Angels of Mercy: A Gendered Analysis of American Nurses in the Philippines

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On July 1, 1942, in the gardens of the National Red Cross Headquarters in Washington, D.C., six Army nurses became the first American women decorated for bravery in the Second World War. Among the women was Juanita Redmond, a young woman from Swansea, South Carolina who had been one of the two dozen nurses evacuated from the Philippines before it was surrendered to the Japanese. Juanita was stationed in the Philippines from September 1940 to April 1942. Up until December 7, 1941, her time in the Philippines resembled a tropical vacation more so than military service as she nursed patients who treated tropical diseases during the day, golf in the evenings, and attended dinner and dances hosted by the officers' club at night. After Pearl Harbor was bombed, things began changing quickly for Juanita. Her pristine hospital in Fort Stotsenburg became a jungle hospital with open air wards on Bataan. Although she continued treating tropical diseases, her main concern shifted to soldiers who required bandages, surgery, or amputation. She yearned for dinner at the officers' club when her rations were reduced to two small meals a day, typically consisting of rice or caraboa stew. Fortunately for Juanita, she was evacuated from the Philippines and returned to America where she wrote a memoir recounting her experience and sternly reminding Americans of the thousands of soldiers, doctors, nurses, and corpsmen still held as Japanese prisoners of war.[1]

Historians Elizabeth Norman, Evelyn Monahan, and Rosemary Neidel-Greenlee have written about nurses such as Juanita who served and became prisoners of war in the Philippines.[2] In particular, Norman and Sharon Eifried wrote about how those who were taken as prisoners of war managed to survive the three years they spent in the camps.[3] However, historians have not examined the representations of these women in contemporary popular culture.

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[1] Jaunita Redmond, *I Served on Bataan*, (New York and Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1943), 43.

[2]Elizabeth Norman, *We Band of Angels: The Untold Story of American Nurses Trapped on Bataan by the Japanese* (New York: Random House, 1999); Evelyn Monahan and Rosemary Neidel-Greenlee, *All This Hell: U.S. Nurses Imprisoned by the Japanese*, Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000.

[3] Elizabeth Norman and Sharon Eifried, "How did they all survive? An analysis of American nurses' experiences in Japanese Prisoner-of-War Camps," *Nursing History Review* 3 (1995): 104-127; Elizabeth Norman and Sharon Eifried, "The Angels of Bataan," *The Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 25 (1993): 121-126.

In 1943 two films were made based on the experiences of this group of Army and Navy nurses who served in the Philippines during the Japanese invasion. How do the actual experiences of these nurses compare to their representations found in popular culture? What does this comparison reveal about female gender roles during the Second World War? *Cry Havoc* and *So Proudly We Hail* heroized the nurses who had served on Bataan and Corregidor, but they also reflected prevalent cultural views of the time and as such the resulting story trivialized the experience and sacrifice of the nurses.[4] An examination of these two films in relation to the experiences of the Army and Navy nurses depicted in them reveals a specific set of gender roles for women in the Second World War. First, although they were in the traditionally masculine settings, women were expected to maintain a feminine appearance. Second, the nurses were considered morale boosters for the men fighting the war. As subordinates in support positions and reminders of those they were protecting back home, the nurses presence at the front masculinized the men. Third, women at the front as well as at home were confronted by paradoxes requiring them to be tough but vulnerable, as well as permissive, yet virtuous.

Army and Navy Nurses in the Philippines: Reality and Representation

Accounts like those of Redmond take place against a backdrop of military nursing whose history extends to the beginning of the twentieth century. Beginning in 1901 and 1908, women began serving as civilian nurses under military contract in the Army Nurse Corps and Navy Nurse Corps. Because they were originally civilians and not members of the military, they had few benefits and no ranking. However, they were the first group of women officially recognized as a part of the military.[5] Army and Navy nurses received relative ranking to men in 1920 and 1942. All nurses were given the rank of officer so in the event of capture they received better treatment.[6] Of the 70,000 women in the Army and Navy nurse corps, 31,000 served overseas in the European, African, and Pacific theatres of war.[7] Nurses who chose to serve overseas marked the first movement of American women toward battlefront.

