s busy schedule on her appearance. The ad indicates that with less time to spend on a complex beauty regimen, women like Linham might be afraid that men would not “look twice” at them – or encourages women to nurture this fear, if they are not already. The abandonment of complex beauty routines was also defended in deference to a commitment to fighting the Axis. Although the ad does make reference to the importance of women like Linham’s wartime labour, it also communicates an underlying worry about remaining attractive and making time for beauty work. Palmolive’s advertisers were, in fact, subtly telling war workers that they should be concerned about fitting self-fashioning into their schedules. Of course, since this was an advertisement for Palmolive, the primary goal was to sell Palmolive’s soap product – so it is not surprising that the soap is presented as the solution to the war worker’s worries in the ad’s narrative. Luckily, the ad explained that women like Linham could rely on soap to keep their complexions in order. The tag line at the bottom of the ad read: “Now more than ever I trust Palmolive to keep me lovely – for him!”⁶⁷ This ad completes the connection between advertising featuring glamorous, hyperfeminine women war workers and actual women doing wartime labour. Linham’s beauty contest win secured her place as an attractive, feminine role model and appropriate aspirational

⁶⁶ “Me – Enter a Beauty Contest? Don’t be silly, I said!” Palmolive, *Globe and Mail*, April 7, 1943, 10. This ad also appeared in *Chatelaine*, March 1943, 29.

⁶⁷ Ibid. See a previous similar Palmolive ad, featuring a war worker, from October 1942, in which the tagline was a less heterosexually-focused “Now more than ever you need Palmolive to keep that schoolgirl complexion all over.” See “I’m a woman in a man’s world – But I’m still a woman!” Palmolive, *Chatelaine*, October 1942, 31. The same ad appeared in *Maclean’s*. See *Maclean’s*, November 15, 1942, 29.

figure for other women, from worker to winner to womanly glamour. Palmolive ran similar ads featuring other female war worker figures, as well as a different ad depicting an unnamed war worker and the headline “I’m a woman in a man’s world – But I’m still a woman!”⁶⁸ Linham, however, was a real war worker who truly won a beauty title dressed in her Research Enterprises Limited coveralls.⁶⁹ Her appeal could also have served directly to recruit women into war work in that her story could be reassuring and exciting to those considering a war job but concerned about being perceived as masculine or unattractive. Perhaps Linham was selected for the Palmolive ad because of her apparent interest in beauty culture. In newspaper coverage of her Miss War Worker win, Linham was described as “[operating] her own private beauty parlor. ‘I do my own hair. I work out my own cosmetic combinations. That way I feel I can get what I want’.”⁷⁰ The combination of this headline and the brief article’s focus on Linham’s self-fashioning firmly positioned her more as a beauty icon than a factory worker.

Linham’s coworkers were not the only ones to offer opinions and advice on appearance and beauty contest participation. At the qualifying contest at the Aluminum Company of Canada, held on a platform outside the plant, coworkers gathered, watched, and shouted advice: “From across the street their fellow-workers cheered and offered friendly advice to judges and judged alike.” Public commentary on women’s bodies, then, was acceptable and perceived to be helpful and friendly, despite the possibility that it was unwelcome. Spectators even provided specific pointers for the contestants,

⁶⁸ “I’m a woman in a man’s world – But I’m still a woman!” Palmolive, *Chatelaine*, October 1942, 31, and *Maclean’s*, November 15, 1942, 29.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ “‘Miss War Worker’ Makes Own Beauty,” *Toronto Daily Star*, July 20, 1942, 3.

including shouting “Show your dimples, Isobel!” at “Pretty, blue-eyed Isobel Taylor” who, an article in the *Globe and Mail* reported, “obeyed.”⁷¹ Whether they provided encouragement or judgment, contest spectators certainly participated in the events in ways more active than simply watching. These narratives of beauty contest participation show that just as looking at and judging images of women war workers was normalized, looking at, judging, and publicly commenting on women’s bodies was a common and acceptable activity.

In media coverage of war worker beauty contests, the balance between reporting on the actual wartime labour done by participants and commentary on their bodies was skewed heavily towards the latter. This had the effect of trivializing women’s position as workers, associating them primarily with their social roles as objects of gaze, praise, and scrutiny. Sports writer Jim Coleman’s account of his experience judging the 1943 competitions is telling, both about the tone at the event itself and about the heterosexual and patriotic uses to which women workers’ bodies were put. Coleman described the narrow physical space between the panel of judges and the large crowd of spectators: “The judges in these contests operated at a distinct disadvantage. They were separated only by a thin strip of open ground from the 20,000 customers, whose hot and angry breath frizzled the hair at the base of the judges’ skulls. Apart from the occasional coarse jocularities and snarls of disapproval, the crowd was indulgent, however...”⁷² This description ignores the obvious ways in which power flowed through judges, who were granted the ability to define and enforce norms about feminine beauty and gendered

⁷¹ “War Worker’s Dimples Help in Beauty Contest,” *Globe and Mail*, July 14, 1942, 4.

