Anatomy of a Pin-Up: A Genealogy of Sexualized Femininity Since the Industrial Age.

Submitted by Eleni Lipsos, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English, November 2013.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature…….

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Acknowledgements.

I wish to thank my supervisors Dr. Corinna Wagner and Prof. Lisa Downing for their unswerving support, enthusiasm, dedication and hard work. Thank you also to Dr. Helen Hanson, Prof. Despina Kakoudaki, Dr. Elliot Kendall, Morwenna Hussey and all the helpful staff at the University of Exeter, Exeter University Library, the Bill Douglas Centre, the British Library, Senate House Library and the British Film Institute Library. Special thanks to Louis K. Meisel, Olivia De Berardinis, Jim Linderman, Nicole Paulus, and Dr. Matt Lodder, as well as Dr. Marilena Mousoulidou, Georgina Vassiliou, Dr. Constantine Athanasiades, Rita Stavrou, Angela Stavrou, Andro Stavrou, Emily Candela, Andrew Adamides, Dr. Katarina Perovic, Dr. David Gooblar, Dr. Jessica Richardson, Dr. Kelso Cratsely, Dr. Yvonne Owens, and my wonderful extended family, especially Isabella Endacott, Andreas Varkaris, Elena Varkaris, Rita Apostolou, George Theophilou, and Yioda Lipsos.

My utmost thanks to my loving grandparents, Lenia and Andreas Apostolou, and parents, Kiki and Nicos Lipsos, to whom I dedicate this thesis.

Abstract.

Pin-up images have played an important role in American culture, in both their illustrated and photographic configurations. The pin-up is viewed as a significant representational cultural artifact of idealistic and aspirational femininity and of consumerism and material wealth, especially reflective of the mid-twentieth century period in America spanning the 1930s to the 1960s. These images not only reflect great shifts in social mores and women's social status, but also affected changes in both areas in turn. Furthermore, pin-up images internationally circulated in magazines, advertising and promotional material, contributed to the manner in which America was idealized in Europe and beyond. Crucially, they influenced how an eroticized and glamorous, yet unrealistic, example of femininity came to be generalized as a desirous model of femininity. In recent years there has been vital, though limited, scholarly research into the cultural and social impact of pin-up imagery, to which this thesis adds to. This thesis takes a genealogical approach, charting the development of popular female-centric "pin-up" imagery in America since the 1860s and up to the 1960s, and its resurgence since the 1980s onwards. In doing so this thesis aims to provide a social, political and cultural context to the emergence of a specific archetypal sexualized femininity, with the aim of challenging the tendency to dismiss sexualized imagery as "anti-feminist" or as trivial. Toward that end, I examine the complexity of intentions behind the production of "pin-up" images. In taking this revisionist approach I am better able to conclusively analyze the reasons for the resurgence and reappropriation of pin-up imagery in late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century popular culture, and consider what the gendered cultural implications may be.

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"*Illusion is the first of all pleasures.*"

- Voltaire.

Introduction.

Over the course of the twentieth century the United States of America popularized a classic notion of eroticized womanhood through the imaging of the All-American pin-up girl. She is the quintessential American invention of the feminine ideal most memorably personified in the classic illustrations of George Petty and Alberto Vargas from the 1930s and 1940s. These artists' lithe yet voluptuous beauties were published in *Esquire* magazine and made famous by American G.I.s during the Second World War, who literally pinned-up these 'Petty Girls' and 'Varga Girls' – amongst other illustrated and photographed pin-ups – in barracks and lockers, or painted them onto aeroplanes, bomber jackets and even bombs. Beyond her contribution to wartime morale-boosting, the pin-up came to represent the spirit and values of a bountiful and trail-blazing postwar America. Since that time she has continued to project a distinct combination of American wholesomeness and rebellion, and is ultimately fixed in the popular imagination as a mid-twentieth-century nostalgic symbol of liberty and eroticism.

The classic pin-up girl has been admired as a representation of the height of female sexual prowess and her iconicity has been revisited in popular and retro youth culture throughout the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries. Invariably, she has also been viewed as signifying capitulation to the mandate of "femininity" and has consequently been unpopular during certain periods, especially during the 1970s with second-wave feminism's initial stirrings. The pin-up's eroticism and exaggerated femininity have long been critiqued and debated alongside similar sexualized imagery. For many scholars, particularly those in the fields of gender, feminist or women's studies, the pin-up's alleged signifiers of power remain unconvincing. For others however, the pin-up's representational sexualized femininity has been interpreted as "empowered."

However, her recent resurgence as a popular model of femininity suggests an unmistakable loyalty to the image, which consequently justifies closer research into why this divisive trope of sexualized femininity should endure in postfeminist Western culture. This thesis sets out to answer this fundamental query by charting a genealogy of pin-up imagery. Taking a cultural studies approach, I explore the early development of pin-up (proto-pin-up) since

the Industrial Age, initially within Japanese and European culture, but primarily in American culture. This thesis then follows pin-up's advancement through to the Second World War when *pin-up* as a recognized term and concept entered discursive currency[1]; and up to the postwar period of the late-1960s just before pin-up imagery came to be replaced by mainstream soft/pornographic imagery. Lastly, I will address the reasons for the pin-up revival from the late 1980s to the present day. In this way the thesis historically contextualizes the cultural figure that is the pin-up by observing how a variety of social, political, industrial and cultural influences contributed to her creation, whilst simultaneously charting her influence over – and reflection of – feminine ideals and sexual mores across a time span of more than 100 years.

What is a pin-up?

The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites 1941 as the year when the word *pin-up* entered general usage. It also cites a reference to the 7th July issue of *Life* magazine of that same year hailing film star Dorothy Lamour as the U.S. Army's number one pin-up. The fact that the term "pin-up" enters the dictionary during the same year that the U.S. entered the Second World War is no mere coincidence: it suggests that pin-up served some purpose at this time in relation to United States involvement in the Second World War. However, pin-up existed prior to this point, although not yet labeled and defined, and this is the subject of chapters 1 and 2, whereby I refer to such imagery as *proto-pin-up*. Conversely, it has been suggested (by specialist pin-up art collector Louis K. Meisel) that any pin-up-type imagery that deviates from the modest wholesomeness of the illustrated mid-twentieth-century pin-up stereotype is "derivative" (see chapter 6). Nevertheless, such "derivative" pin-ups remain valid components of the genealogy of pin-up, whether they be mainstream photographic movie-star pin-ups, subcultural fetish pin-ups, or featured in illustrated comics, or on pulp fiction cover art. All are examined here as contributing to an overall genealogy.

Pin-up appears to have gathered its initial organising principles from such diverse areas as nineteenth-century pornography, the effects of technological advancements in photography and printing, and the increased

[1] The term "cheesecake" initially referred to pin-up imagery in the early twentieth century, but the term "pin-up" is most widely used today and is the term chiefly employed in this thesis. See Sidney Skolsky, 'That's Hollywood For You', *Photoplay*, February 1957.

public visibility of women in society, including actresses and burlesque performers. Additionally the socio-political influence of suffrage and emergence of the New Woman also affected an emergent dialogue about female sexuality and women's social status, which seeped into renderings of proto-pin-up imagery. Consequently, although pin-up seems rooted in the 1940s, it has a vital prehistory that surfaced with the onset of the Industrial Age.

Following are two definitions of pin-up, the first is taken from the *Oxford English Dictionary* and the second is a definition by pin-up art collector Charles Martignette:

> [*Noun*] A photograph or poster of a glamorous or attractive person; a person shown in such a picture; a popular idol considered worthy of being the subject of such a picture […] [*Adj.*] Of a photograph of a person: intended for display on a wall, etc. Of a person: being, or worthy of being, the subject of such a picture; glamorous, attractive. Freq. in ***pin-up girl.***[2]

> A pin-up image is one that shows a full-length view of its subject and characteristically has an element or a theme or some kind of story. The woman in a pin-up is usually dressed in a form-revealing outfit, either one that may be worn in public, such as a bathing suit, sunsuit, or skimpy dress, or one that is more provocative and intimate, such as lingerie. Sometimes, a pin-up may be shown as nude, but this is more the exception than the rule.[3]

The former definition gives an objective account. It refers to the mediums of photography and posters, which highlights pin-up's connection to technology and implies that pin-up can exist in both a photographic and illustrated format. It also suggests that the people or popular idols that were the subject of these images are chosen on account of attractiveness or "glamour." This suggests that aesthetics play a crucial role in grasping the essence of pin-up. Finally it mentions the *intended* use of the pin-up image: for the purposes of display. Suggesting therefore *worthiness* in the subject of the pin-up, implying that it deserves to be seen by as many people as possible.[4]

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[2] *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, http://www.dictionary.oed.com, accessed 18/08/2010.
[3] Charles G. Martignette, 'The Great American Pin-Up', *The Great American Pin-Up,* Charles G. Martignette, Louis K. Meisel (Köln; London, Madrid; New York; Paris; Tokyo: Taschen, 1996, 2002), p. 32.
[4] John Ayto in *A Century of New Words* concurs claiming "pin-up" denotes "a favourite or sexually attractive young person, the typical subject of a photograph fixed to a wall etc. The

The latter definition on the other hand provides a contemporary and artistically informed view of pin-up art. Martignette suggests that women are mainly featured in pin-up images and that they are part of the *overall pin-up image*. The pin-up *girls* featured in the pin-up *image* play a part in the context as a whole and by doing so seemingly achieve a subjectivity that is dependent on them being featured in full-length view, as opposed to being presented in close-up. This concurs with art historian Maria Elena Buszek's observation, who argues that any cropping of images to focus on a body, as opposed to including it in its wider context, forces the viewer to see the body as the "subject rather than the subtext," thus observing the difference between viewing the female body in art as opposed to pornography.[5] Martignette also states the importance of clothing in these images, which indicates how central fetishism, eroticism and commodification are to the cultural genealogy of the pin-up. These themes will be investigated throughout the thesis and more specifically in chapters 3, 4 and 5. Crucial to Martignette's quote and to this thesis is his discounting of the nude as being part of – or a rare exception of – the pin-up genre. This effectively emphasizes the inherent *modesty,* sensuality and eroticism of the pin-up whilst somewhat distancing her from the crudity of pornography.

According to these two definitions, then, the pin-up is, oftentimes, a famous individual, or an artistic rendering of a "feminine" woman. In the context of the image as a whole "pin-up" can also refer to the image in its entirety, which includes a woman within a thematic context. The pin-up can be a photographic image or an illustrated image that is meant for either public or private display. A pin-up traditionally, and more often than not, refers to a lone, overtly feminine, sexualized/eroticized female figure within a thematic context. The female traditionally wears clothes that reveal her form, ultimately creating the sensual or erotic overtone to the image. Consequently a pin-up image demands that the audience focus on the attractive, eroticized and sexualized woman in the image.

This thesis will also explore why pin-up is relevant in the present day, and what value it continues to hold in Western culture. While pin-up remains nostalgically linked to the mid-twentieth century, the reasons for its *revival* and

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term originated in the US." John Ayto, *A Century of New Words* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 126.

[5] Maria Elena Buszek, *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 300.

reappropriation in late-twentieth- and twenty-first-century popular culture is one of the motivating questions of this thesis. In his study of contemporary youth culture Ryan Moore observes the revival of interest in mid-twentieth-century masculinities and femininities in North America since the 1990s. In a subsection entitled, 'Gender, Class, and "Whiteness" in the 1990s' Moore picks up on a specific "pin-up revival" amongst young women and claims that the pin-up: "embodies many of the contradictions faced by young women today […] the genre has been appropriated by women, including many self-professed feminists, because she also represents the promise of sexual subjectivity."[6] Pin-up would appear to represent to those women who admire and emulate its aesthetics, as an alternate form of sexualized expression, against the generic and synthetic variety popular in mainstream media. This despite the fact that nostalgic pin-up would appear to reflect an age of apparent sexual oppression, naiveté and misinformation regarding women's sexuality. It is these contradictions that Moore hints at which inform one of the main lines of enquiry at the heart of this thesis.

According to Moore, retro subcultures and scenes have witnessed revivals from a variety of bygone eras over time, but interestingly it is the mid-twentieth-century that tends to be persistently revisited.[7] Although its popularity falls in and out of favour within mainstream culture season by season, interest in mid-twentieth-century retro remains fairly constant, thereby keeping a vision of the postwar 1940s/1950s/1960s eras alive, influential, and relevant. A thesis on the pin-up therefore is as much a study of the era of the "long fifties,"[8] during which time pin-up crystallized into an ideal, as well as being the study of a country – the United States of America – of which pin-up appears to be a product. This thesis therefore dedicates three (3, 4 and 5) chapters to pin-up in the "fifties."

Pin-up thrives via various channels today, the most noticeable being the production and sale of a wide range of gift-shop items and related

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[6] Ryan Moore, *Sells Like Teen Spirit: Music, Youth Culture, and Social Crisis* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), p. 171.
[7] Moore, p. 169.
[8] Deborah L. Nelson coins the term the "long fifties", stretching from 1945 to 1961, as an era understood to mark out what is meant by "the fifties" amongst scholars whose interests lie in this area of study, mostly concerning American politics, culture and society. See Deborah L. Nelson, 'Introduction', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 33, No. 3/4, Gender and Culture in the 1950s, Fall-Winter, 2005 (New York: The Feminist Press at the City University of New York), p. 13, http://www.jstor.org/stable/40004416, accessed 04/06/2010.

paraphernalia. The initial trend for contemporary pin-up products surfaced during the early 1990s with retro greeting cards. Still sold today, these cards usually feature a recycled retro mid-twentieth-century image or photograph, matched with a contemporary ironic comment that effectively mocks the subject of the image. This popular formula has since found its way onto many saleable knick-knacks such as mugs, notepaper, key-rings, placemats and scores of other gift-shop items. The postmodern appropriation of the image of the classic pin-up on contemporary consumer items in this way is not as anarchic as one might initially imagine, although that seems to have been the intended marketing purpose. The pin-up has always been a figure of humour, dating back to the satirical Gibson Girl illustrations from *Life* magazine. The original element of humour is an inherent component of all pin-up and serves to alert the viewer to the *fantasy* of the eroticized and sexualized femininity on display. The female body therefore, whether just observed for its overblown proportions, or as part of a humorous scene or context, is the humorous issue at the centre of pin-up. Humour as related to the female body and to fantasy will be discussed at length in chapter 4.

The ironic humour applied to postmodern gift-store products however reflects a postfeminist glance back to the era of classic pin-up imagery. This irony seems to direct a certain degree of derision at their supposed anachronism in the depictions of "fifties" femininity. Deborah Nelson observes:

> displaying an image that is recognizably "fifties" without some degree of sarcasm has become a rarity. Mere citation seems to produce irony, with caption or without. The refrigerator magnet or birthday card reproduces the 1950s to register incredulity that such an image could ever have been taken seriously. Ironically embracing the earnestness of the image, which is the hallmark of camp, the reproduction (or imitation) suggests that the fifties, however ubiquitous, remain zip-locked in a sensibility that lies safely in the past.[9]

This derision was actually part of a "revision" as Nelson goes on to mention, a necessary revision of the "fifties" that sought to abandon its idealization in the popular imagination and reposition the study of that era within academic scholarship as one of oppression and repression. It is noteworthy to mention however, as Nelson also does, that the revised version of the "fifties" has

[9] Nelson, p. 10.

developed into an alternative narrative in itself, inevitably bound to be overturned at some point. The start of this overturning might be sensed in the recently renewed appreciation of classic pin-up – in youth culture, fashion, and art – signaling a steering away from the revisionism of the ironic gift-shop commodity culture and from the assumed oppressive "long fifties." Rediscovered novels such as *The Group* (1963) by Mary McCarthy and *The Best of Everything* (1958) by Rona Jaffe, suggest that women of that era did not always necessarily revert to the conservative stereotype. In pin-up terms, imagery featuring Bettie Page best exemplifies this re-revisionism of the "long fifties," and the social breakthroughs that that type of imagery hinted at will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

The second channel through which pin-up has survived is through art books. Since the mid-1990s there have been a handful of comprehensive volumes published on pin-up that have since gone on to become bestsellers, specifically those produced by German publishing house Taschen, who have garnered a reputation for producing sophisticated erotic coffee table books. Their most popular and groundbreaking book on the subject was *The Great American Pin-up*, as well as publishing others on individual pin-up artists Edward Runci and Gil Elvgren. These books present an exhaustive cataloguing of illustrative pin-up imagery never before seen or seriously considered in the art world, and have since proved to be the initial attempts to chronicle pin-up within a history of illustration art. The significant driving force behind the publication of these books was collectors' Charles Martignette's and Louis Meisel's passion for rescuing American illustration art quite literally from the dumpster trucks. Martignette had amassed over 4,300 pieces by the time of his death in 2008, he had begun his collection in the early 1970s back when pin-up was considered as "nothing more than cheesecake or kitsch at best and trash at worst."[10] His and Meisel's dedication to preserving and documenting a unique American art form engendered enthusiasm in the art world for illustration art, a completely new market, thereby prompting a re-evaluation of the significance of such art and along with it a renewed interest in vintage pin-up art and items, thus sparking their collectable status.

[10] Information on Charles Martignette taken from the Heritage Auction Galleries catalogue by Todd Hignite, http://www.ha.com, accessed 13/1/2011.

Since then, Taschen have published related books, the most informative of which are researched and edited by Dian Hanson, whose meticulous attention to detail has resulted in the gathering of much obscure information on vintage erotica. From men's magazines to under-the-counter material, dime store novels, books, photos and other erotica sources, her research has contributed to the creation of a cohesive catalogue of the history of modern erotic imagery, all of which has clearly impacted the way in which pin-up aestheticism is currently understood and used today.