Many of the nurses who served in the Pacific theatre were unexpectedly hurled into a warzone when the U.S. military fought one of the most brutal battles of the war in the Philippines. After the initial Japanese attack, U.S. forces and all nurses retreated to the Bataan Peninsula and the island of Corregidor on Christmas Eve 1941.[8] Everyday life in the jungle, only miles from the front, was very different from anything the nurses had previously experienced. They bathed in nearby streams, ate two meals a day,

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[4] Norman, *We Band of Angels*, 129.
[5] Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 2004), 181.
[6] Norman, *We Band of Angels*, 52.
[7] Monahan and Neidel-Greenlee, *All This Hell*, 2.
[8] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 186.

and lived under constant fear of illness and bombardment.[9] Malaria was a serious problem for the men and women on Bataan. Men with malaria came into the field hospitals at a rate of 1000 per day. The doctors and nurses took preventative doses of quinine, but as the supplies decreased they too contacted the disease. Additionally, as a result of unsanitary conditions, nearly everyone on Bataan suffered from dysentery. The effects of malaria and dysentery were aggravated by the growing problem of malnutrition.[10] The nurses' lives were not only threatened by illness, but also bombardment by Japanese planes. This was the harsh backdrop against which nurses like Redmond recorded their experiences, and filmmakers later sought to propagandize.

In fact, the nurses of the Philippines had a prominent role in the American wartime imagination. Seen as recruiting posters come to life by the U.S. government, eighteen of the nurses toured the country recruiting more nurses and selling war bonds.[11] Eager to help the war effort, Hollywood was quick to produce two 1943 films featuring women and war that doubled as home front propaganda: *Cry Havoc* and *So Proudly We Hail*. Directed by Richard Thorpe, *Cry Havoc* was considered topical due to Bataan's frequent appearance in the news, but it was profitable nonetheless. *So Proudly We Hail*, directed by Mark Sandrich, was considered a more realistic depiction of the nurses' experiences on Bataan and was well received.[12] *The New York Times*' Bosley Crowther reviewed both films; interestingly, he focused his criticisms on the women in the films. He thought *Cry Havoc* was a picture "like '*So Proudly We Hail*'… which is heavy with theatricality and the affectations of an all-girl cast."[13] Of *So Proudly We Hail* he said, "[U]nfortunately Mr. Sandrich has not been able to parallel the reality of the setting with that of his characters…Walter Abel, as an Army chaplain, in one brief speech is truer than any of the girls."[14] These reviews bring up several interesting points regarding women in film, more specifically the representations of women in traditionally masculine settings–in this case the role of the nurses in field hospitals during the battles of Bataan and Corregidor.

Keeping Up Appearances

Although his reviews heavily critiqued the realism of the two films, Crowther fails to mention the unfeasibility of the nurses' well-maintained

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[9] Norman, *We Band of Angels*, 36.
[10] Ibid., 51.
[11] Ibid., 122.
[12] Ibid., 127.
[13] Bosley Crowther, "The Screen; "Cry 'Havoc'," a Picture About Bataan's Women Volunteers, With Margaret Sullavan and Others, at the Astor Theatre," *The New York Times*, November 24, 1943.
[14] Bosley Crowther, "Misses Colbert, Goddard, Lake Seen in '*So Proudly We Hail*' as Army Nurses Who Aid the Wounded Men on Bataan," *The New York Times* (New York, NY), September 10, 1943.