⁷² Jim Coleman, *Globe and Mail*, July 19, 1943, 14.

performance. Women participating in the contest had the power to command attention or even desire from spectators, while the “indulgent” crowd had the leisured position of having paid to look at, enjoy, and evaluate the bodies of contestants. Coleman suggested that he differed in opinion from the other judges when selecting the winner; the other judges, he surmised, took into account contestants’ personalities, smiles, and manicures. He described his own selection criteria thus:

We think only that she should be a curvesome, oomphish young lady who wears a bathing suit in a manner which suggests she was born wearing it. We think that her eyes should shine like the Eddystone Lighthouse. We think that a picture of her should be sent to every young man in the Armed Services of our country. If every picture should bear the following caption in bold, black type: ‘Soldier – THIS Is What You Are Fighting For!’ The war would end very soon.⁷³

Coleman’s assessment emphasized the contestants’ heterosexual appeal, and suggested that the morale and motivation of male soldiers fighting overseas was at least partially dependent on, or could at least be influenced by, the promise of access to attractive, feminine women’s bodies in Canada. The assurance of heterosexual relationships was held out as a reward for men’s service. Granted, the tone of Coleman’s piece is humorous and intentionally exaggerated. Still, women *were* encouraged to send photos of themselves to servicemen, an activity argued to help maintain the morale of fighting men. Looking at images of women’s beautiful bodies was an enjoyable activity, a reminder of the men’s own masculinity and power, and a token of the comfort and sexual rewards that awaited them at home.⁷⁴

⁷³ Jim Coleman, *Globe and Mail*, July 19, 1943, 14.

⁷⁴ See for example “Visit Him Every Week in Snapshots,” Kodak Film, *Toronto Star*, July 9, 1943, 10.

Coleman's reference to swimsuits indicates he may have been commenting on Miss Toronto contestants, who did compete in swimwear. However, comparisons between the winners of the two contests were drawn in news coverage of the contest results each year the contest was held. Each year, Miss War Worker winners actually exchanged clothing with Miss Toronto and posed for photographs. Each year, the accompanying copy clearly drew comparisons between the two women, praising the beauty and femininity of both equally. In 1942, a photo of Miss War Worker Dorothy Linham of Research Enterprises Limited and Miss Toronto Marie Forester of the Bell Telephone Company was captioned,

‘Miss Toronto’ and ‘Miss War Worker’ stand side by side so that you can compare their charms... They trade costumes to prove that if Marie Forester had competed as a war worker and Dorothy Linham had competed as a bathing beauty, each would have outshone all competition just the same.⁷⁵

Associating the two winners with one another and claiming that each was equally beautiful helped to support the idea that war workers were not being masculinized by their industrial work. Their bodies were not being compromised by factory labour and proximity with men and machines, and despite the ‘handicap’ of a factory uniform, women's bodies could still be deemed attractive. Further, since Miss Toronto had been a local icon of femininity since the 1920s, associating the more newly minted beauty queen with her added status and respectability. In fact, Miss War Worker remained so feminine that she was nearly identical to the winner of the “regular” beauty contest. Newspaper readers might even forget that Miss War Worker was a worker at all, or conflate the two

⁷⁵ “‘Miss Toronto’ and ‘Miss War Worker’ Chosen at Police Diamond Jubilee Field Day,” *Globe and Mail*, July 20, 1942, 4. For similar coverage, see “Red-headed Freckled Accountant and War Plant Inspector are 1942’s Beauty Queens,” *Toronto Star*, July 20, 1942, 3.

beauty queens, since both looked so similar. Photos of the second and third prize winners in each contest also appeared side by side, suggesting a visual comparison across contests even more strongly.⁷⁶ In her study of Miss War Worker, Gentile suggests that, “In the case of the Miss War Worker contest, parading in bathing suits and evening gowns would have detracted from the war effort.”⁷⁷ However, while the war worker contest did evoke a more modest image of femininity than Miss Toronto, the regular annual publication of a photo of Miss War Worker in a swimsuit suggests that confirming the attractiveness of her body was more important than strict adherence to patriotic modesty.