Certainly contemporary pin-up artists, among them the renowned Olivia De Berardinis and Hajime Sorayama, owe much to Meisel and Martignette for rescuing the reputations of classic pin-up artists such as George Petty, Alberto Vargas, Earl Moran, Earl MacPherson, Enoch Bolles and Gil Elvgren to name but a few. De Berardinis's work in particular harks back to Second World War pin-up imagery, picking up where Petty and Vargas left off. Her works have steadily featured in *Playboy* magazine and Hugh Hefner has loyally nurtured her career.[11] Sorayama's art on the other hand pays tribute to pin-up within the science fiction genre and presents a pin-up crossover of 1950s sci-fi pulp fiction artwork with classic erotica. Their artworks, along with other contemporaries such as "good girl" comics artist Jay Pike, the late comic book creator Dave Stevens and more recently pin-up photographer Viva Van Story, have turned-on a new generation to pin-up, keeping it apposite and intriguing. Additionally, the popular international art movement Dr. Sketchy's, started in 2005, provides life-drawing classes that employ "glamorous underground performers" (burlesque artistes and pin-up models) as still-life models, and in such a way keeps the spirit of pin-up illustration going and stands as a testament to the continued admiration of this form of art amongst the public.[12]

Evidently since the 1990s "pin-up culture" has taken off as part of a retro scene. Notoriously, the "alt porn" SuicideGirls website launched in 2001 provides a forum for twenty-first-century pin-up girls, after a fashion. Their take on the pin-up stems from a *Playboy* aesthetic but predominantly encourages its entrant SuicideGirls to find their own creative look, although the dominant image is one of combined piercings, tattoos and brightly-coloured hair. Their

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[11] Hefner even rescued Vargas's career in the late 1960s, and with his picture editor, Reid Stewart Austin, are responsible for publishing the definitive books on the lives and works of George Petty and Alberto Vargas.

[12] http://www.drsketchy.com/faq, accessed 14/1/2011.

standardization in that sense is reminiscent of the classic pin-up. In 2011 the site claimed:

> In the same way Playboy Magazine became a beacon and guide to the swinging bachelor of the 1960s, SuicideGirls is at the forefront of a generation of young women and men whose ideals about sexuality do not conform with what mainstream media is reporting.[13]

Pin-up aestheticism is thus used as a conduit to express "alternative" visualizations of contemporary ideals of (sexualized) femininity. Alternative explorations of sexual expression are also reflected in the burlesque renaissance, which flourished in the mid-1990s, eventually crossing over into the mainstream by the early twenty-first century and has come to be referred to since as the New Burlesque. Performers such as Dirty Martini, Catherine D'Lish, Immodesty Blaize and Dita Von Teese typify the visual mid-twentieth-century retro aesthetic of this movement. Von Teese started out as a successful fetish pin-up who, along with Gwendoline and Bianca, helped pioneer fetish subscription-based model-owned websites in the late 1990s.[14] She has since come to be known for paying tribute to the classic pin-up look in her burlesque shows, photographic imagery and daily lifestyle, and is the contemporary icon of a pin-up aestheticism evocative of Vargas illustrative art and 1930s/1940s/1950s Hollywood glamour. She also projects elements of Bettie Page fetish and Belle Époque Parisian decadence with a contemporary modern twist. Von Teese serves as a pin-up case study in the final chapter of this thesis, as do Marilyn Monroe and Bettie Page in chapters 4 and 5 respectively.

Burlesque, "alt porn", the fetish scene, as well as the rockabilly scene, and vintage fashions and lifestyles all come together to inform the current understanding of what pin-up aestheticism means to a cult retro youth crowd. Its popularity is reflected in magazines dedicated to "the vintage scene" as it is called in British magazine *Milkcow*, or the retro "stockings, fun and frolics" of *Glimpse* magazine.[15] Pin-up aesthetics continue to be admired and are a source of inspiration for art, music and fashion, as well as within the multimedia domain with the release of the PinUpGirls App in 2011 and numerous similar

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[13] http://www.suicidegirls.com/about/, accessed 14/1/2011.
[14] Paul Scott, *The Fetish Fact Book* (London: Virgin Books, 2004), p. 96.
[15] *Milkcow*, issue 18, December 2010. *Glimpse*, issue 2, June 2010.

Apps since. The ever-enduring popularity of Bettie Page (58,100,000 Google hits) and Marilyn Monroe (61,300,000 Google hits) is evidence of a sentimentality attached to a nostalgic sexual fantasy world set in the past, as are the ardent pin-up historians who have taken to the internet to share their knowledge of pin-up's past and present. [16]

Genealogy as methodology.

My genealogical methodology borrows from Michel Foucault's model as he developed it in his *History of Sexuality* series. Genealogy, as a tool of critical analysis, serves to observe the vast networks, strands and layers that contribute to the *bricolage* of the pin-up trope. My research specifically traces the evolution of *pin-up aesthetics*, as I have coined them, that is, the signs found throughout various visual and cultural mediums that signify pin-up. To trace a genealogy of pin-up involves identifying how seemingly unrelated events, technologies, innovations, individuals, communities, beliefs, ideals, ethics and moralities – amongst other things – have influenced how Western culture persists in visually defining eroticized femininity. A genealogy lays bare some of the elements that have contributed to the making of the pin-up. It presents a non-linear version of history without necessarily creating a logical and consequential narrative.

Furthermore, in this thesis genealogy will seek to distance pin-up and the pin-up aesthetics from the received narrative of the history of women's visual subjugation. This is not through any desire to disprove feminist assertions of women's objectification, which is historical fact. Rather, in accepting this objectification as part of the genealogy of pin-up, I am better able to observe the operation of pin-up aesthetics in culture without necessarily reverting to an assumed "victimhood" of women. As Foucault himself claims, "[genealogy] does not map the destiny of a people." The thesis will therefore not endeavour to close down the debate about the visual representation of women, nor will it seek to impose any "truth" or moral claim about the social and cultural effects of pin-up.

In his definition of genealogy Foucault claims that:

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[16] See http://www.arthistoryarchive.com/arthistory/pinupart/, http://www.thepinupfiles.com/, http://www.imagenetion.com/, http://grapefruitmoongallery.com/gallery/pinupandglamourart.shtml, http://homepage.mac.com/brons/Art/Cheesecake.html, accessed 14/1/2011.

> Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of oblivion; its task is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present […] Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things which continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being lies not at the root of what we know and what we are but the exteriority of accidents.[17]

That the pin-up aesthetic is a constructed form of feminine identity revisited again and again subsequently places it as "one of those things which continue to exist and have value for us." This thesis will aim to identify those accidents, deviations, reversals and errors that maintain pin-up's continued value in Western society and in doing so will present an analysis of that value.

Since this thesis will utilize a genealogical methodology it should be emphasized that there will be no attempts to "expose" the machinations of power, or identify the workings of a so-called patriarchy with regards to the observation of pin-up aesthetics in culture. Rather, it should be understood that the ubiquity of power is a given. This is in accordance with Foucault's own opinions, who recognised power as a productive and often subtle force in society, so he did not seek to pin it down or to denounce it outright. Critic John Ransom brings this point to our attention and uses Judith Butler's understanding of Foucauldian genealogy in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* to make a point about how genealogy is persistently misinterpreted:

> It was not Foucault's view (nor was it Nietzsche's) that to say some cultural artifact was produced by power is the same as to say there is something illegitimate or a priori objectionable about that particular cultural artifact. Power is not "bad" or immoral, nor is the inevitable shaping and constraining that goes with it. Critique that relies on the "exposure" of the operations of power

[17] Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, History', *Aesthetics, Method and Epistemology: Essential Works of Michel Foucault, Volume 2*, ed. James Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley and others (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 374.

> relies on a superficial and frankly classically liberal conception of power.[18]

In explicit terms therefore, a genealogy of the pin-up is in full acknowledgment of the power networks in operation, both implicit in the imagery and in the intention behind their creation.

Themes.

I would like to outline some key thematic patterns that run throughout the thesis: the observation of a supposed repressive Victorian morality, the issue of apparent transgression, and the observations of exaggerated/excessive femininity, glamour, and humour.

One perspective explored throughout this thesis is how the overabundance and popularity of proto-/pin-up imagery in all its guises – in advertisements, in niche- and mass-market magazines, posters, and pornography – consistently demonstrated throughout all eras a reactive distancing of younger generations, since the late-nineteenth century, from preceding generations' apparent conservative or lingering "Victorian" morality. In actuality there remains no substantive evidence that the Victorians were any more "repressed" than any other generation before or after theirs. Michael Mason regards the loaded reference to the "Victorian" as "a disparagingly regarded cultural phase that starts around 1837 and has doctrines of sexual restraint, perhaps hypocritical, as key elements."[19] And whilst he admits to "relatively subtle intensifications of sexual reticence and restraint in the Victorian era," the prudish reputation of an entire generation was in large part hyperbolic.[20] The judgemental use of the "Victorian" arises just after the turn-of-the-century and consequently set-up an imaginary social threshold over which subsequent generations might transgress to make themselves distinct from their elders. This was also the type of psychological device employed in proto-/pin-up imagery. In the decades prior to the Second World War, proto-pin-up imagery generally suggested an attempt to breakdown the outwardly perceived Victorian

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[18] John S. Ransom, *Foucault's Discipline: The Politics of Subjectivity* (Durham; London: Duke university Press, 1997), p.81.
[19] Michael Mason, *The Making of Victorian Sexuality* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 8.
[20] Mason, p. 4.

"shame barrier."[21] After the Second World War, the pin-up, as a symbol, retained an element of that implied rebelliousness.

According to Foucault, Victorians were not victims of inordinate sexual repression but rather, the censure imposed upon sex through middle-class ordering had succeeded in moving sex "into the home," subsequently creating a plethora of sexualities and so-called perversions as well as the illusion of enticing sexual barriers just waiting to be transgressed.[22] The erotic *potential* of the pin-up therefore has guaranteed her popularity throughout all her historical guises by *appearing* to be a symbol of transgression and liberation, and it is this misunderstood characteristic of hers that has kept this pin-up figure alive. Paradoxically Foucault also states that "To say […] the relationship between sex and power is not characterized by repression, is to risk falling into a sterile paradox."[23] Bearing this in mind therefore, it is the "idea of repression" that gives wings to a theory of power in sex, which subsequently fuels the hold over the popular imagination that the pin-up aesthetic has. It is the pin-up's re-enforcement of the *idea* of repression that allows her to be a transgressive figure. The verb "transgression," and the noun "transgressive" are used regularly in this thesis therefore and should at all instances be taken to mean the *appearance* of crossing moral boundaries.

Exaggerated or *excessive* femininity is a key concept in this thesis. The predicate upon which femininity is discussed herein is that femininity is socially and individually constructed.[24] Excessive femininity refers to the type of femininity expressed through the pin-up aesthetics, of a highly eroticized and sexualized type of femininity that has traditionally been achieved on actual women with the skilled application of corsetry, fashion and make-up (and some might add, a confident attitude also). Such visualizations of femininity in art (pin-up) and imitation in life, has a long history. Feminist cultural historian Lois

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[21] As documented in Steven Marcus's work *The Other Victorians*, the Victorians were by no means truly "repressed" – thus proving Foucault's and Mason's respective points – but were indeed victims of extreme conservative social etiquette and censure. See Steven Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2009).

[22] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (London: Penguin, 1976, 1990), pp. 3-6.

[23] Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 8.

[24] If there is any difference between a reference to "excessive" or "exaggerated" femininity, which would be subtle, it is that "excessive" implies an embellishment to feminine traits, whilst "exaggerated" implies a comical embellishment. Pin-up imagery, in visually representing femininity, oscillates between the two insinuations, sometimes more comical, other times less so depending on the artist, photographer and/or subject.

Banner's research in her book *American Beauty* has informed much of my understanding of the various "modes" of femininity that fell in and out of fashion in America since the early-nineteenth century and subsequent sexualization of the female body within consumer culture, and culture and society-at-large. It is the exaggeration of femininity that has made the pin-up both susceptible to ridicule, and simultaneously a transmitter of humour; the underlying anxiety of the humour being (patriarchal) concerns over the shifting status of women in society (see chapter 1 and 4). However, the pin-up imagery of Marilyn Monroe and Bettie Page for instance, can be interpreted as a parodying of the excessiveness and exaggerations of fashionable femininity, thus deflecting and to some extent gaining control over underlying anxieties about women's status and their bodies. A major point of interest of this thesis therefore is the examination of femininity as excess and exaggeration and is further explored in chapters 4, 5 and 6.

There are some points of comparison between Banner's work and Elaine Tyler May's significant research into femininity during the Cold War era, which has been invaluable in guiding me to seek direct connections between the manner in which women, and visual representations of women, are affected by, and subsequently can become literal embodiments of, a state's socio-economic status. Furthermore, May's observation of "sexual containment," which she compares to the political brinkmanship strategizing typical of the Cold War era, inform the manner in which pin-up communicated assumed ideals about women's sexuality. Sexual containment refers to the "codes of proper conduct" young women (and to a lesser extent young men) were expected to abide by regarding their pre-marital sexual lives. In this pressured social climate, "perverts" – part of a somewhat muddled coterie – were regarded to be homosexuals, communists and violent sex attackers, whilst marriage was held up as the ultimate goal for personal fulfilment. With such high expectations placed on marriage, a "preoccupation with female 'promiscuity'" developed in its wake. This culminated in a widespread feeling of containment amongst young women who felt unsure about towing the line between sexual freedom and restraint. As May suggests: "[women] had the most difficult time walking the tightrope between sexual allure and the emphasis on virginity that permeated

youth culture."[25] This dimension of femininity, part of a "brinkmanship" state-of-mind, is certainly reflected in the postwar pin-ups and will be examined in greater detail in chapter 4.

The concept of "glamour" additionally contributes to representations of excessive femininity in pin-up. Stephen Gundle's comprehensive cultural history of glamour provides most of the background information in the thesis on how pin-up, via glamour, achieves the construction of a figure of *fantasy*, which appealed to both men and women, for different reasons. The "cinematic application" of sex appeal, which Gundle refers to, "opened a new chapter in the culture of women as spectacle. The development of cinema allowed male producers and artists new possibilities for moulding women and creating figures of fantasy, even to the point of reconstructing ideals of femininity."[26] Perceiving the pin-up as pure fantasy is a fundamental point for this thesis, which aids in the understanding of how pin-up aesthetics eventually became loaded *performative* traits for women to utilize for their own purposes and principles by the twenty-first century (see chapter 6). As Mark Gabor has commented, the founding principle of *all* pin-up is and was to "[arouse] sexual fantasy." [27] Also important is Gundle's reference to the reconstruction of ideals of femininity in the twentieth century. Since this is the century within which "pin-up" becomes a crystallized concept, it stands to reason that pin-up imagery was influenced by the dominant feminine ideals of that time (see chapter 2). May has also written about how the glamorous women-centred movies of the 1930s affected the perception of glamour influencing femininity in a somewhat positive manner: "The popular culture at the time, particularly movies and fan magazines, glamorized single working women and affirmed their active role in public life."[28] For a very brief period this feminine ideal was much admired and subsequently influenced the construction of the pin-up, which is further explored in chapter 2.

Finally, it bears mentioning that the attempt to write academically about a subject such as pin-up imagery from a favourable standpoint without acknowledging feminism's crusade to end the objectification of women is almost impossible to do, however it is equally difficult to toe the line of political

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[25] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988, 1999), p. 103.
[26] Stephen Gundle, *Glamour: A History* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 182.
[27] Mark Gabor, *The Pin-Up: A Modest History* (London: Pan Books, 1973), p.19.
[28] May, p. 34.

correctness and avoid upsetting feminist sensibilities. The point of writing a genealogy as opposed to a history of the pin-up allows for a more objective approach to the subject, as previously mentioned. Whilst pin-up could be interpreted as the objectification of women for some, for others it is seen as empowering. To quote Foucault once more, he states that: "Pleasure and power do not cancel or turn back against one another; they seek out, overlap, and reinforce one another. They are linked together by complex mechanisms and devices of excitation and incitement."[29] A genealogy on pin-up thus attempts to identify the ways in which numerous influences, social, political and cultural strands contributed to her construction. Disregarding the pin-up as singularly anti-feminist would be amiss in a thesis fundamentally concerned with researching female sexuality in culture and would seem to discount a plethora of data, experiences and opinions. Primarily therefore, this is a thesis that unearths the "mechanisms and devices of excitation and incitement" that come together to reinforce transitory points of pleasure and power in pin-up imagery.

Literature review.

There have been three major analyses of the pin-up as well as one important non-academic publication on the subject, which shall be primarily overviewed here. The first significant consideration of the pin-up comes from film theorist and critic André Bazin in his essay 'Entomology of the Pin-up Girl' from 1946. The first significant academic analysis of the pin-up was Despina Kakoudaki's 2000 essay 'Pinup and Cyborg: Exaggerated Gender and Artificial Intelligence,' followed in 2004 by 'Pinup: The American Secret Weapon in World War II.' Two years later Maria Elena Buszek published the first academic book dedicated to the pin-up in popular culture, entitled *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture*. In 1996 Charles G. Martignette and Louis K. Meisel's *The Great American Pin-Up*, a non-academic work but nonetheless a bestselling, highly informative and important publication on the subject of pin-up was published.

As a film theorist Bazin approaches the subject of the pin-up as a cinematic trope and includes her as part of an argument concerning the lowbrow-leaning tendencies of contemporary (in this case 1940s) film. Bazin intimates that film is, or at least should be, an art form and his essay is in fact a

[29] Foucault, *History of Sexuality,* p. 48.

critique of the pin-up. Thus without being explicit he sets up a distinction between lowbrow and highbrow cinema and the technical methods incumbent in each. The basis for his critique of the pin-up stems from his championing of "objective reality" in film whereby the spectator is free to interpret what is presented on-screen, as opposed to those films that block interpretation through manipulating techniques such as editing and visual effects.[30] In other words, Bazin cannot respect the element of fantasy presented as reality – the pin-up being the relevant element of fantasy in this case – traditionally identified as a trait of the mass-appealing, and of the lowbrow in art.

It does not necessarily follow however that there is nothing to be gleaned from lowbrow art or fantasy as a whole, a factor that Bazin elides. The predicate in understanding the pin-up lies exactly in the comprehension that she is pure fantasy and should be taken as such (the danger being of course that she has been taken as an aspiration to reality and subsequently condemned). While highbrow art *projects* stimulus from which the intelligentsia draw on to provoke discussion, and subsequently exists to fire debate, the lowbrow appeals to a mass audience because it tends to *represent* or *symbolize* the projections of a collective state-of-mind, serving as a signifier of society. The pin-up as such is a sign of the times; the question that remains however is what she signifies. Bazin's observations provide integral insights into how the pin-up is perceived and received in mass-culture whilst also examining her relationship to film. However, this thesis is not so dismissive of the pin-up as Bazin is and seeks to observe her significance in measuring social attitudes towards the status of women in society throughout her "formative" eras.