appearances throughout the films. This suggests that the level of femininity maintained by the characters in the film was considered reasonable, further implying that Army and Navy nurses were expected to keep up their feminine appearance despite the fact that they were working in a traditionally masculine setting. Contrary to the truth, *Cry Havoc* and *So Proudly We Hail* greatly exaggerate the nurses' abilities to maintain their feminine appearance by dressing the actresses in fitted coveralls, including tight belts that accentuate their small waists.[15] In a diary entry on February 16, about two months into their stay on Bataan, Ruth Straub wrote, "We nurses look very strange in our air corps dungarees. Mine are size 42. All of us have long hair now. We part it and tie it in two braids, fastening the braids with the flannel we found around the hospital."[16] In contrast to Ruth's diary entry, the nurses in both films wear expertly applied makeup and their hair is curled and pinned up, even though the nurses did not resume the "off the collar" regulations for their hair until they were relocated from Bataan to Corregidor.[17] In *They Were Expendable*, director John Ford dramatizes the role of American patrol torpedo boats in the defense of the Philippines. The story focuses on two male patrol torpedo boat captains, one of whom enters into a romantic relationship with Sandy Davyss, a Navy nurse on Bataan. In this particular scene, Sandy attends a dinner party with six of the patrol torpedo boat crewmen, but before it's she is introduced to these men she steps in front of a mirror, brushes her curly locks of brown hair, puts on a sting of pearls, and adjusts the kerchief standing in for a pocket square of her Army issued coveralls.[18] This scene demonstrates the absurd expectations placed on the nurses to maintain their femininity in the warzone on Bataan. Thus, examining a single entry from Ruth's diary reveals the effort made by these three films to represent the Army and Navy nurses as more feminine than their real life counter parts, creating an expectation for these women to maintain their femininity even in a setting as harsh and traditionally masculine as the battlefield in the Philippines.

Though to some extent, it seems as if the nurses on Bataan and Corregidor internalized this expectation of feminine maintenance. A passage from Juanita Redmond's memoir reads,

> *"A problem peculiar to the feminine personnel was keeping up appearances–our appearance. It's an axiom that a woman's morale goes up or down according to the way she looks, or thinks she looks. At Limay we had been lucky enough to have a Filipino civilian do our laundry…at Little Baguio we put aside such frivolities. We worked in*

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[15] *So Proudly We Hail*, directed by Mark Sandrich (1943; Agoura: Paramount Pictures, 2007), DVD; *Cry Havoc*, directed by Richard Thorpe (1943; Culver City: MGM, 2010), DVD.
[16] Ruth Straub, quoted in Norman, *We Band of Angels*, 57.
[17] Norman, *We Band of Angels*, 98.
[18] *They Were Expendable*, directed by John Ford (1945; Culver City: MGM, 2007), DVD.

> *coveralls, which were ugly and much too big for us, but very practical; our white shoes were white by courtesy only; what was left of our cosmetics was hoarded like a miser's gold, to be used only on the rare occasions when we 'went to a party.'"*[19]

Although there is a hint of obligation in her comment about keeping her shoes white "by courtesy only," this excerpt demonstrates that the nurses continued to be concerned over fashion and beauty even on the edge of the battlefield. Considering the media women were confronted with during the war, this internalization of such expectations regarding their femininity is not surprising. By 1940 mass media had tied cosmetic beauty ever more closely to notions of feminine identity and self-fulfillment. Media created during the war praised women who managed to maintain their femininity while doing a man's work.[20] Therefore, *Cry Havoc* and *So Proudly We Hail* simply reinforced the cultural norm of the war which expected women to keep their femininity regardless of their movement into traditionally masculine settings.

In addition to maintaining a feminine appearance, another stark contrast between the appearance of the real life nurses and their representations in film was the incredible weight loss they experienced. As a result of disease and the minimal rations on Bataan, one nurse was so malnourished that she weighed seventy pounds when she was evacuated from Corregidor.[21] The films failed to include the weight loss suffered by the nurses. However, this inaccuracy speaks more of government censorship than societal expectations for women. The War Department gave Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Paramount Studios permission to make films about the nurses on Bataan and Corregidor. It follows then that the U.S. government preferred Americans not be confronted by the harsh conditions faced by their loved ones serving overseas because it would likely cause public unrest and a general lack of confidence in the American military.[22] This government censorship of *Cry Havoc* and *So Proudly We Hail* calls into question other governmental motivations during the war, specifically in regard to their conceptualization of the role of women in American society. An example of government involvement in the shaping of the female wartime image is that of Rosie the Riveter. The original Rosie illustration by Norman Rockwell depicted a rugged and stout female war worker holding a hearty sandwich in her strong hands, her battered rivet gun resting across her lap.[23] By dissecting this image of Rosie, the motivations behind the government's decision to commission a new rendering become clear: with her beefy frame, large appetite, and the

