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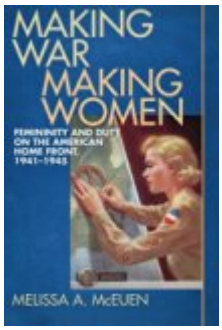

Melissa A. McEuen. *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011. xiv + 270 pp. $24.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8203-2905-5.

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Melissa A. McEuen's *Making War, Making Women* dissects American print culture during World War II to uncover the connections made between beauty, sexuality, race, class, and citizenship. McEuen uses popular advertisements found in such mainstream publications as *LIFE*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, and *Negro Digest*, as well as billboards, cartoons, and government propaganda, to argue that proper femininity was directly linked to women's patriotic duty during the war years. McEuen demonstrates that there was more to the iconic image of Rosie the Riveter than work, devotion, and sacrifice. The pervasive photographs and illustrations of women's wartime contributions also betrayed the culture's obsession with a narrow expectation of heterosexual, white, middle-class femininity, resulting in "unremitting self-regulation" for all American women (p. 132).

McEuen begins with a discussion of cosmetic advertising and the critical role that the made-up face played in constructing wartime womanhood. Embodied by campaigns such as the Pond's Cold Cream "She's Engaged!" ads that ran widely during the war, Madison Avenue described why certain women were worthy of their male counterparts' sacrifice overseas: they were young, white, and beautiful, thus "ensur[ing] their political status as objects worth fighting for" (p. 57). Women were promised that if only they made up an appropriately attractive face they could enact an American ideal and achieve its primary benefit--marriage. McEuen does well to focus on the racialized aspects of this project, both in mainstream white publications, as well as in government-sponsored propaganda posters and the like, but also in African American magazines such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's *The Crisis*, which tended to emphasize light-skinned models of black beauty.

It was not only the female face that came under increased scrutiny during the war, as hands and legs became symbols of the gendered and sexualized needs of the nation. According to McEuen, print culture focused on women's hands

because they were the conduits of the new work life experienced by so many, but also because they were easily manipulated by skin creams and nail care and thus were "sites of judgment about cultural standards and expectations" (p. 61). Additionally, the fetishization of legs reflected the rise of the pin-up, most famously actress Betty Grable, and what McEuen calls the "sexualization of middle-class women's bodies on an unprecedented scale" (p. 4).

McEuen goes on to explore gendered standards of hygiene. Women were subject to much more rigorous expectations of cleanliness in both body and clothing than were men. McEuen writes, "a woman needed to devote unyielding attention to personal cleanliness. Careful scrutiny was even linked to the extent of one's patriotism" (p. 110). The intensity of these values actually created a dilemma for women boarders throughout the war, as homeowners consistently complained that female renters used too much hot water on bathing and laundry. The attention paid to hygiene adversely affected women of color in other ways, as a racist mainstream society deemed African American women dirty by nature.

McEuen's discussion of idealized femininity continues with an exploration of changing wartime fashion, including women's military uniforms, the emergence of pants as acceptable feminine attire, and the significance of stockings and brassieres. The author argues that women's clothing reflected "government policy, political standing, socioeconomic status, sexuality, and sexual availability. In the end, women wore the war, while literally embodying its demands" (p. 136). McEuen closes her work with a treatment of the ways in which feminine personality was defined by the broader culture. Specifically, the qualities of "cheerfulness, optimism, and patience" were crucial to the patriotism and sacrifice expected of women (p. 179). Further, McEuen demonstrates that "morale rested squarely on women's shoulders" (p. 180). Wives, girlfriends, and even grandmothers, were told that it was their responsibility to keep the home fires burning while their men were away, and to do so with a smile.

A question that does not get adequate attention in *Making War, Making Women* is the role of Hollywood in the gender-making that took place during the war. Admittedly, McEuen's work focuses on print culture, but the impact of popular films on the creation of idealized womanhood is undeniable. In fact, McEuen repeatedly demonstrates that various Hollywood stars appeared in printed advertisements and the like during the war; thus, the boundary between film and print culture was quite porous. A more detailed introductory discussion of this phenomenon would have been appropriate.

The organization of *Making War, Making Women* is somewhat problematic. Some chapters seem to stray too far from their focus, as in McEuen's discussion of cleanliness in chapter 3. The section opens with a rather detailed discussion of wartime housing shortages and the discrimination that women boarders faced as they mobilized for work and searched for lodging in new locales. The chapter's focus, however, is actually on expectations of hygiene, with evidence from advertising campaigns for LUX Toilet Soap, though it detours through a discussion of women as scapegoats for sexual disease. Likewise, *Making War, Making Women*'s final chapter on feminine personality includes a treatment of the sexual double standard and expectations of employment as the war drew to a close. One alternative organization might have been to order the chapters by female roles and identities--industrial workers, military recruits, lesbians, mothers, baseball players, etc. As it is, these groups of women make appearances throughout the narrative, but it is difficult to get a cohesive sense of any of them.

Making War, Making Women adds to a growing literature on gender and sexuality in the Second World War. The understanding that Ameri-

can culture was heavily invested in a femininity specific to wartime is not new, however; Marilyn Hegarty (*Victory Girls, Khaki-Wackies, and Patriotutes: The Regulation of Female Sexuality during World War II*, 2008) and others have previously made this claim. McEuen nonetheless provides an important exploration of an American print culture that was increasing in significance, and she demonstrates that not only was the war a highly gendered experience, but it also left women in a nearly impossible situation, as rigorous standards of race, class, and femininity left many outside the bounds--and rewards--of ideal womanhood. Additionally, *Making War, Making Women* unquestionably demonstrates that the private was quite political during the Second World War. What women wore, the color of their lipstick, and how often they laundered their undergarments reflected their commitment to their country, according to print culture. These connections are often cited in the context of the "domestic containment" of the Cold War era, but they clearly existed during the preceding global crisis. McEuen proves that intense pressures were placed on women to look good and act nicely, lest they ruin the culture their men fought to preserve.