To date, Maria Elena Buszek's work *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular Culture* has been the only comprehensive academic work on the legacy of the pin-up. Buszek considers the pin-up from a feminist history and parallel art history perspective, examining how the two have converged at various instances over the course of the twentieth century, effectively altering culture and public consciousness regarding the visibility – both "good" and "bad" – of women in society. Contrary to Bazin's viewpoint, Buszek regards (certain) pin-up as art. Bazin himself demands it of the pin-up and is ultimately left disappointed. Neither stance is completely satisfying however, Bazin's because

[30] See André Bazin, *What is Cinema? Volume 2* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1971, 2005).

it disregards an entire art genre that has endured, and is admired by both men and women; Buszek's because she is selective. On the representative aspect of the pin-up Buszek has this to say:

> While many pin-ups are indeed silly caricatures of women that mean to construct their humiliation and passivity as turn-ons, the genre has also represented the sexualised woman, as self-aware, assertive, strong and independent.[31]

Buszek's thesis rests on a pick-and-choose argument whilst the overall tone of her work is one laden with optimism and of putting a positive "spin" on sexual imagery, something one feels she has been somewhat obliged to do having chosen a postfeminist methodology. Her conviction that certain pin-ups represent "assertive, strong and independent" women is a misleading fallacy. Whilst evidence of such pin-ups is indeed observed in this research it is nonetheless tempered by a perspective of objectivity made possible through the genealogical and contextual cultural analysis.

The most invaluable angle to Buszek's analysis is her, albeit, limited attempt to trace the pin-up through history and give her historical context. It is ultimately a fascinating account and its part recapitulation, especially in chapter 1 on demonstrating how factors such as the *carte de visités* and "awarishness" have contributed to the creation of pin-up, has provided me with a crucial methodical template through which to identify pin-up aesthetics in this research.

Despina Kakoudaki's research of the pin-up provides the first modern analytical approach to the subject and her observations provide the cornerstones for how we come to understand pin-up contemporarily. Kakoudaki makes explicit why the pin-up should avoid being interpreted in terms of pornography and speaks of a mythology surrounding pin-up being entrenched in the 1940s. She identifies the pin-up's "patriotic agenda" concerning America during the Second World War and perceives her hegemonic permeation in mass culture and society and her function thereof. Like Bazin, Kakoudaki attempts to break down an anatomy of the pin-up and make clear the pin-up's representation of American values, her links to technology and machinery (American innovation), and sizes-up her erotic potential, and how and why it operates. Kakoudaki belies an affinity for the pin-up in her writing as opposed to

[31] Buszek, p. 8.

Bazin and favours a cultural historical approach towards the subject, the exact approach that is employed in this thesis. In distancing the pin-up from pornography Kakoudaki observes:

> Compared to our visually explicit and hardcore genres, the illustrated mid-twentieth-century pinup is tame and, I would claim, not easily readable. This is because the pin-ups function and cultural relevance were completely revolutionized in the 1940s, to the point where we can no longer see its historical development clearly and cannot make out how it relates to our contemporary debates about pornography.[32]

Kakoudaki goes on to speak about normative middle-class heterosexuality, exaggerated gender, fetishism and technology, all of which give extraordinary insight into the role of pin-up in culture and provide intelligent and poignant points for debate throughout this thesis. Furthermore, I attempt to suggest how it might be possible to faintly see a connection between classic pin-up and contemporary pornography by the final chapter.

Finally, Charles G. Martignette and Louis K. Meisel's non-academic contribution *The Great American Pin-Up* must be considered among the primary sources relating to the pin-up for its sheer attention to detail in its research and its attempt to contextualize a history of pin-up illustration as part of art history. The book brings together for the first time a reference of over 100 pin-up artists' work, with short biographies for each, in an attempt to bring some legitimacy to the domain of illustration art, which has mostly been overlooked by the art world-at-large. Martignette states:

> I firmly believe that time and history will recognize the hundreds of American illustrators as truly significant artists of the twentieth century. It was their art that recorded for all of us the social and cultural development of our country. And pin-ups and glamour art played a key role in that process.[33]

Alongside contributions from art historian Walt Reed and fellow collector and gallery owner Louis K. Meisel, Martignette makes the initial attempts to write an evolving history in illustration art regarding pin-up, bringing together and drawing upon diverse influences, and citing the artistic impact of Charles Dana

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[32] Despina Kakoudaki, 'Pinup: The American Secret Weapon in World War II', *Porn Studies*, ed. Linda Williams (Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press, 2004), p. 336.
[33] Martignette, p. 10.

Gibson's Gibson Girl, the Art Nouveau movement and Art Deco, as the initial stirrings of pin-up. Their book regards the pin-up from 1920 to 1980 with a focus on illustrated pin-up, encompassing calendar art, pulp fiction covers, centrefolds and advertisements. As a cultural genealogy of the pin-up however, this thesis takes into account influences from outside the United States, includes photographic pin-up imagery, and case studies of pin-up girls, whilst also extending the timeline to prior to the nineteenth-century Gibson Girl in order to encompass the broader spectrum of influences over the formation of the American pin-up girl.

Interestingly, underlying the writing of authors Martignette and Meisel is a slight sense of defensiveness and a nostalgic reverence for alleged "simpler" and more "innocent" times, which the pin-ups ostensibly represent. Reed marks the distancing of the pin-ups from pornography citing the increased use of photography in the 1970s that "tended to take the fun out of the subject [of pin-up] and to put the emphasis on [the] literal examination of sexual parts more appropriate to the medical profession." [34] Martignette and Meisel also emphasize the pin-ups' "sexy but chaste" appearance to connote the reverence paid to women as represented in these illustrations as opposed to the implied degradation of pornography.[35] In making such comments the authors pose very interesting dilemmas in the defence of the pin-up. On the one hand their arguments are commendable and kind, on the other hand they could appear naïve and over-simplified. For instance, Meisel argues that the pin-up was conceived in a world "free from the influence of a warped fashion world or a distorted feminism. They looked the way most women of the time wanted to look and certainly the way men […] wanted them to look."[36] Additionally he remarks that since issues such as race, gender and politics entered the concerns of the artist and the art critic the "artist's ability to make art, and the viewer's to recognize it, has been severely compromised."[37] The key to viewing pin-up art he adds is to view it "without prejudice and preconception."[38] Though these are bold statements to make and conceivably anachronistic, they are difficult to disregard because the subject of the pin-up is anachronistic in itself. The fact that an anachronism, such as the pin-up girl, remains a popular icon in

[34] Walt Reed, 'Pin-Up Art: A Historical Commentary', *The Great American Pin-Up*, p. 17.
[35] Louis K. Meisel, 'The 'Fine' Art of Illustration', *The Great American Pin-Up*, p. 22.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Meisel, p. 23.
[38] Meisel, p. 25.

this era of political correctness is the obvious dilemma at the basis of a thesis dedicated to the subject. What will unravel over the course of the following six chapters is an attempt to see why and how this anachronism remains relevant today.

Chapter 1.

The Precursors to the Pin-Up: Sensual Influences and Pin-Up Aesthetics in Nineteenth-Century Industrial Age America.

This chapter observes how nineteenth-century society, especially in American society, began to normalize the viewing, imaging and commercialization of femininity via a proto-pin-up figure. I will show how technological advances in photography and the increased importance of the press were the primary forces behind this normalization. In addition, I demonstrate that various cultural and economic innovations and phenomena contributed in small or large part to the formation of a pin-up aesthetic leading into the twentieth century. The chapter ends with an analysis of the Gibson Girl whose great popularity prompted the "pretty girl" illustration phase and was, as a product of her time, the first tentatively recognized "pin-up girl" figure. Most importantly this chapter examines how the distinctly American veneration of women and femininity in society – as observed by French traveller Oscar Comettant, a "cult of women" flourished in nineteenth-century America – proved susceptible to complete usurpation by the technologies of an era that Jean-Louis Comolli famously characterized as a "frenzy of the visible." [39]

The "Sensual Rebellion" and the Voluptuous Woman.

Lois Banner's compelling work of social history, *American Beauty* – which charts the rise of the beauty industry and the changes in standards of beauty in America from the early 1800s onwards – makes reference to a "subculture of sensuality" and a "sensual rebellion" occurring in the late-Victorian period. The manifestation of this sensual movement, so to speak, clarifies how and why the twentieth century eventually produced the classic mid-twentieth-century pin-up. In her book Banner observes that for the first time in Western history, just after the Civil War, the "lower or outsider groups" began to influence fashions and standards of beauty. They consisted of the sporting set, the theatrical crowd, those who frequented saloons and gaming parlours, and even prostitutes.

[39] For reference to "cult of women" see Lois W. Banner, *American Beauty* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1983), p.167, p.45. For reference to "frenzy of the visible" see Jean-Louis Comolli, 'Machines of the Visible', *The Cinematic Apparatus*, ed. Teresa de Lauretis and Stephen Heath (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1980), pp. 121-142.

According to Banner, as "outsiders" they lived significantly more "unfettered" lives, meaning, strict social conduct and etiquette did not apply to them, subsequently enabling "more liberated moral codes and erotic styles of dress and behavior."[40] The influence these outsiders – the "subculture of sensuality" – had over fashions signalled a break from the centuries dominance of upper-class tastes, and the values that informed those tastes. The middle-classes of the late 1800s who adopted and made fashionable various trends such as the use of cosmetics, erotic fashion styles and certain behavioural traits, took their lead from them; these people, their habits and their haunts comprised the "subculture of sensuality." When the middle-classes embraced this subculture they instigated the so-called sensual rebellion, which was in essence a reaction against the conservatism of the previous generation. The excess, romance and decadence that defined the rebellion came to be personified in the figure of the "voluptuous woman," as depicted in the art of the era (*fig.1*).[41] The Voluptuous Woman inspired many other creative outlets but most importantly was heralded as a fashionable stereotype for women to aspire to: as Banner points out, "the voluptuous model of beauty of the mid-nineteenth century arose from this milieu […] which also formed the source of a sensual rebellion that began in the 1890s and reached its peak in the 1920s."[42]

The beauty standard of the Voluptuous Woman entered American fashions in the 1850s and became emblematic of the sensual rebellion.[43] The erotic and fleshy "hourglass" figure of this type of woman dominated popular fashion and sensibilities for a short while during her peak in the 1860s to early 1870s. The highpoint of corsetry as established fashion statement occurred during this time, its most extreme adherence to the small-waist and rounded-curves ratio was epitomized by the s-bend corset. The Voluptuous Woman's vanguards were the burlesque performers and actresses of the controversial theatre professions, whose vibrant on-stage personalities and sensationalized off-stage personal lives presented to the young people who admired them a daring example of independence and self-reliance generally uncommon

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[40] Banner, p. 7.
[41] Banner, p. 107.
[42] Banner, p. 7.
[43] Incidentally, Banner explains why fashions were so important to Americans during the 1800s: "The vogues of fashion flew in the face of republicanism, but the growth of fashion consciousness was in keeping with the rampant individualism, materialism, and search for status and success that were as much a part of basic American values as the egalitarianism traditionally associated with the rise of nineteenth-century democracy." Banner, p. 23.

amongst women of the era. By the *fin-de-siècle* however, the Voluptuous Woman gradually fell out of fashion with respectable women; at the same time, her mode of style and beauty became wholly absorbed into the domain of masculine pornographic culture where she has since remained. Without the fashion for the Voluptuous Woman however, the pin-up would probably never have come into existence. The Voluptuous Woman has provided the erotic template for the depiction of pin-up types in art, entertainment, erotica and popular culture in general, the relevance of which is subsequently explored here.

The Voluptuous Woman of the sensual rebellion was remarkable in that she ended the long-reigning model of femininity Banner has identified as the "steel-engraving lady" who came about in the early 1800s.[44] The steel-engraving lady was the frail and passive model of womanhood linked to gentility and morality, archetypically famed throughout history for feigning illness to denote her delicacy. Her standard of beauty was modelled on the pale "angelic" look of tuberculosis sufferers who appeared to have translucent skin. Her fashions – enormous hoop skirts and leg-of-mutton sleeves – rendered her mostly immobile, thus reflecting her inactive status in society. Banner observes that:

> the steel-engraving model of beauty was an embodiment of the restrictive, middle-class Victorian view of woman's role. In a turbulent, rapidly industrializing society […] a period of conservatism, which the entire Western world had entered following the upheavals of the French Revolution, women were designated the representatives of order, morality, and repose. They were to display in face and attire as well as attitude their adherence to the qualities of purity, piety, domesticity, and submission that formed the core of the nineteenth-century "cult of true womanhood" [.][45]

When the alternative feminine model of the Voluptuous Woman re-emerged by mid-century it rightfully caused a stir, and anyone adopting the look was considered to be partaking, somewhat, in an act of rebellion against the

[44] Banner, p. 45.
[45] Banner, p. 53.

accustomed way in which women were expected to present themselves publicly.[46]

Originally the word "voluptuousness" was used to describe a sensual or luxurious lifestyle. But by the 1830s the word was being used to denote the shapeliness of a woman, inferring large breasts and hips "displayed to arouse."[47] In America, voluptuousness tended to be associated with the physicality of immigrant European women. In literature also, the hugely admired poet Lord Byron popularised the notion that dark-haired Eastern European and Eurasian women were intensely sensual and desirable, thus linking the Voluptuous Woman to the *femme fatale*.[48] But it was art in particular that would raise the profile of the Voluptuous Woman. Pin-up is indebted to art movements that venerate *the feminine* and draw out the erotic on canvas in the very recognizable tradition of pure objectification. From the late 1700s to the late 1800s four genres of art can clearly be seen to make their mark on future pin-up: the Realists, the Aesthetic Movement, Art Nouveau and Japanese *ukiyo-e*.

Art For Art's Sake.

In its early days, pin-up's artistic genre was probably closest to satirical cartoon. The grandfather of the genre is widely considered to be the English eighteenth-century painter, political commentator and cartoonist William Hogarth. Humour and satire is a traditional feature of pin-up imagery and ranges from overtly written commentary, to the more subtle impression given by the manner in which the pin-up is drawn. What is never absent from the pin-up however is an appreciation for the female form. Rococo artists of the eighteenth century, such as Jean-Antoine Watteau and Jean-Honoré Fragonard have been credited with initiating the vogue for elevating "pretty" women in art.[49] However, the genre that elevated the female nude to academic heights was that of nineteenth-century Realism. Painters William-Adolphe Bouguereau and Gustave Courbet

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[46] Rebellions in fashion were nothing new. According to Banner, the steel-engraving lady was in fact a rebellion of youth over the white wig wearing Republicans of the eighteenth century who valued age and wisdom. Banner, p. 53.

[47] Banner, p. 59.

[48] The *femme fatale* is an archetype of femininity that took off in the late-nineteenth century as found in literature, theatre and general popular culture. The two most famous examples that epitomized this archetype at the time was the renewed interest in the historical figure of Salome (instigated by Oscar Wilde's play *Salome*) and the belly-dancing phenomenon of 'Little Egypt' from Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition (see chapter 5).

[49] Ralph Stein, *The Pin-Up: From 1852 to Now* (London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group, 1974), p. 18.

particularly exemplify the level of adoration afforded to the voluptuous female figure in fine art: in true pin-up style these Realist painters toed the fine line between art, erotica and pornography, which made their paintings purposefully controversial. The pornographic element, or rather, the pornographic *potential* of all erotic artwork is what makes them such compelling viewing. It is the promise of, but also, the lack of the pornographic in the erotic artwork that fascinates. Reflecting on the erotic in such a way encourages a blurring of the boundaries that separate highbrow from lowbrow art, or, art (the nude), from "art" (a pin-up). As cultural sociologist Richard Howells observes:

> We may not be taken aback by bathing pictures by Ingres or Courbet, but many a parent would be dismayed to find similar magazine photographs under a teenager's bed […] This may lead us to wonder if much of what we have come to think of as art is in fact pornography. Conversely (and controversially), some might even be so bold as to argue that much of what people had come to think of as pornography might indeed be art.[50]

The incident of Bouguereau's *Nymphs and Satyr* (1873) makes an interesting point about what passes as pornography (*fig.2*). The painting caused a stir when it was acquired by Hoffman House – a New York men's club – in 1887, and hung on the wall of the bar room. So notorious had the voluptuous women of the painting become that the club inaugurated a Ladies' Day especially, in order to admit the thousands of women who had requested a viewing of it. The painting, considered "high-class pornography" at the time, caused such a commotion that Hoffman House espied an opportunity to capitalize on the painting's popularity and began selling Hoffman cigars as souvenir items bearing the Bouguereau image. The painting contributed to the notion that voluptuousness was fashionable and, although voluptuous women had been displayed in working-class saloons before the Hoffman House incident, it helped cement the trend for displaying nudes in bar rooms, turning it into a staple feature of bar room décors everywhere.[51]

Confusion over pornography as art might be enlightened somewhat by considering the concept adopted by the artists of the Aesthetic Movement: Art

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[50] Richard Howells, *Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), p. 87.
[51] Banner, p. 111.

for Art's Sake.[52] The ideal behind the concept is similar to that of pornography, namely, the (male) pursuit of pleasure. Without a doubt, England's Aesthetic Movement of the mid-1800s, and the Pre-Raphaelites, considerably impacted the level of appreciation for depicting and popularising women of a particular standard of beauty in art. The resolve to create "Art for Art's Sake" meant that the artists of the Aesthetic Movement deliberately produced works for pleasure, with no real aspirations to moralism or didactics. Additionally, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood favoured muses who were unusual in appearance and anathema to Victorian social conventions of female beauty at the time. The auburn-haired and pale Pre-Raphaelite muse Elizabeth Siddal typified the unconventional "look" that the Brotherhood strove for, and blended her unconventionality with a sumptuous and romantic aesthetic in paintings (*fig.3*). The Voluptuous Woman at the height of her popularity was also considered an outsider and in the same way was linked to a visual-sensual overload.