In 1943, Miss War Worker Dorothy Dales and Miss Toronto Marion Saver traded clothing and were deemed to be equally beautiful. The newspaper provided a detailed description of Dales’ body:

Miss War Worker is a tiny thing, with dimples, and blue eyes and long black lashes. She stands a bit over five foot four, including the wealth of almost-black hair that covers her shoulders. She weighs 120, lost 22 pounds when Bud first went overseas, and has a 22-inch waistline, 24-inch bust and 36-inch hips.⁷⁸

Close scrutiny of Dales would have been necessary to provide such a description.⁷⁹ In 1944, Miss Toronto Carolyn Ryan and Miss War Worker Dorothy Stone were, the paper claimed, “Almost identical in size, proportions and personalities.” Once again, the two posed for photographs and were deemed to be extremely similar: “In exchanged costumes

⁷⁶ “Red-headed Freckled Accountant and War Plant Inspector are 1942’s Beauty Queens,” *Toronto Star*, July 20, 1942, 3.

⁷⁷ Gentile, “Queen of the Maple Leaf,” 128.

⁷⁸ June Callwood, “Contest Judges Turn Down Blondes; Brunettes Steal Police Games’ Show,” *Globe and Mail*, July 19, 1943, 4.

⁷⁹ The piece also described Miss Toronto, Marion Saver as follows: “A bit over five foot six and weighing 130 pounds, Miss Toronto has long light brown hair and eyes that change from blue to green and back again when she laughs.” Saver was 18 years old, and Dales 19. June Callwood, “Contest Judges Turn Down Blondes; Brunettes Steal Police Games’ Show,” *Globe and Mail*, July 19, 1943, 4.

are Miss Toronto wearing Miss War Worker's togs; while Miss War Worker is equally at ease in Miss Toronto's snug-fitting bathing suit." The continual affirmation of the similarities between winners of Miss War Worker and Miss Toronto shows that a very narrow version of beauty was being rewarded each year. Winners had in common a number of characteristics: they were young, white, single, able-bodied, and assumed to be heterosexual, as well as often having similar body types (small, thin, slender) and occasionally even the same hair colour (brunettes were by far the most successful). Further, the emphasis on similarities between the two women in media each year de-emphasized the differences – in particular, sidelining attention to Miss War Worker's *work*.

In contrast to women war workers, male war workers' bodies were simply not watched as closely or evaluated as openly. This is further evidence of a power differential between male and female workers, even in a period when some have suggested that women made important gains in the labour market. After the first Miss War Worker contest, GECO's *The Fusilier* reported that, "Now that the girls of 'Scarboro' have had all the fun of a beauty contest, a popularity contest for the men is being mooted." Apparently no male popularity contest was necessary because of the overwhelming preference for one male employee, "Don Sinclair of the messenger staff."⁸⁰ The recognition of men's complementary attractiveness to women is telling of the centrality of heterosexuality to socialization at war plants, but perhaps even more revealing is the fact that an imagined contest for men would be based on popularity, and not just

⁸⁰ "K. Russell, Finalist in Beauty Contest," *The Fusilier*, vol. 1 no. 10, August 1, 1942, 1, General Engineering Company (Canada) fonds, F 2082, box 3, folder F 2082-1-1-11, AO.

appearance. Men's bodies made up only part of their heterosexual appeal, while women's bodies seem to have been much more central to their perceived attractiveness.

Alternatively, perhaps men's "popularity" was based partially on their bodies, but they were not expected to be *beautiful*, because beauty was perceived to be a uniquely feminine attribute.

The value and impact of war worker beauty contests extended beyond individual and community morale-boosting, and beyond its recreational utility and function as part of a charity fundraising event. War worker beauty contests contributed to the branding of young, white, middle-class women's participation in waged labour as an acceptable gendered activity that did not threaten binary gender roles, the femininity of women's bodies, families centered around heterosexual couples, or the dominance of men in the wage-earning world. Some positive effects followed from the contests: participants gained significant praise and attention from spectators, coworkers, and friends, as well as having the chance to win tangible prizes. Some women enjoyed the opportunity to appear feminine and take part in beauty culture. As recreational events, the contests provided a popular and welcome diversion from the stresses and strains of wartime on the Canadian home front.