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[19] Redmond, *I Served on Bataan*, 74.
[20] Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1998), 238.
[21] Norman, *We Band of Angels*, 108.
[22] Ibid., 128.
[23] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 43.

phallic quality of her rivet gun, Rockwell's Rosie was far too masculine for the cultural norms of the time. Thus was born the government's softer, better known depiction of Rosie accompanied by the words "We Can Do It!"[24] This image of Rosie typifies the ideal wartime woman promoted by not only the government, but also popular culture–including films such as *Cry Havoc* and *So Proudly We Hail*. She is feminine with her plucked eyebrows, full makeup, and curly hair, but ready to assume her position in a man's job as she flexes her toned yet slight arm, pulling her sleeve back with a slender hand complete with polished fingernails.

Subordinates as Morale Boosters

One reason the nurses strove to maintain their femininity in the field hospitals was in an effort to heighten the morale of the men fighting. Women were considered very effective morale boosters for the troops. For example, in a memoir composed after the war, one of the surgeons on Bataan spoke of the morale boosting effect the nurses had on the soldiers,

> *"One of the most remarkable things to come out of our experience in Bataan was the presence and performance of the army nurses. In retrospect I believe that they were the greatest morale boost present in that unhappy little area of jungle called Bataan…Some of the men in the combat area who had a moment of quietness would steal away to the hospital to spend a short while in the company of a woman."*[25]

Knowing they had this important effect on the men, the nurses were happy to oblige any time they were invited to dine or dance with the soldiers on Bataan and Corregidor. For example, Juanita Redmond and Eunice Hatchitt were invited to dinner by a group of officers, after which the officers provided entertainment with formal typewritten programs.[26] All of the nurses also had a standing invitation to dinner aboard a gunboat anchored near the hospital. In her memoir, Juanita describes one of these dinners she attended, "Inez MacDonald and I went one day and were almost overcome by nostalgia at the sight of the silver and table linen. They gave us wonderful food and lots of cigarettes, and after dinner we played bridge with Captain Pohlman ad Lieutenant Erickson. It was fun and relaxing."[27] *They Were Expendable* features a similar scene in which the nurse Sandy attends a dinner party with six PT boat crewmen. She sits at the head of the table where all six men can easily gaze upon the oddity of a woman in their midst. Sandy's presence at dinner allows the men to reminisce about pleasant times before the war. Both the real life and on-screen nurses act as normalizers that remind the men what

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[24] Ibid., 44.
[25] John Bumgarner, quoted in Norman, *We Band of Angels*, 63.
[26] Redmond, *I Served on Bataan*, 76.
[27] Ibid., 79.

they are fighting for: the simplicity of prewar times and the protection of the women they love on the home front.[28] Thus, the nurses on Bataan and Corregidor stood in for all American women by bringing the sentiment and love of the women back home to the men in combat,[29] effectively boosting their morale.

Women as morale boosters can also be seen through their stoicism, especially when interacting with men in combat. For example, in her memoir from 1943, Juanita does not express any concern over the absolute devastation the men were facing in the Philippines. She only speaks of their bravery and perseverance, as in the following passage about the injured men who came into her care after the first round of bombings by the Japanese in December 1941, "The boys were so quiet. They didn't scream or cry out. They clenched their teeth and fought the pain…I'll never forget my first amputation." She then recalls the conversation in which the doctor informs a soldier that his leg required amputation, to which the soldier replied, "'Well, do a good job on it, Doc.' And he grinned. But they were all like that."[30] Knowing that it would be read by many Americans, Juanita likely maintained a stoic demeanor throughout her memoir so as to preserve the morale of all Americans, but especially the men in the military. This stoicism is also prevalent in *Cry Havoc* and *So Proudly We Hail* when the senior nurses scold younger nurses for crying or visibly worrying in view of the wounded or ill men in their field hospitals. The nurses in the films only express pity or concern for the soldiers when they are in their private quarters or bathing–two locations far out of the men's earshot. But once again, because these media reached many Americans, a character's reminder of the bravery and strength of the soldiers resolved any concerns expressed in these scenes. It is of course true that an ideal military nurse would maintain a high degree of stoicism under stressful conditions, but by hiding their pity and concerns, the women reaffirm their confidence in the soldiers, perhaps suggesting that they are relying on the men to protect them. Thus, in positioning themselves as the protected and subsequently subordinate to the men in combat, the nurses boost troop morale by implying that the men are responsible for their lives and the lives of those on the home front as well.