At the high point of the sensual rebellion however, it was Charles Dana Gibson's illustration, the Gibson Girl (discussed later in the chapter) that all at once established and captured the zeitgeist of fashionable women in America. Once the trend for voluptuousness had eventually passed, the emerging Gibson Girl retained all the romance and sensuousness exhibited within the Aesthetic Movement, but appeared as a surprisingly tall, elegant, sophisticated but shapely middle- to upper-class woman. Her forbears in art were the Pre-Raphaelite Medieval maidens and novelist and illustrator George Du Maurier's 'Trilby' (*fig.4*). The Gibson Girl sat at a distance, but not too disassociated from the Art Nouveau movement of the Belle Époque period in France, which "dedicated itself to the worship of women":

> [Art Nouveau created] a tidal wave of eroticism which is probably unique in the history of art […] The female body was prominently displayed everywhere, and became a dazzling source of inspiration. The charms and arabesques of the female shape were to be found on walls and stair-ramps, on buildings, around doors, in ashtrays, encircling vases and table legs, swirled on paper-knives and paper-weights [.][53]

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[52] The maxim came from France: *"L'art pour l'art."* It is written in Latin – *"Ars gratia artis"* – on the Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer film production company logo, therefore linking the valorization of the (female) movie star/pin-up to art as pure pleasure.

[53] Jacques Sternberg, Pierre Chapelot, ed. J.D.S., *Pin-Up* (London; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1974), p. 21.

Within Art Nouveau the depiction of the female figure can be seen to be informed by remnants of the Voluptuous Woman archetype yet transformed by a characteristic physical sinuousness that exuded middle- and upper-class sophistication. This style clearly impacted Gibson's unique illustrations. Art Nouveau (the "new art"), a part of the wider Arts and Crafts movement of Europe, and particularly the poster art of its greatest ambassadors such as Alphonse Mucha, Jules Chéret and Aubrey Beardsley, were distinctive for their curvilinear outlines, thus mimicking the curvaceous body of the voluptuous woman (*fig.5&6*).

There are direct connections between the beautiful Art Nouveau women and the erotic line and colour drawings of Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints, especially apparent in the work of Kitagawa Utamaro. Famous for his *bijinga* ("pictures of beautiful people"), Utamaro's work, and that of his contemporaries in Japan, could very possibly be considered to have been the initial direct influence concerning the subtext and simplicity in the illustration style of pin-up art. It has been suggested that it was in fact Japanese art that instigated the Art Nouveau movement.[54] Japanese art of the latter Edo period during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries provides the most interesting and less obvious influence over America's pin-up genre. After 250 years of isolation Japan was forced to open its ports to the rest of the world after an intrusion by American Commodore Perry's ships upon Japanese harbours. By 1871 Japan had dispatched their first diplomats to America and export trade had spread to America and beyond.[55] A "Japan Craze" subsequently swept through Europe, particularly in England and America during this period, with traditional Japanese culture influencing everything from chinaware to the theatre.[56] Oscar Wilde was a staunch proponent of the excellent craftsmanship of Japanese decorative arts; he famously toured America in 1882 giving lectures on aestheticism in which he lauded praise on Japanese art and culture. But where the craze was short-lived in Europe, Americans welcomed the influx of Japanese culture for two whole decades:

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[54] Sternberg, Chapelot, p. 92.
[55] Hannah Sigur, *The Influence of Japanese Art on Design* (Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2008), pp. 11-16.
[56] Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta *The Mikado* is a prime "Japan Craze" example.

> beneath [the] surface silliness [of the Japan Craze], a process of true assimilation was unfolding in response to economic upheaval, changing social patterns, and greater sophistication. In the world of mass production that now typified the American market, the Japanese artistic ideal of economy, simplicity, and functionality provided creative ideas for products to meet middle-class needs and quality demands.[57]

For Americans it seems the Japanese style provided an alternative to the European way of life that had traditionally informed their national identity. In the age of the Industrial Revolution, Japanese folk art reminded Americans (and Europeans) of the lost art of handmade arts and crafts. Infused with a sense of nostalgia therefore, Japanese art would introduce a sense of longing for the past to the classic pin-up, as would the simple lines and economy of style that distinguished their illustration, a technique that would lend itself well to Western poster advertisements.

Shunga, the erotic subgenre of *ukiyo-e,* depicted idealized and fantastical sex acts, a "varied world of sexual possibilities" that reflected the sense of adventure of contemporary urban living (*fig.7*).[58] Whilst pin-up did not borrow from the sexually explicit dimension of Shunga, it did borrow from the "modesty" it displayed in the clothing of its characters. Since nudity was not considered taboo in Japan, where people were used to seeing naked bodies in mixed-sex communal baths, clothed or semi-clothed figures thus came to be eroticized as exemplified in Shunga.[59] The strategically placed clothing of the classic pin-up can be similarly seen to derive from this erotic Shunga tradition. Similarly, the depiction of the courtesan was central to the aesthetic. They were the "celebrities of the day" and the genre glamourized them to both male and female viewers, in much the same way that Hollywood would later glamourize their stars in publicity pin-up stills and posters in the 1920s and 1930s. Tim Pilcher observes that: "men saw these ladies as highly eroticized due to their profession, while being unattainable except to the wealthiest, most cultured men. Women saw the courtesans as distant, glamorous idols, and Japan's fashions were inspired by [them]."[60] The most famous Japanese artist of women of the *ukiyo-e* was Kitagawa Utamaro.

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[57] Sigur, p. 95.
[58] Tim Pilcher, *Erotic Comics: A Graphic History, Volume 1, From Birth to the 1970s* (East Sussex: Ilex, 2011), p. 18.
[59] Pilcher, p. 18.
[60] Ibid.

Utamaro was a late eighteenth-century Japanese artist of the "floating world" period in Japanese art, from Edo (modern Tokyo). No comprehensive account of his life is available and he remains a semi-mysterious figure; however, he left behind a legacy of famous portrait-style illustrations of "types" of women, something that has been described as a "veritable taxonomy of the feminine."[61] The *bijinga* were intended as categorisations of women (and originally of men also), following in a long-held Japanese tradition of classifying persons within society. The *ukiyo-e* in general served artistically as an advertising genre: of towns and cities; landscapes; people; produce and merchandise, among other attractive features. Utamaro was particularly interested in portraying the inhabitants of the Yoshiwara district, a bohemian area where artists, poets and prostitutes mingled. Building on the district's existing reputation, Utamaro exaggerated its erotic and fantastical aspects, made even more attractive by the fact that Japan was undergoing a period of censure and conservatism under the Kansei Reforms at the time. Art historian Julie Nelson Davies argues that observers have wrongly interpreted Utamaro's prints as documentary evidence of daily life. On the images he produced of prostitutes she states:

> *ukiyo-e* prints served to glamorize the trade [of prostitution]. Thus the point that what is shown in those depictions in general, and in Utamaro's in particular, was not a representation of 'real life' cannot be stressed enough. These are not 'snapshots' or 'portraits' taken from life, nor are they 'documentary' (however fraught that word may be) in intent. They are a fictionalized view of an imagined world of pleasure, complicit in all that it entailed.[62]

Pin-up similarly takes its lead from this tradition, in that it sets up a world of fantasy that is often misinterpreted as an attempt to depict what is real. The Yoshiwara district that Utamaro portrayed was, according to Nelson, "an eroticized zone of the imagination."[63] Comparing a geographical area to an eroticized area of the imagination is an incisive observation that characterises the way in which art – no matter how realistic – can only ever be an extension of the artist's mind.

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[61] Julie Nelson Davis, *Utamaro and the Spectacle of Beauty* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), p. 63.
[62] Davis, p. 23.
[63] Davis, p. 62.

Utamaro's initial motivation for devising his classifications of women – which included wives, daughters, mothers and shopkeepers, as well as prostitutes (often given the misnomer of "geisha") – was the traditional Chinese practice of physiognomy.[64] The influence physiognomy had over the *bijinga* was the requirement that attention to detail be paid to the muse's appearance. In Utamaro's *bijinga* therefore, what we may contemporarily interpret as the fetishization of women in these images in fact sprang from a combination of corrupted physiognomy and his unique approach to illustration in composing bust-length portraits:

> Images of women generally grew out of earlier pictorial traditions that employed the female figure for the purposes of narrative, didacticism and erotic attraction. This treatment of images of women was not new, nor was it isolated to Japan. Earlier *ukiyo-e* appropriated these precedents and employed them in pictures of dancers, entertainers and the contemporary manners and customs (*fuzoku-e*) in the seventeenth century. The mode evolved into a highly aestheticized manner showing attractive figures of both sex, but became primarily focused upon reproducing the nuances of feminine beauty – dress, make-up, hairstyle and behaviour – to make these into fetishized features. Gradually, images of the high-ranking *yujo* ["women of pleasure"] came to represent the ideal for the cultural terms of beauty.[65]

Regarding the effect of *ukiyo-e* and *Shunga* over the eventual formulation of pin-up, it is perhaps George Petty's renderings that can be seen to directly borrow from the artistic tradition of the fetishistic *ukiyo-e*, with his focus on delicate depictions of hands and feet and his reliance on props (or boudoir accessories) to contextualize the beauty of the women he painted (*fig.8&55*) But pin-up artists Alberto Vargas, Olivia De Berardinis and Hajime Sorayama have also paid their respects to *ukiyo-e* in their work (*fig.9,10&201*). Utamaro often depicted his women with boudoir props and accompanied his artwork with *gesaku* (tongue-in-cheek poetry), or satirical dialogue between characters, thus revealing a direct relation to the humorous commentary which features in classic American pin-up. Utamaro's *bijinga* were preoccupied with *examining*

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[64] Physiognomy has been practised in China since the 10th century. It is the study of the conceptualized body as a mirror of the structure of heaven: "Physiognomic reading of an individual's face meant interpreting the pattern of heaven in the earthly object of the manifested body. Seeing into the "aspect" was like looking into a watery mirror, reflecting the order of heaven. For Chinese physiognomists, this meant that careful study of the body, and particularly of the face, would reveal an individual's health, character, fate and fortune." Nelson, p. 89.

[65] Davis, p. 69.

women but never specifically glorified the Voluptuous Woman as such, as did the European art movements. The *bijinga*'s eroticism and sexuality emanated from the fetishistic aspect of Utamaro's illustration technique, of both the body and the clothing depicted.

The Voluptuous Woman in European art and her admiration among middle-class men and women as a beacon of contemporary beauty standards was in fact a fad. Even at the very height of her popularity, the Voluptuous Woman had never really managed to steal the limelight away entirely from the athletic, slender, small and delicate model of femininity that had always been favoured in popular culture. But during her peak, from the 1860s-1870s, such was her effect that she aided greatly in ushering in the sensual rebellion of the 1890s. At the time of their mass distribution and production in the early 1800s, the erotic and exotic female subjects of Utamaro's prints and their implied intimacy evoked a connection with the emerging Victorian fascination for verisimilitude, which was to have an immeasurable effect on the way women would be imaged from that point onwards.

Verisimilitude and *Tableaux Vivants*.

For Utamaro's contemporary audience, the draw of his prints ultimately was the "documentary" feel, or rather, an intimacy achieved by a certain level of verisimilitude captured in the detail of the illustration. Pin-up images in similar ways conjure verisimilitude via their representational style; the context of catching them in "private" moments; and via their often direct gaze out towards the viewer, while at the same time creating distance between subject and viewer through their very intangibility. This tension is precisely what sustains the attention of the viewer. Importantly the nineteenth-century trend towards verisimilitude reveals a society that was becoming increasingly scopophilic.

The allure of verisimilitude became progressively more apparent throughout the 1800s when the *tableaux vivants*, a theatrical novelty, eventually became a legitimate and highly popular established form of entertainment.[66]

[66] Before the re-emergence of *tableaux vivants* during the Renaissance period, a variant of the *tableaux* appeared in the late Middle Ages in England and France. Presentations of *tableaux* during the Middle Ages were put on for liturgical and royal ceremonial purposes. Jack McCullough claims that the first Renaissance *tableau* was presented in Paris during a theatre production in 1761, whilst Barry Faulk and Lois Banner claim it was Goethe who first witnessed the revival of the *tableaux* in 1787 at a private function, before they became popularised in the halls and theatres of Europe and America.

Tableaux vivants featured live models in static poses, sometimes staged within a frame, amongst evocative scenery with props, live music and running commentary (*fig.11*). Presented onstage they would recreate a famous painting or sculpture, a scene from a literary work, or even evoke a historical event, whilst attempting to achieve as much likeness to the original work of art as possible: "The total effect was a startling display in living color and three dimensions."[67] In Britain *tableaux vivants* entered popular culture during the 1830s and shortly thereafter they caught on in New York where they initially found a mass audience from the 1830s-1870s and later again during the 1890s.

When the *tableaux*, or *poses plastiques*, first arrived in America they were considered in earnest to be a refined and informative educational mode of entertainment, since they promoted the knowledge of fine art:

> The justification offered for these early tableaux was that they contributed to the edification, refinement, or moral uplift of the audience. Advertising attempted to focus attention on the aesthetic, didactic, or moralistic value of the work represented […] The exhibits of paintings and sculpture provided the audience with a knowledge of source material; the panoramic displays contributed the exotic; and, taken together, they all encouraged that sense of spectacle which could be satisfied by tableaux […] The aura surrounding tableaux vivants from their introduction in 1831 until 1847 seems one of almost child-like curiosity – innocent, well-intentioned, and receptive. [68]

Once the initial rush of wonderment had subsided however, and the *tableaux* proven to be a profitable business venture, managers soon began to capitalize on the sensational possibilities of these curious productions. It eventually became apparent that audiences increasingly flocked to see female performers in "fleshings" and body paint simulating nudes from sculpture and painting masterpieces. Managers exploited this angle of the productions in their advertising, so much so that issues with law and decency began to overshadow anything that may have originally seemed innocent and child-like. Historian Jack McCullough points out that:

> Although the managers still emphasized the "artistic" nature of the presentations and urged "edification" as their purpose, it was clear

[67] Jack W. McCullough, *Living Pictures on the New York Stage* (Epping; Essex: Bowker Publishing Company, 1983), p. 1.
[68] McCullough, pp. 16-17.

> that growing numbers of spectators were far more interested in the "symmetry" of the "female form divine." As mid-century approached, this dichotomy of sensation and artistry was clearly evident [.][69]

The effective marketing tool of suggested nudity had therefore made its first appearance in mass culture. However, the *tableaux* eventually suffered the loss of its middle-class audience when they began to gather a reputation for tawdriness and crudity. This reputation soon established a distinction between two individual types of *tableau* productions: the "model artist" was purely a show of the "fine female form," whilst the *tableaux vivants* were able to retain some of their original credibility. Subsequently, the display of women could be construed as a class-defining action depending on the manner in which female bodies could be posed. If models' poses presupposed knowledge of the classical arts, the audience viewing them was assumed to be upper-class. Without that context however the models were merely sexual objects and therefore associated with an uneducated viewership. Social historian Barry J. Faulk writes:

> The conflation of feminine display with the norms of classical culture could not be transferred to "vulgar" spaces. Once it left privileged spectators who could read the codes of classical literacy, the private pose embodying aesthetic beauty became degrade display. [70]

At the time of the decline of the *tableaux vivants* from the late-1860s to early-1870s, the burlesque troupe, the British Blondes, suddenly arrived on the scene and stole attention away from the titillation of the *tableaux*. Additionally the "leg shows" already in existence in America, offered alternative entertainment featuring attractive young women, without any of the pretentions to decency claimed by the *tableaux* organisers. The *tableaux vivants* died out by the 1870s and were only subsequently revived in the 1890s by Edward Kilanyi as a fittingly complimentary art form to the sensual rebellion.[71] They came to be known as the Living Pictures and were particularly distinctive for capturing the imaginations of the British and American public alike by uniquely marrying

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[69] McCullough, p.19.
[70] Barry J. Faulk, *Music Hall & Modernity: The Late Victorian Discovery of Popular Culture* (Athens; Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2004), p.149.
[71] McCullough, p. 101.

(female) spectacle and verisimilitude within highly stylized settings: "The affinity between greater verisimilitude and increased scopic pleasure was made evident in the new Living Pictures."[72] Kilyani's productions did much to aestheticize, legitimize and sophisticate the live displayed nude, primarily because he had mastered the art of illusion; utilizing lighting techniques, make-up, scenery and props to create devastatingly beautiful sights: "The advances in illusionist technique allowed for a remarkable control over the nude figure on display; they also offered new possibilities to aestheticize nudity in displaying and controlling the spectacle of the female body."[73] The spectacle of the body in the Living Pictures therefore also promoted the idea of the body spectacular, made possible through the way in which the techniques of illusion distorted and altered the presentation of bodies. Aesthetics, spectacle and the unquenchable thirst for evermore satisfying measures of verisimilitude to mollify the scopic trend, were to finally reach their zenith in the invention of photography.

The Nude, Pornography, and Photography.