However, as reflections of gendered and sexualized visual iconography, war worker beauty queens contributed to the trivialization of women's role as workers, and supported the notion that young white women's primary value lay in the attractiveness of their bodies and in their ability to convincingly perform femininity. The contests also entailed significant and sometimes intrusive scrutiny of and commentary on women's

bodies, and rewarded only a narrow vision of beauty. Because they could be both positive and problematic, the legacy of war worker beauty contests is mixed. Overall, the combined effect of both the positive and negative aspects of the contests was to cement the connection between the iconic, glamorous woman war worker of the visual landscape with the living bodies of workers who participated in the contest. In Dorothy Linham's case, her body appeared as the idealized war worker figure in the magazine, as an actual contestant and winner, and, in day to day life, as an inspector at REL. Miss War Worker contestants and winners, like the photographs and illustrations of war workers in magazine ads, were clean, thin, white, young, often small, often brunette, and always smiling and beautiful. Although there were likely many women who felt no connection to Rosie, Ronnie, or any other glamour-worker, at least some women chose to perform the specific version of beauty and femininity that became so loaded with meaning during wartime. War worker beauty contests provide revealing evidence about attitudes towards women's bodies, labour, and gender during wartime. They also demonstrate the ways that viewing women's bodies was constructed as a leisure activity and a way to build community pride. Instead of demonstrating their industrial skills or intellectual aptitudes, women paraded before crowds and were encouraged to reveal dimples. The contests powerfully show how much more value was placed on women war workers' physical appearance and attractiveness than on their abilities, or even their patriotic allegiances.

Conclusion

On International Women’s Day in 2016, a familiar face appeared on social media sites: Rosie the Riveter’s likeness sprang up in photographs, cartoons, and other images that adapted or appropriated the beautiful woman war worker trope. Particularly popular on a day with roots focused on women’s labour, contemporary images used to celebrate ranged from women styled and posing as Rosie to cartoon pugs sporting polka dot bandanas to Rosie-esque drawings with Portuguese captions to Rosie tattoos and far far beyond.¹ The image of the attractive yet powerful woman worker continues to captivate – and to be transformed. In fact, glamorous woman war worker imagery reimagined through a contemporary lens can be easily found online. On any given day, there are numerous examples among Instagram posts tagged with the hashtag “#wecandoit.”

During the war, beautiful woman war worker imagery contributed to the construction of women in the munitions and other war industries as Other, temporary sojourners whose time in the factory was perceived both as a potential threat and as a charming, short-lived novelty. This complex legacy is rarely captured in today’s reinterpretations.² Instead, war worker symbolism connotes a mixture of strength, power, and unabashed physical beauty and femininity. As third wave feminists increasingly

¹ For a few examples, see: bluidelady, Instagram post, March 8 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BCt5e52xowe/>; Danie Bush (daniebush), Instagram post, March 8 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BCwBg0EPcFp/>; Ricardo A. Guerrero III (rag3artist), Instagram post, March 8 2016, https://www.instagram.com/p/BCtmMyBmD_L/; Cliffs Tattoo, Instagram post, March 8 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BCvZ7eJTOG3/>; Carmen Daf (carmendaf.art), Instagram post, March 8 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BCs2dWKpaSq/>. This is an extremely small sample of what appeared on March 8, 2016, and new posts continue to appear with the hashtag #wecandoit every day.

² For other ways that this imagery has been reconceptualized and re-used, including in political campaigns, see Knaff, “Epilogue: “These Girls Are Strong – Bind Them Securely!” World War II Images of Women in the Postwar World,” in *Beyond Rosie the Riveter*, 163-175.

embrace and promote the destigmatization of self-fashioning and of voluntary participation in beauty culture, it seems that Rosie imagery continues to resonate, perhaps in part because it accommodates glamorous and feminine physical presentation. Yet, modern performance of war worker beauty is more complicated than ever: the “Adult Riveting Darling Costume” sold by [partycity.com](http://www.partycity.com) remakes the woman war worker once again, retaining her red and white polka dot bandana, but trading fitted coveralls for a “royal blue romper with an American flag patch” (see figure 40). The costume’s description suggests, “Roll up your sleeves and show the boys what you can do in this sexy Rosie costume,” reminding customers both that Rosie is still a heterosexual figure and that the knee high white socks and red patent platform pumps shown on the tall, thin, white model are not included with their purchase.³ While some modern viewers might be horrified by this “new” sexy version of what is now understood in a historically flattened way as an image of feminist power, viewing it alongside the photographs of Canada’s Miss War Worker winners posing in swimsuits after their beauty contest successes suggests significant continuity. The relationship between femininity, beauty, image, and power is still deeply contested and complicated.