A similar stoicism is also expressed by women on the home front in their interactions with their loved ones serving in the military. When writing to their husbands and sons overseas, women expressed joy and optimism regardless of how they truly felt.[31] Women on the home front struggled with many issues they had never faced before such as rationing, managing finances, housekeeping, and caring for their children. Women were frequently confronted with a combination of these challenges while also working for the

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[28] Peiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 239.
[29] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 77.
[30] Redmond, *I Served on Bataan*, 23.
[31] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 22.

first time in their lives. However, women were reluctant to complain about home front conditions–perhaps as a result of the advice they found in women's magazines encouraging them to keep correspondence with soldiers upbeat and cheerful.[32] In this way, women on the home front contributed to heightening troop morale. Though, this once again illustrates their subordination to men in that their needs for emotional support are met second to the men's. Juanita's memoir, the representations of nurses in the three films mentioned above, and letters from women on the home front demonstrate the extent to which women were thought of as morale boosters, though often from a position subordinate to the soldiers.

Paradoxes: Tough and Vulnerable, Permissive and Virtuous

As their role in society was adapted for wartime needs, women were characterized by paradoxes, especially those who transitioned into masculine environments. Although women had to be vulnerable in order to boost the morale of the soldiers, they were at the same time expected to also be tough because many of them had been thrust into masculine settings in response to the war. For example, *So Proudly We Hail* portrays the nurses as tough enough to survive in a warzone, but vulnerable enough that their male companions were reminded of the nurses need for protection in their masculine world. Lt. Janet "Davey" Davidson, for instance, is initially very independent and rejects the advances made by her love interest, Lt. John Summers. But once they reach Bataan and the nurses realize how dangerous the warzone is, Davey professes her love for John. This implies Davey's need for John's protection, both emotional and physical. However, for the real life nurses, these roles of protector and protected seemed to be reversed. Take Juanita Redmond's recollection of the second bombing at one of the hospitals as an example,

> *"Sergeant May had pulled me under a desk, but the desk was blown into the air, he and I with it. I heard myself gasping. My eyes were being gouged out of their sockets, my whole body was swollen and torn apart by the violent pressure. This is the end I thought. Then I fell back to the floor, the desk landing on top of me and bouncing around drunkenly. Sergeant May knocked it away from me, and gasping for breath, bruised and aching, sick from swallowing the smoke of the explosive, I dragged myself to my feet…We worked wildly to get to the men who might be buried, still alive, under the mass of wreckage, tearing apart the smashed beds to reach the wounded and the dead. These men were our patients and our responsibility"*[33]

[32] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 22.
[33] Redmond, *I Served on Bataan*, 111-112.

From this passage, it seems that the nurses thought their patients rather than themselves vulnerable, as they quickly brushed off bombings to see that the men under their care were alive and well. This implies that the nurses' work did not allow them to take on the paradox of tough and vulnerable perpetuated by their representations in *So Proudly We Hail*.

However, this paradox is clearly seen by women's transitions into and out of war work. Many women gained a sense of strength and independence by working in war plants.[34] However, by the end of the war, these women were pushed out of the workforce to make room for the men returning from war.[35] Consequently, women on the home front were expected to step into male roles, but relinquish their newfound confidence and return to work in the home, once again becoming dependent on men as they returned home from the war. Although it is refuted by Juanita's account, the paradoxical expectation for women to be both tough and vulnerable as they entered masculine environments is clearly demonstrated by the popular and economic cultures of the war.