There are conflicting accounts as to who should be credited with the invention of photography, but generally it is Frenchman Joseph Nicéphore Niépce who is thought to have produced the first photograph (heliograph), circa 1827. Englishman William Henry Fox Talbot is also considered to be an innovator of photography, having developed the same process as Niépce but only on paper and not in practise. Talbot announced his process to the Royal Academy in London two weeks after Niépce went public.[74] In 1839 Niépce collaborated with Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre to produce the daguerreotype. Daguerreotypes, the first photographs, could only be produced once and were consequently expensive. The widespread use of photography was made possible when George Eastman produced the Kodak camera in 1888.[75]

In retrospect, it is obvious that in an age in which *tableaux vivants* were causing such a sensation, the invention of photography would be the next logical step in the charge to reach even greater measures of verisimilitude. In fact, the invention of photography symbolically encapsulates the fervour of that generation of the nineteenth-century that made visuality vital to the way we

[72] Faulk, p. 156.
[73] Faulk, p. 155.
[74] Howells, p.153.
[75] Howells, p.153.

would, from that point on, forever communicate. To briefly return to Comolli, he states that the nineteenth-century fascination with the visual was entirely influenced by technological innovations that supplied more and more visual material, that in itself was fed by human expansion in the form of exploration and colonization, which provided material for further representation, thus necessitating the increased production of visual material:

> The second half of the nineteenth century lives in a sort of frenzy of the visible. It is, of course, the effect of the social multiplication of images: ever wider distribution of illustrated papers, waves of prints, caricatures, etc. the effect also, however, of something of a geographical extension of the field of the visible and the representable: by journies [sic], explorations, colonisations, the whole world becomes visible at the same time that it becomes appropriatable [sic] […] The mechanical opens out and multiplies the visible and between them is established a *complicity* all the stronger in that the codes of analogical figuration slip irresistibly from painting to photography and then from the latter to cinematography.[76]

At this stage, the "analogical" codes of figuration were slipping from painting to photography (but not to cinematography just yet). It is often forgotten that the basic premise of photography, the camera obscura, had been around for centuries before the dawning of the innovative Victorian age. Michael Koetzle, in an essay from the book *1000 Nudes: A History of Erotic Photography from 1839-1939*, comes upon an exceptionally intriguing reason as to why photography suddenly in the nineteenth century, mattered:

> The discovery of photography during the first third of the nineteenth century was the response of the technological era to the taste for images of a middle class of considerable economic means […] What remained lacking up until the end of the eighteenth century was *a socially rooted interest* in obtaining pictures by mechanical means and a way of making permanent the camera obscura "sun pictures" [my italics].[77]

What Koetzle implies by "a socially rooted interest" is that there was an apparent demand within society for certain forms of cultural entertainment, including the erotic, and the corollary financial gains resulting from those

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[76] Comolli, pp. 122-123.
[77] Michael Koetzle, *1000 Nudes: A History of Erotic Photography from 1839-1939*, Uwe Scheid Collection (Köln; London: Taschen, 2005), p. 7.

entertainments. Indeed, Linda Williams observes (in terms of the cinematic) that the "optical inventions of the late nineteenth century – cameras, magic lanterns, zoetropes, Kinetographs, Kinetoscopes, and the early precursors of movies as we know them today," were methods through which the *scientia sexualis*, as Foucault described it, came about. Thus, photography and technologies of the visual-at-large also reflected a scientific categorizing fascination with regards to the body and to sex. The emergence of pornographic daguerreotypes and photographs reflects, on the one hand, a "construction of new body forms," giving impetus to emergent Western traditions of *scientia sexualis*, as opposed to an emanation from the *ars erotica* (erotic arts of ancient civilizations).[78] However, the later emergence and eventual establishment of pin-up imagery in the mid-twentieth century reflects more of a hybridized Western fine art and imitation of *ars erotica*, sustained by the ideological framework of the *scientia sexualis*.

The medium of photography made it possible for eroticism to be capitalized upon. Apart from lending itself effortlessly to the principles of verisimilitude, photography, it could be argued, crystallized the form of objectification only previously experienced in paintings, by transforming whatever and whoever was captured on camera into a scrutinized object.[79] What had once been enjoyed in the viewing of the *tableaux vivants* as the intimacy of verisimilitude, had changed with the viewing of a photograph into a voyeuristic pleasure, reason being that the people in the photograph were not live and therefore unaware of the viewer.

Eroticism, voyeurism and objectification are etched into the very DNA of photography. It is no surprise therefore that erotic and pornographic photography is almost as old as the camera itself. Daguerreotypes of nude models began to appear in Paris in 1845, the most well-known photographers of the genre were Bruno Braquehais and Julien Vallou de Villeneuve (*fig.12&13*).[80] The daguerreotypes of nudes were originally produced for artists

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[78] Williams, in relation to hardcore cinematography, perceives in it a break from the *ars erotica* as outlined by Foucault, and views its emergence from the Western *scientia sexualis* instead. This is not necessarily the case for pin-up art, which reverses the hardcore evolution of sexualized imagery. And yet, pin-up art is eventually influenced by cinematography and thus is impacted by this ideological tussle between *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis*. Linda Williams, *Hardcore*: *Power, Pleasure and The "Frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkley, Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 1999) p. 36, and Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, p. 57.
[79] Koetzle, p. 10.
[80] Koetzle, p. 14.

to work from as substitutes for live models. Academy artists recognised that by using photographs of a live nude they could work from the image wherever and whenever they pleased. All too quickly however, the perceived licentiousness of the "academy figures"[81] (or "*études d'après nature*"[82]) made of these images a covert charade through which to sell and distribute the images as pornographic/erotic material: "photographic académies teetered precariously on the undefined line between art and pornography and represented the legal tip of a much larger and mysterious iceberg of illicit imagery," claims art historian Elizabeth Anne McCauley.[83] Consequently, by the turn-of-the-century, when photography had become increasingly cheaper and processing methods more efficient, the era of the "French postcard" took over. Thus the French not only pioneered photography but also "perfect[ed] ways of printing naughty photographs." [84] As a result, there was an explosion of visual erotica and pornography. Formerly, due to the expense and uniqueness of the daguerreotype, pornographic pictures existed only in small numbers and exclusively for the wealthy, but suddenly, with the advent of photolithographic methods, such material flooded the market and was much more widely available. The French did not corner the market for long however, as by 1899, Great Britain produced approximately 14 million postcards and Germany 88 million, though not all of these were pornographic.[85] These figures illustrate why the moniker "cardomania" was used to describe the popularity of this new visual material.

It is the subject matter of the pornographic/erotic postcards however that played an effective role in the way future pin-ups would be depicted and photographed. The aesthetic visual trope that is characteristically "pin-up" evolved from the inherited genre of fine art, passed on to the photographic *académies,* and then through to the pornographic postcard. The photographic *académies* as executed by Braquehais and Vallou de Villeneuve for instance, posed their models in ways that they knew their customers – artists – would require the female nude to appear for the purposes of effectively rendering

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[81] Koetzle, p. 102.
[82] Elizabeth Anne McCauley, *Industrial Madness: Commercial Photography in Paris, 1848-1871* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press), p. 152.
[83] McCauley, p. 149.
[84] Dian Hanson, *Dian Hanson's: The History of Men's Magazines, Volume I, From 1900 to Post WWII,* ed. Dian Hanson (Köln; London: Taschen, 2004), p. 10.
[85] Lisa Z. Sigel, *Governing Pleasures: Pornography and Social Change in England, 1815-1914* (New Brunswick; New Jersey; London: Rutgers University Press, 2002), p. 122.

them on canvas. “In such prints and photographs,” Thomas B. Hess observes, “the styles of Rococo, Neo-Classic, Romantic, Realist and *art officiel* painting were popularized, simplified and often hardened into stereotypical formulations.”[86] These formulations were then imitated by later pornographers, quite possibly unaware of the historical visual tropes being re-enacted for the mass-produced postcard:

> Models in erotic photographs were frequently assigned the traditional positions of Susannah surprised at the bath, the penitent Magdalen, Aphrodite Anadyomene, Diana the huntress and other clichés […] The images are drenched with art. The artisans, hack artists and minor masters who manufactured products for the erotic-art market were prisoners of the style of their time.[87]

Subsequently various standardizations linking fetishization (parts of the body, certain types of props) with voyeurism (the setting, visual access to the model) developed in the models’ poses. Eroticism thus played up more and more to the implied voyeuristic experience of the photograph:

> Settings and props […] enhance the overall effect, turning the erotic photo into a cheap and portable alternative to peering through the keyhole into the boudoir, and one which is always available. Distance is what defines the artistic nude, closeness defines the erotic photo, as well as, of course, the encouraging smile and a come-hither flash of the eyes.[88]

Props such as shoes, stockings, garter belts, fans and feathers, the popular boudoir (private) setting and the “come hither” gaze straight to camera were eventually universally recognised as the marks of the erotic standard, “what could be termed as the industrialization of the erotic gaze [.]”[89] The titillation of the space of the boudoir stemmed from its association with eighteenth-century French courtesans and aristocratic mistresses, a place therefore, where illicit sex occurred. The boudoir was a room popularized in late-eighteenth-century “licentious novels” as a debauched space, a fantasy that impacted all visual

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[86] Thomas B. Hess, ‘Pinup and Icon’, *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, 1730-1970*, ed. Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin (London: Allen Lane (Penguin), 1973), pp. 223-237, p. 224.
[87] Hess, p. 224.
[88] Koetzle, p. 17.
[89] Koetzle, p. 142.

erotic and pornographic material thereafter. Cultural historian Caroline Cox observes:

> It was a room of secret passions, both mysterious and impenetrable, a super-feminine hideaway that men could only glimpse voyeuristically – unless invited in, of course. In a world where few females had control over their own fates, power was a male preserve, and all women were legally, morally, and spiritually under the authority of men. There were few niches in which they could actually thrive and prosper, save the boudoir, and it was in this space that women fashioned their own seductive aesthetic.[90]

The boudoir was a private domain that women had ultimate and free reign over, a place where they themselves cultivated interior decors that were overly-ornate and forever associated with extreme femininity (the Rococo style) in the pursuit of ensnaring lovers of stature. From a certain point of view, the boudoir afforded a few privileged women a site within which to exercise power and control, albeit, in a very limited fashion. But to the pornographer and the pornographic imagination, this kind of private setting allowed much scope for voyeuristic fantasy to flourish in illustration and photography.

The appearance of photography has been somewhat ordained as the moment "when the real pin-up was born," although this is debatable.[91] What photography does signify however – through drawing on various characteristics from a wide range of influences such as the *bijinga*, the Realists, the use of heavy make-up and props from the *tableaux*, and putting to effective use the fleshiness of the Voluptuous Woman – is that the photographic nudes prompted the initial stirrings of the *naughtiness* implied in the pin-up aesthetic. All of these elements began to coalesce, one could argue, as early as 1840.[92] According to Koetzle, there were approximately 50,000 daguerreotypes of nudes produced in Paris by 1860, even though their production was banned in France, England and the United States.[93] Their popularity more than anything stemmed from, as ever, the claim to intimacy that the daguerreotype made possible:

> those looking upon an erotic daguerreotype image around 1850/60 could be altogether sure that a real nude had posed for

[90] Caroline Cox, *Seduction: A Celebration of Sensual Style* (New York: Collins Design, 2006), p. 21.
[91] Stein, p. 19.
[92] Stein, p. 19.
[93] Koetzle, p. 11.

> the picture […] This was the main attraction of early photographs of nudes, giving them a considerable edge over all graphic endeavors, no matter how artistically accomplished.[94]

Further to this, it could also be argued that the framed outline of the daguerreotype/photograph/postcard – not so dissimilar to the frame of the painting or the *tableau vivant* – produced a fenced-off fantasy realm (like the topographical erotic zone of Edo) which, with the photograph, could be carried around, treasured and made deeply personal, unlike the painting or the *tableau*. The photograph, by its very nature, is an erotic keepsake, no matter what it depicts, because of the very object-ness of the object that is the photograph.

In its early days photography was an awe-inspiring phenomenon. Initially it was thought that the camera did not lie, that a photograph presented a "truth" or "reality."[95] Certainly it de-glamourized some aspects of life such as portrayals of war, which as illustrations seemed to lend war a thrilling aura.[96] On the other hand, like illustration, the photographic industry began to develop methods of glamorization. If there is any "truth" to a photograph it is its capacity to fictionalize reality, as opposed to illustration, which is reality-based fiction. Howells astutely observes that "[photography is] a meeting of the actual and the imaginary, where each adds to, rather than detracts from, the power of the other."[97] Alongside the invention of photography came the devising of the airbrush, which would later be the cornerstone of technical brilliance in the creation of the classic pin-up. Originally the airbrush was used to retouch photographs, but it soon made the transition to artistic tool and was a fundamental component of the Bauhaus art movement during the 1930s, making possible the ethereal imaging of the classic pin-up (see chapters 2 and 3). [98] The need for retouching photographs more than likely came about because of the camera's capacity to be harsh and unsympathetic in the manner in which it captured its subjects. Even though photographs were things of wonder for the Victorians, it seems that they mostly favoured blemish-free images of themselves. Furthermore, throughout the 1910s, American

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[94] Koetzle, p. 10.
[95] Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 95.
[96] Howells, p. 157.
[97] Howells, p. 167.
[98] Elyce Wakerman, *Air Powered: The Art of the Airbrush* (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 18.

magazines still predominantly favoured publishing illustrations on their front-covers to ensure better sales.[99] In the parallel underground world of erotic material it was the same:

> although the photographs of nudes of 1900 reveal short legs and well-developed buttocks and hips, the pin-ups which were drawn at the same time are slim, tall and streamlined […] idealis[ing] […] the figure […] exaggerat[ing] her basic femininity, making her more corruptible than in reality, more depraved and mocking than we dare to imagine, and totally preoccupied with adultery and luxury, with admiring herself and getting others to admire her.[100]

Illustration and photography became interchangeable mediums through which reality could be manipulated. Whilst the first generation of photographers retained their artistic methods over their work, the second generation who had grown up with the medium, turned away from art and looked instead to exploiting photography for economic gain[101]:

> The so-called age of publicity and the subsequently widely decried artistic decline, the standardization of various formats, stagings and poses, all combined to turn what once belonged in the realm of exclusivity into an event addressing the public at large.[102]

The age of publicity is exemplified by the manner in which photography helped create the celebrity, born of the decadent purpose suggested in Ralph Stein's quote above: to both admire oneself and move others to admire you. The actress Lillian Russell was the most photographed woman in America in the late-nineteenth century, thus cementing her iconic celebrity status.[103] Well-known photographers such as Napoleon Sarony became synonymous with celebrating the great and the good. Cigarette cards featuring the images of actresses and sports personalities additionally publicised those who made it their business to be known. And even as early as 1854, the entertainer/showman/promoter Phineas T. Barnum instigated the first photographic beauty contest by which contestants sent in their photographs to

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[99] Kitch, p. 95.
[100] Stein, p. 21.
[101] Koetzle, p. 14.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Banner, p. 136.

be judged.[104] By the 1890s, the photographic beauty contest had been usurped by the newspapers and general press and consequently became a national institution.[105] Publicity and celebrity provided reasons for the *display* of photographs of people who were not known personally to the bearer. In the end, it would be the compact *carte de visités* that would impact the manner in which photos were put to use.

The *Carte de Visités* and the rise of Burlesque.

The *carte de visités* were photographic calling cards which were avidly traded and collected during the late-nineteenth century, so much so that the practice was eventually nicknamed "cardomania." The *cartes* were first invented in France, and the practice reached America by 1860 during which time they became a popular sentimental token for the average soldier involved in the American Civil War, allowing them to possess a photographic memento of a loved one whilst far from home. It was also common practice amongst public figures and in general the upper- and middle-classes to employ a photographer to produce *cartes* for them. Nevertheless it was the *cartes*' usage within the theatrical establishment, in particular by the fashionable new burlesque dancers, who benefited most from cardomania. Burlesque performers found the proliferation of their cards – which were given out, exhibited in theatre box offices and sold outside theatres by street vendors – to be an excellent asset in self-promotion by increasing their visibility and therefore their celebrity. The *cartes* in this way, as cultural historian Maria Elena Buszek states, "represented not only the earliest examples of pin-up imagery but also a space in which […] [to] construct, control, and promote […] sexual 'awarishness'."[106]

"Sexual awarishness" was a term that originated from Lydia Thompson (*fig.14*), the ringmaster of the troupe of burlesque girls the British Blondes, who left England for America in 1868, introducing their bawdy but satirical act to a nation that would eventually adopt it as a distinctively American form of entertainment. The "leg show" of the mid-nineteenth century was the progenitor to the burlesque acts that caused such a sensation both in England and the US. Burlesque offered a more substantial act than the leg show combining "nudity"

[104] It would not be until the 1920s when the stigma attached to appearing in public in a beauty contest would wear off.
[105] Banner, pp. 255-260.
[106] Buszek, p. 29.

with predominantly satirical song and dance acts.[107] In Rachel Shteir's exhaustive volume on striptease, she defines burlesque as follows:

> Popular in the British music halls, burlesque had emerged in New York in the 1840s as a biting working-class parody of high culture or as an extravaganza full of fairies and mythical creatures. Burlesque sent up Shakespeare and fashion, marriage and women's suffrage […] incorporated wacky song-and-dance numbers, marches, silly attacks on fashion's frivolities, and zany parodies of Offenbach, delight[ing] audiences of all kinds.[108]

In contrast to the leg shows burlesque was a theatrical variety show in which the female form (specifically the voluptuous figure) was celebrated and showed-off in revealing clothing, thus providing an early instance of the marriage of female sexuality with humour in a cultural capacity; a winning combination for future pin-up artists. The sexual magnetism of Thompson and her troupe was often hyped-up in the press and audiences who sometimes came away from the shows feeling they were "not as salacious" as they had been made to believe they would be.[109] Nonetheless, burlesque presented a theoretically complex model of entertainment, firstly because it appealed to – albeit for a short-lived period – the middle-classes, and secondly, it attracted mixed gender audiences.[110] In the meantime, Thompson and her troupe were eventually scandalized and heavily criticised in the press for lowering the general standards of acceptable feminine behaviour. This did not affect their popularity greatly, even though burlesque was gradually relegated to the domain of working-class entertainment, for the brand of femininity that the burlesquers had championed came to be regarded as a fashionable example of modern womanhood, which mocked the ideals of the respectable archetypal Victorian "True Woman." Their brash personalities and style existed alongside the already established "look" of the New York Bowery Gals, young working-class women of the 1860s, either shop girls or factory workers, who adopted the

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[107] Early burlesque was not a striptease act, but rather the burlesquers courted titillation in provocative clothing.

[108] Rachel Shteir, *Striptease: The Untold History of the Girlie Show* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 28.

[109] Robert C. Allen, *Horrible Prettiness: Burlesque and American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), p. 18.

[110] A reviewer from the *New York Clipper* of 1868 relayed the effect the burlesquers had on their audience in a poem: "Each sex was, with different passions mov'd;/The men grew envious, and the women lov'd." Quoted from the *New York Clipper*, October 10 1868, in *Horrible Prettiness,* p. 214.

brassy fashions of prostitutes and refused to wear veils in public, thus making direct eye contact with passersby, in such a way projecting a risqué and sexually confident demeanour usually associated with the "common prostitute."[111] The burlesquers' rebellious, and forthright spirits also clearly reflected the attitudes surrounding the campaigners for women's suffrage that stirred society at this time. This was especially true in America, where burlesque was admired far more widely than it had been in Europe, indicating thus that a unique "New Woman" to be identified specifically as American was emerging in the country at the time.