Image Redacted for Copyright Reasons

Figure 40. Adult Riveting Darling Costume, www.partycity.com.

³ Adult Riveting Darling Costume, Costume #5783, <http://www.partycity.com/product/adult+riveting+darling+costume.do?refType=&navSet=109916> (accessed April 27, 2016). In April 2016, the costume was advertised at a reduced sale price of \$35.00 USD. The same costume is available to Canadian customers at www.partycity.ca.

During the Second World War, Canadian women war workers marched into both factories and the visual landscape. This dissertation has explored imagery and visual discourses featuring and connected to women war workers, showing that it is impossible to understand this imagery without considering, at once, the intersections of labour, gender, whiteness, beauty culture, bodies, media, consumer culture, advertising, and sexuality. The iconic figure of the woman war worker reflects the complexity of these intersections. This work has further argued that women workers were primarily viewed through the lens of their bodies, constantly encouraged and pressured to participate in beauty culture in order to erase the effects of industrial work and to maintain both their own morale and that of Canadian men and Canadian society more broadly. Beauty and femininity were highly valued qualities, and yet they simultaneously “othered” women workers’ bodies, defining their waged work as temporary and exceptional. By exploring visual representations of women war workers as well as giving attention to some women’s experiences of self-fashioning, this study has shown that image and performance are mutually entangled.

Building on existing work that considered images of women in one publication or considered women workers at one factory, this dissertation has compared representations of workers from different war plants, in different media, and across different publications, focusing on the power of visual representations and highlighting the importance of beauty culture during wartime. This process has exposed continuities across media in visual and verbal messages about women workers’ bodies, their participation in beauty culture, their contradictory vulnerability and power, and their connections to both whiteness and heterosexuality. By tracing and connecting similar

messages about women war workers in magazines, company newsletters, archival photos, and newspapers, this work has shown that the beautiful woman war worker was a visual icon, symbolizing tensions, worries, and hopes around gender, labour, and race in wartime, as well as in the postwar period, when war workers' presumed next step into white motherhood was of particular importance to the national project. This study has also filled in a previously existing knowledge gap around the details of beauty culture in wartime industrial workplaces, from on-site salons to keep fit classes to turban tying tutorials, thanks to newsletter sources whose full potential had not yet been tapped. Together, these contributions help to advance the study of gender and labour on the Canadian home front, as well as suggesting that untold histories of beauty and the body still hold a great deal of promise.

Scholars have barely begun to tackle the topic of women, war, and beauty in Canada, and much remains to be explored. For example, there is tantalizing evidence that a separate "Miss War Worker" contest took place on the Prairies. Could there have been a range of war worker beauty contests across the country? A series of archival photographs shows five women visiting an Ontario plant wearing beauty queens' sashes over their warm winter coats; the sashes read, "Miss Fabric," "Miss Assembly," "Miss Sheet Metal," "Miss Prairie Airways," and "Miss War Worker."⁴ The existence of war worker beauty queens defined by their area of employment, combined with the fact that the Prairie Miss War Worker sported a crown (a prize never handed out at the Toronto

⁴ Images and accession document held by the Canadian Museum of Civilization – accession number 2007-87. Accession documents describe the group as "The Miss War Worker Moose Jaw Delegation," and suggest that the images document a visit to Prince Albert in 1942 as well as possibly a visit to CanCar in Thunder Bay.

event), suggests that this contest was entirely separate from the Ontario-based, Toronto Police Association-sponsored event that was the focus of chapter 6. Exploring local archival collections in regions outside of Ontario where war work took place could allow the identification of still other wartime beauty contests, which would demonstrate the cross-Canada power of the iconic woman war worker image even more strongly.

Further research into other elements of the history of beauty culture in wartime Canada also remains to be done. For example, a closer look at the role of beauty in discourse surrounding and defending women's participation in Canada's various armed services is long overdue. An analysis of the uniform and grooming expectations for Canada's wartime nurses would complement excellent existing work on the history of nursing more generally. Canada's civilian women, whose wartime experiences have been considered least of all, should also be studied further. How did housewives' experiences of purchasing and providing clothing for themselves and their families shift during the war? How were Canadian fashion trends affected by rationing? Finally, what can we learn from a closer look at postwar transformations of women's clothing from functional yet feminine to "fluffy"?⁵

More broadly still, Canada lacks a general history of beauty culture along the lines of Kathy Peiss' groundbreaking survey, *Hope in a Jar*, which could explore both unique Canadian cosmetic and fashion styles as well as the relationship between Canadian and American beauty trends. There is critical work to be done in narrating and