Another paradox faced by women during wartime was the expectation that they be permissive, but ultimately virtuous. This paradox began developing in the interwar period when the boundaries of permissive sexual activities for American youth began to widen.[36] The war then brought unprecedented opportunities for premarital experience as a result of relaxed social constraints which developed out of the shifting wartime society as women entered the workforce and men joined the military.[37] During the war, permissive young women known as victory girls caught the attention of many as society tried to contain their sexual behavior, but not the behavior of the men they associated with.[38] This double standard separated women into two groups: those who were permissive and not respectable and those who were virtuous and respectable.[39] From these developments came men's desires for "sexy mates," who were still expected to uphold the traditional standards of virtue.[40] As such, women were characterized by this permissive but virtuous paradox throughout the war.

As an example of this paradox, consider Dorothea Daley Engel's experience as it relates to that of Davey's from *So Proudly We Hail*. Dorothea was one of the twenty-three army nurses evacuated from Corregidor after serving on Bataan. Before the war broke out, Dorothea met her husband

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[34] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 71.
[35] Ibid., 68.
[36] John D'Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 258.
[37] Ibid., 260.
[38] Ibid., 261.
[39] Ibid., 263.
[40] Ibid., 265.

Emanuel at an officers' club dance at Clark Field.[41] They were soon engaged, but when all of the nurses were relocated to Bataan the two were separated.[42] Reunited at Hospital #1 after a couple of weeks, they were married a month later on February 19.[43] However, when Dorothea was evacuated her husband's whereabouts were unknown and he was declared missing in action by the Army.[44] Similarly, Davey met Lt. Summers before the war and the two were married in a field hospital. Also like Dorothea, Davey's husband was declared missing in action as she was evacuated from Corregidor. Unlike Dorothea though, the film hinted at a sexual relationship between Davey and John before they had married. The two are seen embracing in a foxhole before the screen fades to black; when the lights come back up, Davey awakes alone in the foxhole to find that John left her a note in which he excuses himself for not saying goodbye, but he did not want to wake her. Given the similarities between these two stories and the fact that Dorothea's was published a year before *So Proudly We Hail* premiered, it seems likely that the latter was based on the former. However, unlike the historical account, the film suggests permissiveness on the part of the Davey (Dorothea) character. In this way, a paradox is created between the virtue of the real life nurse and the permissiveness of her on-screen representation.

Another manifestation of this paradox can be found in virtuous women who put up a permissive façade. Pat, a nurse from *Cry Havoc*, is an example of a promiscuous character who is often flirting with a male officer, Lt. Holt. Pat frequently rebels against her commanding officer and the head nurse, Mary Smith, who Pat notices is also attracted to Holt. The two become jealous of each other as they witness one another exiting Holt's quarters, and like the audience, are unaware of what occurred behind closed doors. Initially, the film gives the impression that Pat and Smith are promiscuous women. However, when Holt dies later in the film, it is revealed that he and Smith were married. With this new information, Smith is no longer considered promiscuous, but rather a virtuous woman who occasionally spent the night with her husband. Additionally, when Pat finds out that the two were married she makes it clear that nothing came of her flirtations with Holt, and had she known of the marriage she never would have interfered with their relationship in the first place. Thus, Pat's virtue is also revealed by the end of the film. *Cry Havoc* creates two characters initially perceived as permissive, but as the film develops, the virtue of both characters is uncovered, consequently reinforcing the paradox.