Burlesque also reflected a new era in the scientification of sexuality and an increasing awareness and interest in female sexuality in particular. This was the era of sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Ellen Key, who wrote specifically on the sexuality of women. This historical phenomena should be considered alongside "awarishness" which, according to Lydia Thompson, was the state-of-mind of the modern woman, one who was aware of her allure and her sexuality. As Buszek points out, "the burlesque performer effectively disrupted the binary that had named and controlled female sexuality in the nineteenth century – particularly that of the white bourgeois women who became her newest admirers."[112] The look of the burlesque – piled high bouffant hair and theatrical make-up – was emulated by a generation of young American women who would lead other women into the twentieth century.

Physicality and appearance had suddenly taken on a political resonance; it was as Buszek reminds us, a "subversive sexuality," at least in the domain of appearances, which represented a limited but nonetheless notable contribution to the changing role of women in society. Robert C. Allen remarks:

> When Lydia Thompson and the other members of her troupe appeared onstage in tights and short skirts or pantaloons, they accelerated a trend of feminine spectacle begun more than thirty-five years earlier with romantic ballet. In 1869, the display of the revealed female body was morally *and* socially transgressive. The very sight of a female body not covered by the accepted costume

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[111] Jacki Willson, *The Happy Stripper: Pleasures and Politics of the New Burlesque* (London; New York: I.B. Taurus, 2008), p. 45. Willson also mentions the Tough Girls of the early twentieth century who behaved like the Bowery Girls and similarly took their fashion cues from prostitutes. The performer Mae West in her youth was a Tough Girl.

[112] Buszek, p. 64.

> of bourgeois respectability forcefully if playfully called attention to the entire question of the "place" of woman in American society.[113]

All these elements were conveyed through the *carte de visités* and, by the 1870s, the lithographic burlesque posters, which advertised travelling burlesque troupes across the country during the post-Thompson phase of burlesque. The posters were displayed outside theatres and featured "highly pictorial"[114] narratives, usually presenting the burlesquers as mighty forces of fun and sexuality who could dominate the minds, bodies and pockets of the middle-class men who came to see them (*fig.15*).

Robert Allen sees in these posters a "celebration of charismatic female sexual power," presented in a carefree fantastical world of plenty, in beauty and in sex, "illustrating not so much what a prospective patron would see onstage but rather the nature of burlesque's imaginary world."[115] Therefore the posters condensed in a readily available format – as did the *carte de visité* – the bold but exciting new "discovery" of female sexuality (previously only associated with motherhood or prostitution), which due to the short-hand nature of the poster image, had to provide an immediate and explosive impact upon viewing, in effect creating an "exotic other"[116] of the burlesquer(s) illustrated within it. The type of womanhood presented in the posters was unreal and in a Baudrillardian sense, *hyperreal*, more than what a women could ever be.[117] For some spectators this presented an eventual disappointment, for others it was taken in good humour, even admired or lusted-after:

> In the fantasy realms of stage and poster world, [the burlesquer] is so distanced from ordinary women and real-life sexual relations that [the male spectator] can take pleasure in her display of charismatic sexuality without feeling threatened by it. He can even indulge masochistic fantasies of being dominated by her, knowing that sitting in the audience he is safely distanced and insulated from her power. She is to him an unobtainable object of desire, and that very unobtainability is his shield against her power.[118]

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[113] Allen, p. 259.
[114] Allen, p. 205.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Allen, p. 219.
[117] Jean Baudrillard famously put forward the theory of the "hyperreal" as a model without origin. See Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994, 2010). See also Stein quote, p. 13.
[118] Allen, p. 219.

Although this fantasy was mainly sold to men, it would be the women spectators who would absorb the apparent signs of power and sexuality into their own collective psyche.

Early burlesque was short-lived and over the decades would transform into the more familiar realm of stripping, whereby the specific comedic aspect was removed from the acts. Burlesque would no longer resemble the satirical song-and-dance show it had originally been conceived as, and with that the Voluptuous Woman became something to be objectified and sexualized. Needless to say both burlesque and the Voluptuous Woman turned into exclusively male (mostly working-class) erotic/pornographic points of interest. Burlesque finally died out in the 1960s, only to be revived again in the 1990s (see chapter 6). What would remain from this phenomenon of the late-nineteenth century however, apart from a new acceptability of women in the theatrical profession (this was the era that produced Sarah Bernhardt and Isadora Duncan) was an acceptance of a stylized, fashionable and glamorous visibility extended in some way to the majority of women in society, serving as an apparent signifier, though not an actual act of, a developing sense of female liberation.

The role of Glamour and Consumerism.

Fashion, as a social trend, began to be exploited and commodified for economic gain during the nineteenth century. Cultural historians Hilary Fawcett and Lois Banner place the inception of a “fashion system” with designer Charles Frederick Worth pioneering haute couture and instigating “couture culture” by opening up the first couture house in Paris in 1858. During its early years the political connotations of the fashion system implied recognition of upper- and middle-class women as active participants in the emergent capitalist economy. By the late-nineteenth century however, luxury items such as fashionable clothing became far more easily available and affordable and were understood to define the emerging “leisure class.” Nineteenth-century American sociologist Thorstein Veblen observed in his theory of conspicuous consumption that “elegant dress” was an “insignia of leisure.” He shows that especially with regard to women’s fashions, the more embellished and ridiculous – for example, high heels – the better the proof that the wearer was certainly not working class; high heels testified to “the wearer’s abstinence from productive

employment". Additionally, fashion represented conspicuous waste, a "corollary" of conspicuous consumption, and also expressed a "restless search" for aesthetic satisfaction and innovation.[119] Hilary Fawcett expands on this idea by observing how the participation of women in the fashion system lent them a certain (though limited) authority over themselves:

> Themes from high fashion cut across class, and the democratizing of the fashion system allowed for a wider range of women to engage in the construction of identities which challenged conventional attitudes towards sexuality and femininity. The role of female fashion in this period was crucially tied to changes in social and cultural attitudes to gender and sexuality.[120]

Participating in consumer culture in this way not only gave women who could afford fashionable items a certain status, but on a wider scale served to create an almost exclusive women's realm in which they could also find employment as dressmakers, milliners or even fashion journalists. Thus in a small way employment opportunities in fashion and increased disposable income for women, contributed to the notion of a "subversive sexuality."

In the second half of the nineteenth century the voluptuousness of the female form was accentuated with waist-cinching corsetry, a look which was completed with exotic materials, decorative Art Nouveau jewels, and newly-commodified cosmetics. The corset, a ceaslessly controversial item of clothing, evolved out of the sixteenth-century stay at a time when "sartorial culture," as fashion historian Valerie Steele calls it, tended more towards "rigidity and rectitude" amongst the aristocracy and nobility. [121] Underlying Steele's enlightening research on the history of the corset is her attempt to challenge the dual argument of the corset as being either "liberating" or "oppressive," a duality resulting from the received reductive notion of the corset being an "instrument of women's oppression" that sets women up as stereotypical "victims" or "slaves" to fashion. "By patronizing the women of the past as passive victims of fashion," claims Steele, "historians have ignored the reasons why so many

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[119] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of The Leisure Class* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), pp. 121-3.
[120] Hilary Fawcett, 'Romance, glamour and the exotic: Femininity and fashion in Britain in the 1900s', *New Woman Hybridities: Femininity, feminism and international consumer culture 1880-1930,* ed. Ann Heilmann and Margaret Beetham (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 146.
[121] Valerie Steele, *The Corset: A Cultural History* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2001, 2007), pp. 8-12.

women were willing to wear corsets for so long."[122] Steele claims that corsets were considered to be status symbols, that retained their prestige once the working-classes were able to afford cheaper versions; thus, they could be seen as a democratising item.[123] Admittedly, they were also devices of control, for once they had accumulated the distinction of respectability women were then obliged to wear them, "because they controlled the body and, by extension, the physical passions."[124] Pertinent to the genealogy of pin-up, however, was the corset's propensity to exaggerate the body and eroticize women's corporeality, especially with the s-bend corset invented at the turn-of-the-century, which pushed the breasts out and the abdomen back, and forced the back into an arch.[125] The corset simultaneously stood for propriety and sexual allure, it was thus a "socially acceptable way" for Victorian women to "articulate sexual subjectivity."[126]

In advertising corsets were not depicted on full-length female bodies until the 1890s, since they were regarded as indecent images of women in their underwear. Still, humorous and erotic prints capitalized on the underlying salaciousness of the corset, which "assumed the role of surrogate for the body […] [and] functioned as a sign of undressing and making love. The act of lacing and unlacing the corset was treated as a symbol of sexual intercourse in prints."[127] Furthermore, the fetishization of corsetry and the culture built-up around it led to the pathologizing of "abnormal" practises such as that of "tight-lacing," which was looked upon as a perversion by the late Victorian era (see chapter 5).[128] The corset thus became a fixture of erotic iconography and in this manner excessive femininity dominated erotic visual culture. Female sexuality became thoroughly embodied thanks to the corset, but it simultaneously celebrated the unique sensuality of the female body by artificially enhancing natural female curves and afforded fantasy through fashion to women throughout the social hierarchy. This was the allure of glamour.

By the 1930s, packaged glamour became an especially popular ideal to aspire to particularly due to the rise of what were then not just film stars but film

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[122] Steele, pp. 1-2.
[123] Steele, p. 28.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Steele, p. 84.
[126] Steele, p. 35.
[127] Steele, p. 45.
[128] Steele, p. 109.

idols. Glamour goddesses such as Greta Garbo, Jean Harlow and Joan Crawford amongst many others succeeded above all as vessels of glamour, selling fantasy and ultimately movies, on behalf of the studio publicity machine. The glamour of the 1930s was a crystallizing of what Buszek has identified as a portrayal of "transgressive female sexuality" that had steadily permeated culture and society since the late 1800s, referring to the type of performative sexuality represented by burlesquers and flapper girls of preceding eras.[129] Historian Stephen Gundle traces the roots of the glamour embodied by the film idols of the 1930s to an even earlier period.[130] As far back to the period of the late French aristocratic courts and the Napoleonic Empire (1770s-1830s), he sees a democratizing glamour, reflected in the move from a pre-Revolutionary social order to the breakdown of class distinctions, and wider access to wealth and status among a growing bourgeois public:

> Glamour was about the way in which the most visually striking manifestations of aristocratic privilege were taken over and reivented by newly emergent people, groups, and institutions. This occurred in several realms including the political sphere, the modern city, consumption and lifestyles, and the theatre. Commodity culture provided a key channel for this process of appropriation which did not simply take the form of imitation. Rather it occurred in ways that reflected the system of values and culture of the bourgeoisie and its particular imaginative world.[131]

In Britain, the depictions of ethereal yet fleshy and sexualized femininity in the paintings of the Pre-Raphaelites, most specifically in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's works, such as his popular portrait *Bocca Baciata* (1859), typified the glamourous female and her interdependence with commodity and commodification (*fig.16*).[132] Glamour was not articulated as such until the 1930s but its standardization almost certainly stemmed from the consumer culture of the late-Victorian period. Perhaps more importantly, the advent of advertising and the rise of the print media since the mid-1800s saw to it that glamour sold products and ideas in this new transgressive age. Glamour, and a specific

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[129] Buszek, p. 21.
[130] Stephen Gundle, *Glamour: A History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 2009), p. 18.
[131] Gundle, p.19.
[132] *Bocca Baciata* represented something of a change in methods for Rossetti since this was the first of the lone female depictions of which there would be a plethora in his later life. His interest lay in getting the tone and look of flesh as near perfect as he could, combining elements of the real and the ideal to create the romantic and the sexual, something the pin-up artists over the next 100 years would aspire to create.

predilection for displaying such idealized feminine sexuality, steadily infiltrated culture and came to define the way in which women were regarded. Initially this occurred through adverts for cosmetics, perfumes and hosiery, which were the new products for women at the *fin de siècle*; and then eventually, through the ambient, sensuous movies produced in 1930s Hollywood. It could be argued, that rather than a means of provoking male sexual desire and provide a spectacle for the male gaze, glamour was in fact, a devise for igniting (female) fantasy and effectively presenting women with a modern perception of unconventional resistance to traditional feminine norms. Gundle observes that:

> [Glamour] involved the superb injection of fantasy into public rituals and consumption practices, and arose from the opportunities that these supplied for possible or imaginary transformations of the self. It was the market and industrial production on the one hand, and equality and the erosion of structured deference on the other, that formed the basis of the diffusion of glamour.[133]

Buying, and buying into this ideal of glamour, was more in-keeping with change and of entering the new epoch at the turn-of-the-century. Historian Carol Dyhouse recognises in her analysis of glamour that:

> in many contexts a desire for glamour represented an audacious refusal to be imprisoned by norms of class and gender, or by expectations of conventional femininity; it was defiance rather than compliance, a boldness which might be seen as unfeminine.[134]

The choice of the word “unfeminine” presents an interesting paradox when used in reference to glamour, as it would seem to present a contrary notion of the term. Given context however, it becomes a succinct description of how this new feminine ideal was an indicator of the next generation’s push into the future. The suffragettes in particular were becoming more vocal and more visible during this time, they used theatrical methods learned by example from the theatre and the burlesque performers to draw attention to themselves and their cause, executing publicity stunts and seditious acts which were widely regarded

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[133] Gundle, p. 19.
[134] Carol Dyhouse, *Glamour: Women, History, Feminism* (London: Zed Books, 2010), p. 3.

as "unfeminine."[135] The actual "showiness" of glamour, the desire to attract attention, was utterly antithetical to anything women had ever been perceived to be up until that point: "[glamour] did not sit easily with more traditional feminine virtues of innocence and modesty."[136] Glamour did not seem to stem from a "natural" or biological innateness of womanhood in the same way as virtue and modesty were widely regarded to have been, instead it seemed to borrow from the confidence and assuredness traditionally associated with men and masculinity (glamour, let us not forget, was used to describe men as well as women, Rudolph Valentino being the first among the glamour men). Glamour was enhanced through artistry and the manipulation of the physical appearance of a person, rather than simply relying on Nature's goodwill. This may also be why glamour was regarded with suspicion:

> the combination of erotic beauty and artifice […] Glamour was the mainstay in the commodification of femininity within modernity […] the process by which women might be transformed from their humdrum selves into the figures of fantasy that gazed from posters, illustrations and magazines.[137]

Indeed, posters, illustrations and magazines were the progenitors of glamour, until it reached its heyday when the movie industry finally took hold of it. The combination of the mass-produced image through the invention of the high-speed printing press, the proliferation of illustrated art and the dawning of the photographic age aided in generating the mystique of glamour. All these elements came together to bring the New Woman of the early-twentieth century into being.

The Golden Age of Illustration and the burgeoning mass media.

From the 1860s onwards, Western culture began to tend towards the increasingly visual. Illustration in America entered something of a Golden Age towards the end of the nineteenth century even though it has since been largely ignored by its art-world peers and never given proper recognition as a high-brow fine art genre. Nonetheless, the Golden Age was made possible through technological advancements that combined the use of photography and

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[135] See Susan A. Glen, *Female Spectacle: The Theatrical Roots of Modern Feminism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).
[136] Dyhouse, p. 45.
[137] Fawcett, p. 150.

halftone[138] engraving methods to create detailed reproductions of artwork, thereby rendering the laborious use of wood and copper plate engraving (to transfer the tonal quality of images) obsolete.[139] As a result illustrators became masters of their own artistic domain, free to convey as much detail and as much realism in their works as they saw fit. This Golden Age flourished from the onset of the American Civil War through to the start of the First World War.[140]

In America, illustration in newspapers and magazines came about as a direct need for pictorial information to accompany frontline reportage during the American Civil War (1861-65). As the public became increasingly anxious to hear constant updates from the frontline, artist-reporters were commissioned to sketch battle scenes which featured in publications such as *The New York Illustrated News* and *Harper's Weekly*. However, since wood-block engraving at the time was a laborious process, only the most newsworthy sketches were printed. After the war some illustrators were kept on, with *The Century* magazine in particular employing illustrators to cover the Southern Reconstruction and the Frontier West. In the meantime, magazines published literary articles as well as articles concerned with science, travel and art, which required a more creative type of illustration than that of political reportage. From the 1870s onwards, *Scribner's* and *Harper's* dominated the industry, and they employed some of the most talented and artistically trained illustrators of the day. Whilst British and American illustrators were initially influenced by the style of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, a distinctly American style of illustration began to develop at the turn-of-the-century, taking as its influence the works of commercial artists such as Czechoslovakia's Alphonse Mucha, France's Jules Chéret and Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, as well as Britain's Phil May and Aubrey Beardsley – artists who had taken inspiration from the detail and impressionable minimalism inherent in Japanese prints, which lent well to the medium of advertising and would prove to be integral to the future of the pin-up.[141] Alberto Vargas's pin-up girls in particular owe much to this style of illustration, whose Varga Girl was one of the first of the genuine pin-ups (see chapters 2&3).

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[138] The technique of reproducing continual dots of varying sizes to give the illusion of tone.
[139] The method of halftone engraving made colour printing possible, which was preceded by the chromolithographic printing process.
[140] Walt Reed, *The Illustrator in America 1860-2000* (New York: The Society of Illustrators, 2001), p. 9.
[141] E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Art* (London; New York: Phaidon, 1950, 2005), pp. 553-554.

The Golden Age was boosted in large part by the significant changes in the printing industry. Photo-processing was used to reproduce line drawings at a faster pace and more cost effectively. Consequently publishers seized upon this opportunity to improve the quantity and quality of the pictures they commissioned. Due to the lower costs of printing, publications saw a sharp increase in circulation and sales which in turn increased demand for articles and artists. The combination of the invention of the high-speed rotary plate presses, the ongoing improvement in halftone engraving quality, the drop in the cost of paper manufacture and the growing readership of the 1890s swept illustration into the Golden Age. The improvements in the printing press and the subsequent enhancements in the quality of printed illustrations naturally brought with it a publishing culture based around the enjoyment of images, specifically, images of women. During an age in which most people in America did not have access to books or museums, illustrations in more accessible outlets proved to be very popular for obvious reasons.