⁵ This wording taken from Pierson, *They're Still Women After All*, 215-220; her conclusion is titled "When Fluffy Clothes Replaced the Uniform."

analyzing the relationship Canadians have had with the idea of bodily beauty, including how Canadian understandings and experiences connect to or contrast with American perspectives. Racialized beauty and whiteness must be examined in the Canadian context: the creation of a Heritage Minute featuring black beauty pioneer (and anti-segregationist) Viola Desmond in 2016 signals the possibilities and importance of this work.⁶ Cheryl Thompson's dissertation on black beauty products in Canadian history is also a major and encouraging step forward.⁷ Histories of Canadian people navigating gender non-conformity, including studies of trans and lesbian women during the 1940s, would help to disrupt the dominance of binary understandings of bodily beauty.

This study has shown that along with beliefs about heterosexuality and women's role in the world of waged work, beauty culture was central to how women war workers were pictured and perceived. Despite the limited availability of oral history evidence, comparing women's memories of wartime work with visual representations and textual accounts demonstrates that women workers themselves experienced beauty culture in multiple and complex ways. Wartime media constantly assumed that women were interested and engaged in beauty culture, and pressured them to participate in endless self-fashioning whether they wanted to or not. While some women experienced the

⁶ The Heritage Minute focuses entirely on Desmond's experiences of racism, and does not acknowledge her beauty business, but even choosing her as a figure to spotlight could open up discussions about her entrepreneurial activities. "Viola Desmond Heritage Minute debuts, honouring the 'Rosa Parks of Canada,'" *CBC News Nova Scotia*, February 2 2016, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/heritage-minute-viola-desmond-nova-scotia-civil-rights-1.3430266> (accessed April 27 2016). See also *Historica Canada*, Viola Desmond Heritage Minute, <https://www.historicacanada.ca/content/heritage-minutes/viola-desmond> (accessed April 27 2016).

⁷ Cheryl Thompson, "Race and beauty in Canada: print culture, retail, and the transnational flow of products, images and ideologies, 1700s to present" (PhD diss., McGill University, 2014).

ability to perform femininity, and even glamour, as pleasurable and as a source of personal power, others felt neutral or uncomfortable participating in beauty culture.

In her landmark study of the figure of the modern girl of the early twentieth century, Jane Nicholas writes,

Modern women's subjectivity was intimately connected to a culture that constantly used images of women's bodies to circulate ideas of modernities, racial and class hierarchies, discourses of age, ideas of surveillance, and discipline... To live as a modern woman was to live in connection with these images, almost regardless of whether or not they accurately reflected one's own lifestyle.⁸

These strong and pervasive relationships between images and understandings of women's bodies continued to grow throughout the twentieth century, and were certainly in full force during the Second World War. Like the modern girl, the woman war worker existed in an environment in which images of women's bodies were ever-present. During the war, images of women war workers reflected tensions and ideas about appropriate white femininity, women's place in the world of waged work, expectations about grooming and self-fashioning, and the connections between women's responsibility to be beautiful and their expected participation in heterosexuality and white motherhood. Even women who chose to reject, adapt, or question their relationship with the iconic woman war worker image were still connected to the visual landscape of beautiful femininity in some way.

Images are powerful: they influence how we see ourselves, how we see others, and how we understand the world. As the ability to produce and consume images of ourselves has dramatically expanded, thanks to the ubiquity of cameras and the infinite

⁸ Nicholas, *The Modern Girl*, 215.

reach of the internet, questions about the relationships between representation, performance, and identity have become more fraught than ever. Given the unrelenting flood of images of women's bodies in North America today, the challenge of parsing the relationships between image, performance, and experience remains strikingly relevant.

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Appendix A: List of Search Keywords

In searching online newspaper databases for the *Toronto Star* and *Globe and Mail*, the following search terms were used, along with date-limiting parameters (January 1939 to December 1945).

war worker
miss war worker
woman war worker
miss war worker contest
war worker + beauty
war worker + glamour
war worker + contest
war worker + pageant
work + beauty + pageant
work + beauty + contest
miss Toronto
miss Toronto contest
worker + pageant
pulchritude
Irene Brayley
DIL
Defense Industries
Defense Industries Limited
GECO
DeHavilland
DeHavilland Aircraft
REL
Research Enterprises
Small Arms
Inglis
TPAAA
Toronto Police Amateur Athletic Association