In addition to *Cry Havoc* and *So Proudly We Hail*, the paradoxical expectation for women to be both permissive and virtuous can be seen in a

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[41]Dorothea Daley Engel, "I Was Married in Battle: An American Army Nurse's Own Heartbreaking Story of Her Honeymoon in Hell," *American Magazine,* 1942, 27.
[42] Ibid., 112.
[43] Ibid.,113.
[44] Ibid.,115.

variety of popular culture from the war. Many other Hollywood films projected provocative images of women in stories of seduction.[45] At the same time as seeing these provocative images, women were also confronted by a reinvigorated purity movement which battled against the public display of sexuality. Every step toward sexual liberation was met by an equal and opposite effort to maintain traditional standards of decency.[46] As a result, women found themselves surrounded by two opposing ideals for their role in society. Pinups also provide evidence of this societal paradox facing women during the war. Drawn by Alberto Vargas and featured in *Esquire*, the Varga Girls were a particularly controversial set of pinups found on the walls of many male barracks during the war. The Varga Girls' many states of undress and suggestive poses resulted in a lawsuit against *Esquire* by the United States Post Office. *Esquire* won the case, claiming that the magazine's content boosted the spirits of American soldiers. However, the Post Office's attempt to censor the racy content demonstrates the changing attitudes regarding women and sexuality during the war.[47] *Esquire* suggested women be flirtatious and provocative while the Post Office expected they remain respectable and wholesome, thus setting these oppositional roles as those that American women should aspire to. Another woman who appeared in popular publications was Lace, a 1943 cartoon. She was "sexy but still wholesome, risqué in dress or undress, while still somewhat innocent in spirit."[48] In this cartoon, the main female character is literally defined by the paradox–sexy but wholesome, risqué but innocent; Lace further advances this paradox for women during the war. These examples, including *Cry Havoc* and *So Proudly We Hail*, demonstrate the extent to which men and women were confronted by popular culture that perpetuated this paradoxical role for wartime women, expecting them to be permissive, yet at the same time virtuous.

Conclusion

Comparing the representations of Army and Navy nurses in *Cry Havoc* and *So Proudly We Hail* to the experiences of the real life nurses on Bataan and Corregidor has proven a useful case study in identifying the gender roles that confronted American women during the Second World War. Women were expected to remain feminine throughout the war, even though many found themselves working in masculine environments. Their subordinate role in society further masculinized the soldiers, making them effective morale boosters. Additionally, women faced a culture of paradoxes including expectations that they be tough but vulnerable and permissive yet virtuous. These roles come together to demonstrate society's reaction to the way in

[45] D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 279.
[46] Ibid., 280.
[47] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 96.
[48] Ibid., 103.

which women were beginning to reposition themselves within it. The national emergency brought on by the war unsettled conventional ideas about women's capabilities and their place in society.[49] As female positions in society began to reflect those of their male counterparts, efforts were made to slow women's social mobility–thus arose this set of female gender roles. For example, women's presence in traditionally masculine settings such as war plants or field hospitals was countered by an expectation that they maintain a prewar ideal of femininity. These same women were asked to give up their newfound independence for their prewar positions in the home and reliance on their husbands for financial stability. Their prewar subordination to men was maintained in their wartime positions in the workforce or the military.

Additionally, as women's sexuality came to reflect men's sexual behavior, Christian organizations and politicians worked to preserve prewar standards of decency.[50] Therefore, it seems that wartime roles for women were meant to combat their social mobility and allow for a return to prewar society upon the war's end.

Postwar American society initially reflected the effort to preserve prewar female gender roles, but later their wartime liberations expanded as women established themselves as more than housewives. Women in the first several postwar years moved to the suburbs and found themselves once again as homemakers. They traded in their coveralls and rivet guns for aprons and spatulas, becoming the ideal image of femininity, subordinate to men, and dependent on their husband's income.[51] What little sexual liberation they may have achieved during the war was quickly subverted by purity movements as they reacted to the female promiscuity of wartime.[52] However, in the later postwar years, women's social mobility began to gain momentum once again as women established themselves as a permanent presence in the workforce and resumed their pursuit of sexual liberation. For women then, wartime society was a confrontation between traditional prewar roles and the beginnings of female liberation.

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[49] Preiss, *Hope in a Jar*, 240.
[50] D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 282.
[51] Yellin, *Our Mothers' War*, 48.
[52] D'Emilio and Freedman, *Intimate Matters*, 282.