By 1889 advancements made possible the commercial multiple sheet calendar, which in the twentieth century would prove to be one of the biggest generators of pin-up culture, although pin-ups would not appear on calendars for a while.[142] The calendar prototype was apparently introduced by Benjamin Franklin in 1752. By 1850 the calendar became a single sheet product that was used for advertising purposes. In 1889, the first commercial calendar issued by newspaper publishers Edward B. Osbourne and Thomas D. Murphy sold advertising space on them.[143] Then in 1896, Herbert Huse Bigelow and Hiram D. Brown formed what was to become the biggest calendar company in the world, initially attracting public attention with its Art Nouveau "pretty girl" calendar, featuring a portrait by Italian artist Angelo Asti, simply named *Colette* (1904). Brown & Bigelow, claims Charles Martignette, are the "single most influential force behind the development of the American pin-up […] the company helped to bring pin-up and glamour art to its highest level."[144] The calendar effectively allowed the pin-up exposure beyond the exclusive realm of male desire. Brown & Bigelow's controversial calendar of 1913, *September Morn* by Paul Chabas (*fig.17*), is considered to be the first nude calendar and was brought to the public's attention due to the interest that the New York

[142] Martignette, p. 34.
[143] Martignette, pp. 34-35
[144] Ibid.

Society for the Suppression of Vice gave it. This naturally turned it into a sensation. Brown & Bigelow were not deterred by Anthony Comstock's legal investigations and continued to produce such calendars.[145] The artwork they published never strayed into vulgarity, was always tasteful and actually rather modest since they were given out as gifts within the business community. This is mainly the reason why artwork was used for calendars instead of photography, since it was considered "more appealing, timeless and romantic" than photography.[146]

In New York, the explicit "romances" were surreptitiously sold during the 1860s, which grew out of the burgeoning "pulp" industry of thrilling Western and detective stories sold on cheap pulp paper (wood fibre softened with acid).[147] Pictorally, *The Police Gazette* was the closest thing America got to a men's magazine at the time. Transformed in the 1870s by its new owner Richard Kyle Fox, it is credited with establishing sports pages and gossip columns, and over the years, increasingly peppering its pink pages with images of pretty burlesque girls, chorus girls and actresses (*fig.18*).[148] It was usually found in barbershops, an exclusively male zone in the nineteenth century. In the meantime, the French introduced the "nude study" magazine, the first sophisticated incarnation of which was *La Vie Parisienne*, published initially in 1863, which included risque illustrations, "spicy fiction" and satire.[149] Americans on the other hand, had to contend with the fully clothed Gibson Girl at this time.

The Gibson Girl phenomenon.

The Golden Age of Illustration paved the way for the publishing phenomenon that was the Gibson Girl, who was the first of the visual feminine stereotypes and one of the first icons of popular culture. Her overwhelming fame typified the

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[145] Anthony Comstock initially took it upon himself as a one-man crusade to wipe out obscenity in American society, he was, to quote, "an obsessed individual." He later operated under the Committee for the Suppression of Vice and in 1873 succeeded through lobbying Washington to sign into law "An Act for the Suppression of Trade in, and Circulation of, Obscene Literature and Articles of Immoral Use," which was unofficially known as the "Comstock Law." By 1913 he was observed to have softened somewhat in his diligence, having taken no official action against the circulation of Chabas's *September Morn*, only requesting it be removed from a Manhattan shop window. It was later put back but Comstock turned a blind eye to it. See Walter Kendrick, *The Secret Museum: Pornography in Modern Culture* (New York; Middlesex; Victoria; Ontario; Auckland: Viking, 1987), pp. 130-147.
[146] Gabor, p. 151.
[147] Hanson, pp. 8-12.
[148] Gene Smith, *The Police Gazette*, ed. Gene Smith and Jayne Barry Smith (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 14.
[149] Hanson, p. 12.

way in which images would increasingly become indicative of the social and economic fluctuations in history and how they would come to dominate culture, whilst serving as social barometers. Not only did the Gibson Girl reflect a part of history, she made a part of it also. Her notoriety played a part in the shift during the Industrial Age that saw women begin to evolve into increasingly autonomous members of society as opposed to the mother/wife/daughter paradigms of the past. Banner explains:

> Contemporary feminists often saw [the Gibson Girl] as a prototype of the "new woman". The blouses and skirts she wore for casual wear seemed in line with the goals of dress reformers, and the many scenes in which she was pictured at sports seemed to validate the aims of the advocates of exercise and athletics.[150]

Feminist writer and activist Charlotte Perkins Gilman was an admirer of the Gibson Girl, even though the artist Charles Dana Gibson himself was apparently unsympathetic towards "organized feminism," a not altogether unsurprising sentiment from a gentleman of the age. Nonetheless the Gibson Girl took on a life of her own apart from the views of her creator. Whether she would be judged much of a feminist symbol by today's standards is debatable, but she did become the first mass-produced icon of the Western modern age and influenced everything from social mores to women's fashions.

During the time of the publishing industry giants William Randolph Hearst and Joseph Pulitzer, *Life* magazine (established in 1883 and instrumental in the creation of the pin-up) hired Gibson. His work was first featured in the magazine in 1886 and his satirical Gibson Girl – who provided humorous social commentary on fashions, manners and the perceived differences between the sexes – became a regular feature in *Life*, for which Gibson would eventually go on to earn $65,000 a year. Gibson took inspiration from his mentor, caricaturist George Du Maurier, who popularized the figure of "non-domestic femininity" via his sketches for *Punch* and his novel *Trilby*. Gibson's "girl" however far exceeded Du Maurier's success with *Trilby*, both in America and abroad. Quintessentially American, the Gibson Girl represented a zestful, youthful and outdoorsy womanhood, she implied New Woman rebelliousness with a general Amazonian air about her, accentuated by a statuesque figure in finely tailored

[150] Banner, p. 156.

clothing and tempered with a delicate and exquisite beauty (*fig.19,20&21*). She was a world apart from the girls of sexual promise of the burlesque posters; her modernity and authenticity made her more popular amongst men *and* women. This had much to do with the sociable artist Gibson himself: "The drawing[s] showed […] Gibson's charming intimacy with his subject; for him, a handsome young American, whose ambition and diligence had launched a successful career, modern American women were part of his social experience."[151]

In fact it was the Gibson Girl's Americanness that would set more of a precedent for later artists, even though this particular brand of it presented a complex mixture of signs. Caroline Kitch claims that the Gibson Girl reflected Americanness in her white, upper-class beauty – a manifestation of contemporary beliefs about eugenics and President Roosevelt's fears of "race suicide." The physical beauty of the Gibson Girl represents "a measure of fitness, character, and Americanness" that people should aspire to, as opposed to the foreign "look" of the immigrant. Visual stereotypes such as the Gibson Girl therefore served the purpose, in a way, of directing the mixed ethnic female (and male) American populous as to how to be truly American. These images instigated what Kitch has called a "culture of imitation" by which the middle and aspiring classes took directives from opinionated magazines such as the *Ladies' Home Journal* on how to think, look and behave in their public and private lives.[152] The craze for imitating the Gibson Girl sparked various commercial ventures that benefited from this phenomenon. Her image was adorned and sold on various items of bric-a-brac such as china, silverware, pillow covers, chairs, tabletops, matchboxes, ashtrays, scarves, wallpaper, covers of sheet music and advertising posters for songs and plays written about her and inspired the manufacture of shirtwaists, skirts, corsets, shoes and hats.[153] These items sold the lifestyle of a white, middle-class model of modern womanhood to the average American citizen in the hopes that her classical beauty or her "awarishness" might become their own.

The Gibson Girl provided a figure of an archetypal American libertarian spirit, fusing the ideals of independence, fashion and bourgeois aspirations, despite Trina Robbins's claims that "Gibson's women are debutantes […][and]

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[151] Angelika Köhler, 'Charged with ambiguity: The image of the New Woman in American cartoons', in *New Woman Hybridities*, p.160.
[152] Kitch, p. 28.
[153] Kitch, p. 41.

will never work a day in their lives."[154] Whether the New Women of East and West coast America were truly independent or liberated is not the issue, Gibson's Girl if anything made independence *attractive* to women through her appearance, regardless of whether there was any substance to her independence or not. In such a way her independence became embroiled in patriotism. Angelika Köhler sees this in a slightly different manner:

> the [Gibson Girl] displays an independent, self-reliant and powerful personality […] However, the way she presents herself also reveals her readiness for compromise. The Gibson girl is aware of her attractiveness; she demonstrates this awareness quite frankly. A pug nose and carefully shaped lips underline her desire to be looked at and admired.[155]

Köhler however cleverly asserts that Gibson's Girl represented more of a cross-over stage in the social status of women and that True Woman beauty and femininity was still expected of the New Woman regardless of her right to ride bicycles and attend college. "She represents modernity as far as her creators are willing to grant it to their model […] The power and the limitations of the image of the New Woman are rooted within this network of male liberalism and female ambition."[156] The Gibson Girl therefore was not so much independent but rather a rebellious figure, turning away from the Victorian True Woman with a satirical laissez-faire attitude. Köhler asserts that:

> Gibson definitely breaks with the nineteenth-century concept of the fragile and delicate image of the True Woman when he takes his female figure off the pedestal and presents her instead as a strong, self-centred and independent young woman. For several reasons this female image suggests modern twentieth-century aspirations. Gibson's drawings anticipate the vast potential that the United States will contribute to the new century when he creates a national alternative to the European model of femininity, and in that he celebrates the American *girl*, he pays special attention to the quality of being young, thus preparing the ground for a dominant cultural phenomenon of the twentieth century […] The image of the frequently ageless True Woman represents a *condition* of maturity, balance, harmony, whereas the youth of the Gibson Girl embodies *dynamism* and flexibility, the rebellious spirit

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[154] Trina Robbins, 'The day of the girl: Nell Brinkley and the New Woman', in *New Woman Hybridities,* p. 181.
[155] Köhler, p. 161.
[156] Köhler, p. 162.

> to change conditions and the mobility to adjust to new situations.[157]

Yet the perspective some social historians have of the Gibson Girl is that she was not predominantly presented to be striving towards education and work, which were new and exciting open avenues to many middle-class women at the time. Instead her frivolous outdoorsy sporting fancies, high jinx at social gatherings and her abilities to bewitch men were mainly depicted. She was rarely pictured at home and even less so at work and whenever the domestic or professional scenarios did appear they presented moral dilemmas for the Gibson Girl concerning motherhood and marriage.[158] In fact Köhler ends her essay lamenting the descent of the Gibson Girl, who started out as a satirical figure charting the new emboldened spirit of a young generation of women during the 1890s, only to progress later on into the domain of sarcasm directed at these same young women who dared to venture into professional life. On the other hand, as Caroline Kitch suggests, the images of the Gibson Girl enjoying the outdoors and rarely featuring at home was a significant sign of social change regarding the transformation of women's roles. What we can conclude on for certain about the Gibson Girl was that not only did she represent women's increasing visibility in public and their aspirations beyond the boundaries of the family or marriage home, but that she was the first icon of popular culture to be literally pinned-up.[159]

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[157] Köhler, p. 164.
[158] See Charles Dana Gibson, *The Gibson Girl and her America* (Mineola, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1969, 2010).
[159] Richard Harding Davis, 'The Origin of a Type of American Girl', *Quarterly Illustrator 3*, no.9, January 1895, p. 3-5.

Chapter 2.

Transgression, Eugenics and the Streamlined Petty Girl: The Proto-Pin-Up Of Modernity.

At the *fin-de-siècle*, and for most of the first third of the twentieth century, a recognizable image of eroticized femininity – the proto-pin-up – came to represent a *modern* age characterized by so-called *transgression*.[160] Emerging from the Industrial Age, the proto-pin-up simultaneously reflected the regressive cynicism of capitalist corruption and a progressive, hopeful look towards modernity and an expectant future. During this era the appearance of the excessive femininity of the proto-pin-up in witty and satirical, erotic and even crude imagery points towards a symbolic battle against the perception of superficial Victorian prudery. This and subsequent chapters examine how (proto) pin-up imagery operated under the false guise of a "liberationist" ideology. In spite of its falseness however, it must be noted that this example of liberation-through-sexuality (Foucault's "regressive hypothesis" in action) put across by proto-pin-up imagery nonetheless appealed to some as a method through which to exert some power in society, via the utilization of a sexualized persona. Though deeply flawed from a present-day perspective, on the surface of things, this type of imagery appealed to those willing to be rebellious, which ultimately pointed to a yearning for change.

Historians have tended to focus on the exploitative aspect of the proto-pin-up whilst also making some allowance for the points at which she has inspired women, thus pitting supposed "good" power against "bad".[161] However, the perspective currently lacking analysis, which will be examined in this chapter, is how the overabundance and popularity of proto-pin-up imagery in all its guises in the early-twentieth century (in advertisements, in niche- and mass-market magazines, posters, and pornography), demonstrated a reactive

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[160] See introduction for an explanation of "transgression."

[161] For instance, J. Howard Miller's famous Second World War image of Rosie the Riveter was and is still heralded as an image of female empowerment, the bicep she proudly displays demonstrates her capacity to do traditionally "masculine" hard labour and is thus generally understood as projecting "good" power. Nevertheless, the fact that the woman featured in the image simultaneously exhibits the excessively feminine traits of long eyelashes and scarlet painted lips also suggests that female empowerment is achieved through sexuality, a traditional and gender stereotypical depiction of female power, thus "bad." It is a dubious image therefore, as are most pin-up images.

distancing of a younger generation from the previous generation's outwardly bourgeois "Victorian" morality – or rather, a bringing to the fore of the underground Victorian sex culture – and furthermore, an attempt to breakdown the "shame barrier" in the decades preceding the Second World War.

The pin-up of modernity was informed by many influential aspects of post-First World War society, which was altered by seismic shifts in social attitudes. They included: the Modern art movement, psychoanalytic understandings of sexuality, the eugenics movement, the growth of the transport industry, the prevalence of Hollywood imagery and the trend for streamline design. The pin-up's eventual association with "freedom" would be cemented during this apparently transgressive era. And, almost predictably, she inherited this reputation from France, or more precisely from an American idealization of Paris that mythologised the bohemian denizens of the butte in Montmartre during the Belle Époque.

The Montmartroise and the American erotic idealization of the Parisian Woman.

The stereotype of the expert French lover is a reputation that was most likely forged in Montmartre during the Belle Époque and disseminated through the new medium of the lithographic poster, in addition to the "French postcards" and erotic playing cards that were popular at the time. The posters in particular, replete with allegorical imagery – alluding to the libertinism of the artistically inclined avant-garde area of the butte in Montmartre, with its cabaret acts, free-flowing alcohol, prostitutes and cancan dancers at the Moulin Rouge – furthered an erotic fantasy that was used to attract the middle-classes of Paris to the area. The works of poster artists Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Jules Chéret, and later Alphonse Mucha, epitomized the type of imagery that the butte would come to be associated with. Their artwork captures the imagination specifically because it taps into the erotic mystique that the area generated, and assigns that allure to the female figures they painted. In addition, the simplicity of their poster-art work was integral to delivering immediate and powerful advertising

messages. These factors heralded the basic organising principles of what would eventually become the American pin-up girl.[162] Mark Gabor insists that:

> The objective of the poster [as it evolved in late nineteenth century Paris] was typically to announce a theatrical event, promote a café, or sell a product – even in those years of relatively primitive advertising techniques, sex was used as a means of attracting the public.[163]

Put more precisely, it was the promise of sex, as Foucault would point out, that was used to attract the public to Montmartre. Such a promise was deployed successfully to attract interest in the theatre, cabaret and music hall acts, to draw attention to related actresses and celebrities, and even to sell items such as alcohol, oil lamps and cigarette papers. Chéret's posters, which proved particularly influential in the genre of advertising, established the visual trope of the lone erotic female figure employed in the commercial sector. Author and collector Martijn Le Coultre credits Chéret with creating "the evergreen of advertising: the eye catcher."[164] "With his images of scantily clad merry women, the so-called 'Chérettes,' he was able to grab the attention of the passers-by and thus to create awareness of the product advertised," claims Le Coultre.[165] In Chéret's work, there is a deliberate and transparent deployment of female sexualization for the purposes of drawing the eye and making a statement (*fig.22*).[166]

The market for posters and illustration was by no means limited to the most famous names in the business, for other artists flooded the streets of Paris with similarly sensual imagery, among them Henri Boutet, Leonetto Capiello, Jules Alexandre Grün, Albert Guillaume and Lucien Métivet (*fig.23,24&25*). According to cultural historian Gabriel P. Weisberg, posters such as these unwittingly contributed to the birth of popular mass culture in the manner in which they glorified and eroticized the outsider status of the area, which was

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[162] "One of the requirements of a poster," wrote Bauhaus typographer Herbert Bayer "is simplicity. The composition of lines, shapes, and colours must form an optical unity designed to be noticed, enjoyed, and not to be lost from memory." Wakerman, p. 24.
[163] Gabor, p. 26.
[164] Martijn Le Coultre, 'Jules Chéret and the World of Design', *Jules Chéret: Pioneer of Poster Art,* Ségolène Le Men, Réjane Bargiel, Martijn Le Coultre, ed. Michael Buhrs (Stuttgart: Arnoldsche Art Publishers, 2011), p. 134.
[165] Le Coultre, p. 134.
[166] Chéret's Chérettes were deemed too risqué even in France and were sometimes censored, whereas in England, Holland and Germany amongst other countries, they were considered "not suitable for export" altogether. Le Coultre, p. 145.

perceived to be on "the fringes" in both a literal and figurative sense.[167] In other words, the area was deemed rebellious, which was crucial to generating the "new" of popular culture. These posters therefore did not just serve as advertisements but also within that capacity promoted the area and the people within it, especially the women, as seemingly tinged with danger on a "site where pleasure and vice were equated" and within an "arena where traditional boundaries were blurred."[168] Everything about the butte was meant to stimulate and excite, presenting innovation, change, and ultimately something new, in the manner in which popular culture operates. Weisberg observes:

> doing the unusual, challenging preconceptions, has become the standard way for popular culture to create the new, once the new enters the mainstream it is co-opted by many, consumed, commercialized, eventually trivialized and passes onto the masses as the avant-garde begin their search for the "new new". It is this cycle that was first heralded in the community on the butte around 1900.[169]

The "pin-up *type*" – as Gabor refers to the proto-pin-up – at the turn-of-the-century was a product of early popular culture. Crucially this imagery communicated the elements of the modern, the dangerous, the stimulating, the transgressive and the erotic – all characteristics that are manifested in the figure recognised as the Montmartroise.

