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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Melissa A. McEuen. *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011. xiv + 270 pp. $69.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8203-2904-8; $24.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8203-2905-5.

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Published on Jhistory (March, 2012)

Commissioned by Heidi Tworek

Making Women's Bodies and Minds: The War, the Government, and the Press

Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945 is an excellent book that examines the American government's efforts to homogenize its women to support the war in cooperation with advertising agencies, such as J. Walter Thompson (JWT). The resulting advertising campaigns are the heart of McEuen's text, creating a book with three layers of scholarly interest. First, McEuen's narratives of the advertising campaigns lend historical depth and richness. Second, McEuen provides a feminist reading of the ad campaigns, which is steeped in the work of Deborah McDowell, Elizabeth Gros,z and Susan Bordo.[1] McDowell perceived a woman's body as a "battleground' a 'site of cultural conflict and contestation' "; Grosz viewed a woman's body as a " 'cultural product' that has political demands written on it"; and Bordo helped inform McEuen's writing about "how and why women took certain steps to try to create desirable bodies" (p. 3). The third layer is race, illustrated through McEuen's investigation of the campaigns aimed at black women.

McEuen demonstrates in her five well-written chapters how the American government sought to get women out of the home and into the workforce to support the war effort through its relationship with advertising executives. A few such executives met in December of 1941 to seek out ways to organize corporate advertising to support the war effort, free of charge. In those meetings James Webb Young of JWT sought to collaborate with governmental representatives, creating the War Advertising Council. Webb and other ad executives used their talent and their agencies to tell Americans about food rationing, war bond sales, the importance of women in the nursing field, and how women could support the war effort by joining the military. In the process, they sought sell their products by teaching women how to be feminine. As McEuen notes, one ad campaign for Pond's skin cream, "conflated skin color and career with social status, national devotion, and in, some places, even democracy itself" (p. 10).

JWT and early pioneers of marketing joined with producers of Pond's skin cream, Lux soap, stocking companies, makeup companies, and clothing manufacturers, and all of them went to work to change opinions. As an example, McEuen provides details of one of Thompson's campaigns, titled the "New War Worker Advertising." This campaign sought to make a direct appeal to women to take part in the war effort. Earlier, a campaign for Pond's titled "She's Engaged" had encouraged women to use the cream to make themselves more feminine for their men. The New War Worker ad campaign, for example, focused on a woman working in a laboratory searching for harmful bacteria to help injured military men or those in war zones. She "has skilled hands" and a "highly trained mind" that are coupled with a "particularly lovely complexion–creamy smooth and white" (p. 18). McEuen's research not only brings the perspective of the campaign as a whole, but also tidbits of the back story that make the campaign come alive from the marketer's point of view. For example, one man told marketers that he considered lighter-skinned women more attractive, loveable, and more intelligent. From that type of opinion came advertising messages. Overall, this schizophrenia of working juxtaposed against being extremely feminine with perfect body parts was rampant. As McEuen

notes, Webb's campaigns dramatized "women's anxieties in a wartime context, turning seemingly mundane tasks [such as] choosing and using cosmetics into decision[s] of political import" (p. 11).

Women who chose to work indeed did have some real problems, McEuen reveals. Housing, clothing, and work hours were significant problems for working women. Many landlords didn't want women renters. So they refused to rent to them, thus forcing many women into substandard living arrangements. McEuen includes excellent historical documentation of the housing crisis for white and black women, as well as the subsequent public opposition. This stereotype of women working also played into the reverse stereotype of a "working woman." One narrative was of the government and advertisers warning men away from women who might be out at night or who worked for a living (and were away from home late). This campaign was intended to protect men from venereal diseases. McEuen includes a reproduction of a 1940 poster that sports an image of a lovely, rather innocent-looking girl (the girl-next-door type). Three men are looking at her. The words on the poster say: "She may look clean–But. Pick-ups, "Good time" girls, Prostitutes Spread Syphilis and Gonorrhea. You can't beat the Axis if you get VD" (p. 52).

As noted, race, too, plays a significant role in McEuen's story. While Pond's sought to engage women in working toward lovely white skin by using the cream, no black women were ever used in these campaigns. Black women were taught different ways to buy different products. These advertising campaigns not only laid down guidelines for skin color, but also perpetuated class divisions. These media messages told black women that the only way they could succeed was to become as light-skinned as possible, as well as to adopt middle-class goals and values such as education and fashion.

In sum, McEuen uses the five chapters in the book to explore women's body parts that were the focus of these advertising campaigns. Chapter 1 focuses on women's skin and how the industry sought to sell products that would help a woman work in the world, but also be pale and soft-skinned for her potential mate. The second chapter focuses on women's hands and legs, leading us through the campaigns for shaving to stockings. As one advertisement exhorted, pay attention to your legs, everyone else does. McEuen also provides the development and release of Betty Grable's pin-up and the details of that "rear view."

In the third chapter, McEuen leads the reader through the advertising efforts to help women overcome their uncontrollable, rather smelly body. A campaign developed for Lux used Hollywood starlets to encourage women to use the soap so they would become daintier and more beautiful like these the Hollywood stars. These film stars were dainty, and had beautiful, sweet-smelling skin. Working women, if not properly cleaned and manicured, had the potential to be disease carriers, as noted above. Daily bathing, clean clothes–all were so important to help women be a support for their men overseas and to better position themselves to get the man and get married.

McEuen's fourth chapter focuses on clothing and how it, too, became an important element in women's support of the war effort. Clothing had always been decoration for women, but was even more so during this wartime period. Military men should be happy to see a well-dressed woman, the advertisers alleged. The War Production Board went to work using this story line, issuing General Limitation Order L-85, which limited the use of certain fibers in women's clothing. To do that, dresses had to be designed and produced in such a way that they used fewer materials. Thus women were offered clothes to buy that had narrower skirts, fewer decorations, shorter hems, belts, and standardized jacket lengths. Sweater girls were soon to be the rage. These regulations fit well into women's roles of conservation, too. Conserving food, natural materials, and now fabrics played seamlessly into the government's plan for encouraging women to live for the cause of war.

Finally, McEuen explores demands on women to be agreeable and demure–and to cultivate their minds–to support the war effort and the men in the trenches. Being sweet, kind, nurturing, and agreeable, all the while struggling to work, raise children, have a beautiful, sweet-smelling body, wear perfect clothes, and maintain a streamlined pantry (so as not be a hoarder during these lean years), was a lot for women to manage. But they had to. The men who came home from the war needed extra nurturing and kindly patience, these media messages asserted. Even children could come to resent unhappy and crabby mothers.

With a book full of examples of how the OWI, the U.S. Manpower Commission, and JWT and other agencies sought to make women focus on their skin, their body size (even going so far as to publish measurements of the ideal body), their hands, their lips, and how they smelled (sweet and clean), McEuen has written a most useful, interesting, and well-written history of a period

still very influential on the Western psyche. This book needs to be in university libraries and on reading lists for courses in women's and gender studies.

Note

[1]. See D. McDowell, "Recovery Missions: Imaging the Body Ideal," in *Recovering the Black Female Body: Self-Representations by African-American Women*, ed. Michael Bennett and Vanessa Dickerson (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001); E. Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 2005); and S. Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

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Citation: Carol Atkinson. Review of McEuen, Melissa A., *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945.* Jhistory, H-Net Reviews. March, 2012.

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