"A name was ascribed to a woman living in the district who was often associated with poets, musicians, and artists," observes historian Elizabeth K. Menon, "she was called the Montmartroise."[170] The Montmartroise served as muse to the local artists of the butte. As fellow denizens these women were convenient models for artistic inspiration; they were also usually lower-class, under-paid and often dabbling in prostitution to make ends meet.[171] Illustrators were aware of the social contradictions and subterfuge inherent in the lives of the Montmartroises, all of which was played out against a background of rising

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[167] Gabriel P. Weisberg, 'Montmartre's Lure: An Impact on Mass Culture', *Montmartre and the Making of Mass Culture,* ed. Gabriel P. Weisberg (New Brunswick; New Jersey; London: Rutgers University Press, 2001), p. 3.
[168] Weisberg, p. 5, p. 3.
[169] Weisberg, pp. 10-11.
[170] Elizabeth K. Menon, 'Images of Pleasure and Vice: Women of the Fringe', *Montmartre and the Making of Mass Culture*, p. 39.
[171] Menon, p. 40.

feminist awareness.[172] Édouard Manet's *Un Bar aux Folies-Bergére* (1882), for example, although an ambiguous painting, perhaps offers an ethical comment on the dual lives of the women who lived and worked in Montmartre, who supplemented wages from their legitimate jobs with possible prostitution on the side (*fig.26*). This enigmatic status of the Montmartroise became the cornerstone in the evocative renderings of her by local illustrators. In most works the duality becomes linked to the sexuality of the women portrayed, which in turn lends the images a dubious reflection on power. According to Menon, as these particular women became increasingly brazen and self-aware, their profession eventually became linked to "a heightened condition of modernity." This was as a direct consequence of the mythologizing of the area via proliferate poster and proto-pin-up imagery, and the heightened visibility that that created. [173] Subsequently, "illustrators remained uneasy about the way in which women were positioning themselves in the world of the cabaret district," suggesting that as these women were becoming increasingly confident and more in control of their persons, the male artists reflected their own uncertainty and reservations in their works. [174]

The ambiguity and contradictions in the Montmartroise's social standing is evident in the renderings of the proto-pin-up at this time through a blending of the two traditionally distinct ways in which women were viewed in an either/or manner: saint and sinner, virgin and whore, "the visualization of vice and virtue." Thus a "semi-virgin" character emerged, seemingly reflecting the morally conflicted way in which the male artists viewed the clandestine duality of the Montmartroise.[175] This compelling melding of innocence and carnality, informed through social awareness and overlaid with mystery, is exactly what the pin-up would come to represent and what was distinctive about her amongst the many different types of images of women. Henry Gerbault's illustrations stand out in amongst the work of so many others in epitomizing the state of the semi-virgin, particularly because of his use of Adam and Eve tropes, which permit him to utilize Eve's dual reputation as temptress and antediluvian innocent (*fig.27&28*).

[172] Menon, p. 51.
[173] Menon, p. 46.
[174] Menon, p. 49.
[175] Menon, p. 37, p. 45.

"The semi-virgin," observes Menon, "was a desirable state for a woman to occupy as it increased her sense of mystery."[176]

The Montmartroise did not necessarily always refer to the sex worker however. More likely she was an amalgam of a type of avant-garde muse that encapsulated the personas of the cabaret performer, cancan dancer and dual-role prostitute. Many legitimate female professionals became Montmartrian artist's muses, including performers Louise Weber, Jane Avril, Yvette Guilbert and Marcelle Lender, who had all been painted by Lautrec at some point, an artist who apparently painted only "self-consciously modern women."[177] The Montmartroise metamorphosed into a figure of modernity through the visualization of her audacious and bohemian attitude, as linked to her sexuality. And much like the *bijinga* of Japan, she represented a geographical area that defined her as an outsider. The image of the Montmartroise and what she stood for were openly advertised by Parisian posters and further circulated by magazines, reaching many more admirers in such a way.

Paris – as representative of France – had thus gradually been building an international reputation for sordidness since the late-nineteenth century. The famed nightlife of Montmartre contributed to the oversexed reputation of Paris/France, which was circulated and mythologized through the production and distribution of French/Parisian postcards and in the earliest form of men's magazines such as *Le Frou Frou*.[178] In actual fact, *Le Frou Frou* was a souvenir cabaret program from the Folies Bergère that contained some of the first photographs in wide circulation of bare-breasted women.[179] During this same period however, the popularity of a genuine magazine would enable the wide acceptance of imaged female nudity in the form of a proto-pin-up figure. That magazine was *La Vie Parisienne*, undeniably the most well-known and admired magazine of the period (*fig.29*).

British illustrator Francis Smith (Smilby) suggests that the magazine "was indisputably the leader, the forerunner, of a whole world of publications that dealt with what nowadays we call 'sex', and which the French, with far more flair and feeling, simply called *l'amour*."[180] With this, Smilby suggests that *La Vie*

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[176] Menon, p. 45.
[177] Buszek, p. 126.
[178] Women's petticoats were referred to as *frou-frou*. See Cox, p. 52.
[179] Hanson, p. 60.
[180] Francis Smilby, *Stolen Sweets, The Cover Girls of Yesteryear: Their Elegance, Charm, and Sex Appeal* (Chicago: Playboy Press, 1981), p. xiii.

Parisienne is responsible for removing erotic femininity from the offensive (to some) and exclusive arena of the pornographic and moving it to the mass market via conventionalism and romanticism. "*La Vie Parisienne* was a magical name," observes decorative and fine arts author Victor Arwas, "that proclaimed itself proudly as the masthead of a way of life in which frivolity, wit and satire were as important and as relevant as literary and political intellectualism."[181] *La Vie Parisienne* had begun life in 1863 in Paris as a serious weekly magazine that reported on the theatre and music hall events, and contained articles on finance, world politics and fashionable society.[182] By the 1870s, a crucial change came about in which it began to feature a few illustrations that "involved a certain amount of wanton display."[183] *La Vie Parisienne* truly broke the mould after censorship laws in France were relaxed in the 1890s. According to Valerie Steele, the magazine was one of the earliest to recognize the "desirable eroticism of lingerie" and *déshabille* (to be partially dressed) at a time when women's underclothing was meant to be strictly functional and modest for those married; whilst silks, chiffons and embellishments were aligned with the underclothes of the *cocotte*.[184] *La Vie Parisienne* aided in establishing the tauntingly, partially and strategically clothed woman as the erotic pin-up standard: "the magazine's emphasis on lingerie in the 1880s may have represented the closest thing to nudity that the law permitted […] the partially clad female figure was often perceived as *more* erotic than the nude."[185]

Thus the proto-pin-ups of *La Vie Parisienne* recalled the erotic aesthetics of Japan and the courtesans of Utamaro's *ukiyo-e.* The manner in which female nudity was displayed within its pages was always contextualized, portraying various social lifestyles through inclusion of props and clothes and interesting settings, probably to appeal to women readers also, thus romanticizing the nudity. In the process, it made nudity more palatable to women as well as men (*fig.30*):

> more and more features appeared showing how the various social classes – the lady of fashion, the servant, the model – dressed, slept, bathed, anything that could point to differences in mode and

[181] Victor Arwas, *La Vie Parisienne* (London: Berkshire, 2010), p. 11.
[182] Smilby, p. 1.
[183] Ibid.
[184] Valerie Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism: Ideals of Feminine Beauty from the Era to the Jazz Age* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 193-198.
[185] Steele, *Fashion and Eroticism,* p. 198.

> manner, especially if excuses could be found to show them *en déshabillé*.[186]

Smilby asserts that *La Vie Parisienne* made egalitarian the availability of "sex" to more than just the fortunate few who could afford (or knew the means through which to acquire) pornography. However, as noted in the previous chapter, it was in fact the postcard that democratized pornographic and erotic material. *La Vie Parisienne* on the other hand, "gentrified" erotic material and in doing so, most intriguingly, made attractive and fashionable to its female readership an eroto-pornographic sexualization of femininity. And much like the illustrators of the Montmartroise, those who contributed to *La Vie Parisienne* reflected a new type of French woman who was distinctive for her apparently "liberated" and "independent" appearance:

> It was here, in the pages of *La Vie Parisienne*, that a new day dawned with the emergence of the socially oriented magazine. Before this time the sexual entertainments of the superior classes had been found only in the "private publications" kept by wealthy men of taste on their highest library shelves. Now they could be found in the public bookstalls. And as the new century emerged from the shadows of the old, the cultured and elegant, independent and sexually liberated Frenchwoman emerged with it.[187]

Jacques Sternberg and Pierre Chapelot however are less idealistic about the motives for the magazines' championing of this "liberated Frenchwoman," stating: "It was only a matter of time before […] [*La Vie Parisienne*] realised that the Parisian woman, along with Beaujolais, camembert and perfume, was a typical French product and a marvellous marketable commodity."[188]

Indeed, such renderings of a specifically French woman made her, above women of other nationalities, the woman most associated with sex, something that Americans in particular were inclined to appreciate as it fuelled the already existing "American infatuation with the City of Love."[189] The amorous and erotic reputation of Paris/France, and relatedly that of its women, stemmed from two factors: the first was the fact that photographic methods were invented in France and freely put to use in this way before anywhere else

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[186] Ibid.
[187] Smilby, p. 3.
[188] Sternberg, Chapelot, p. 5.
[189] Smilby, p. 56.

(see chapter 1). Whilst at the same time the lax circulation of erotic/pornographic material in France enthralled Americans, who were banned from acquiring pornography through legitimate means due to the Comstock Law. In America, more so than anywhere else, the Parisian woman was unconscionably mythologized. The images that illegally made their way into the country from France were, one would imagine, interpreted as "liberated" when judged against the reserved ladylike coolness projected by the Gibson Girl. The women that featured in them were comparatively daring, provocative, loose even, and ultimately transgressive. "America was perhaps more responsible than France itself for promoting and establishing Paris as the universal mecca of amour and sex," claims Mark Gabor, and to prove this point, he lists an entire catalogue of early American men's magazines that demonstrated how the American male associated sex with French women: *French Follies, French Frills, Gay Parisienne, Les Dames, Paris by Night, Paris Life* and *Paris Nights.*

The issue of apparent censorship – as with the Comstock Law, and any residual Victorian-era superficial prudery – was that it did not repress sexuality but rather *aroused* it, as is evident in the process of the reification of the proto-pin-up over this period. The increasing visualization of women and subsequent attempts to censor them only served to heighten their eroticism. Conservative and restrictive women's clothing operated in this way, as proven by *La Vie Parisienne*'s glee in regularly satirizing and fetishizing women's clothes and undergarments in illustration (*fig.31*). Lois Banner claims a specifically American propensity to overrate women's supposed innate spirituality, thus raising them on a pedestal, is to blame for the nineteenth-century obsession with physicality: "the obverse side of the focus on spirituality was a fascination with physicality, with the shape of women's bodies, in a culture in which they were supposed to be concealed."[190]

Frenchman Alfred Binet was the first among clinical psychologists to introduce the theory of erotic fetishism, from which Freud would later develop his theory (see chapter 5). Clothing fetishism is the most popular fetish, as well as being the first identified fetish. The late-Victorian-to-early-twentieth-century fashions were exceptional in arousing sexuality by their apparent modesty. Layers of petticoats, over corsets, chemises and knickers made a ceremony out

[190] Banner, p. 166. Banner also states: "Placing women on a pedestal was a characteristic of the legendary American chivalry, and nineteenth-century culture generally had spiritualized women and viewed them as representatives of morality." Banner, p. 166.

of the dressing and undressing of the female body.[191] "Edwardian underclothes developed a degree of eroticism never previously attempted," according to historians C. Willett and Phillis Cunnington, and were for the first time collectively referred to as "lingerie."[192] "Lingerie" inferred delicate, intricate and sheer adornments as opposed to functional underwear, and subsequently began to garner much more attention and praise in the fashion media, as well as in men's publications such as *La Vie Parisienne.* "Those diaphanous garments were indeed revealing," state Willett and Cunnington:

> They exposed […] a new and remarkable attitude of mind, very remote from the Victorian. It was a kind of artificial, highly refined, and probably unconscious, sensuality. Perhaps it served as a substitute for the purely physical attractions which were prudishly concealed.[193]

The fetishism of various parts of the body over the course of the twentieth century, which lingerie promoted, is reflected in the phases of the pin-up. In the earlier decades, legs and buttocks were drawn attention to in illustration, given that skirts were longest during this time, whilst at mid-century the focus of the pin-up would be on the size and shape of the breasts. Early-twentieth-century fetishism centred on female legs in part because the legs were integral to the short-lived fashion for knickerbockers (bifurcated skirts) worn for use on the bicycle. The bifurcation of the skirt was revolutionary, and riding a bicycle was "a feminist statement, and women who rode declared their approval of the new opportunities for women," which was in turn symbolic with the wearing of the new modern skirts.[194] Their critics considered them to be masculine, Sapphic, and representative of women moving away from domesticity and maternity, and were thought to prompt "women towards lasciviousness."[195] To this end they were effectively used as an erotic vehicle, the eroticization of the garment being extricated from the subtlety with which the knickerbocker revealed the contours of the leg. A popular trope of erotic illustration at the time featured women on bicycles (*fig.32&33*). And so sexually

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[191] Dian Hanson wittily observes that the French created entertainment out of the many layers of underwear with the cancan years before the arrival of the striptease. Hanson, p. 60.
[192] C. Willett, Phillis Cunnington *The History of Underclothes* (London; Boston: Faber and Faber, 1951, 1981), pp. 128-129.
[193] Willett, Cunnington, p. 129.
[194] Banner, p. 144-5.
[195] Menon, p. 58, p. 55.

stimulating was this idea of women's legs that American magazine *Vanity Fair* (not the current publication) dedicated a 1903 issue to images of bifurcated girls, thus rendering the item of clothing transgressive and erotic.[196]

The illustrator that best captured the type of French woman who incorporated all these facets of early modern twentieth-century womanhood – the "semi-virgin" status, the gaiety of the performer, the commercialism and fetishism of emergent modern fashion and culture – was Raphaël Kirchner, *La Vie Parisienne*'s most admired illustrator. The Kirchner Girl, unlike the Gibson Girl, did not appear as a society girl intent on marriage with bourgeois aspirations. Instead, the Kirchner Girl was carefree, sexually attainable, an inviting girl-next-door type, and an idealized seductive Frenchwoman. Kirchner drew her in a dreamy watercolour haze as an openly smiling and delicate yet sexually aware romantic figure (*fig.66&67*). "The freedom demonstrated in Kirchner's works," observes Meisel, "reflected the liberation that was sweeping through all phases of society during the Belle Époque."[197] Kirchner's work featured heavily in *La Vie Parisienne* and made popular the theme of the picture-postcard "Bathing Beauty." His rendering of femininity deviated from the archetypal Montmartroise figure, setting aside what *La Vie Parisienne* had described of the Montmartroise as, "cunning, possessing loose morals, and [being] attractive in an 'irregular' way."[198] In contrast, the Kirchner Girl's softness gave her mass appeal and she subsequently became the first popular "pin-up" of the trenches during the First World War, with illustrations made available in magazine, postcard format and even in booklet form. Raphäel Kirchner's untimely death in 1917 could not halt the long-lasting impact his creation would have on the creation of the American pin-up, lending her the egalitarian wholesomeness that she would become synonymous with. Kirchner and his contemporaries such as Henry Gerbault, Chéri Hérouard, Gerda Wegener, Fabien Fabiano and Umberto Brunelleschi, signalled a progression from what now appeared to be depictions of a glacial ladylike beauty and gentility of the late-Victorian proto-pin-up, to a *fin-de-siècle* sexuality that hinted at a nascent Art Deco modernity.

The proto-pin-up of the early-twentieth century therefore was beginning to be defined by a sexuality that teetered on the borders of subtlety. American

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[196] Hanson pp. 75-78.
[197] Meisel, 'The 'Fine' Art of Illustration', *The Great American Pin-Up*, p. 35.
[198] Menon, p. 41.

artists inspired by the frivolity and sexual abandon depicted in these images influenced an era in American illustration during which "the Golden Era came together."[199] The remnants of Victorian definitions of spiritual and delicate femininity, as popularized by the artists Howard Pyle, A.B. Frost, Edwin Austin Abbey, E.W. Kemble and Charles Dana Gibson, were fading. The second and third decades of the twentieth century would be defined by the "party girls" of Montgomery Flagg, Coles Phillips, Nell Brinkley and John Held Jr., whose pin-up types would epitomize not just an aspirational transgressive model of femininity but also mark the transition of the proto-pin-up from French fancy to American property.

America, Modernity, and the concept of Modern Womanhood.

The Modernists, affected by the devastation of the First World War, were motivated to pioneer new abstract ways of perceiving the world around them.[200] Concepts of freedom, liberation and the shifting of moral boundaries were particularly at the forefront of their creative expression. The modernist movement filtered into everyday life via art and photography, architecture and design, theatre, literature and critical theory, provoked by a general re-evaluation of the status quo after the severe economic, emotional and social effects of the Great War. Modernism came to fruition during the 1930s but in fact the spirit of its artistic innovation had sprung up earlier in Europe during the 1890s. The age of modernism emerged approximately in late-nineteenth century Europe and heralded various topographical hubs over the years starting in avant-garde Paris, then London and later Berlin, until finally in the 1920s and 1930s it became distinctive of America, particularly New York and Chicago.[201] America defined modernism through architecture (Frank Lloyd Wright), in jazz (Duke Ellington, Bessie Smith, Louis Armstrong), art (Man Ray, Georgia O'Keeffe), the cinema (Chaplin movies), transportation (the Model-T Ford) the popularization of psychoanalytic thought, and, though often historically overlooked, the figure of the "liberated" and fun-loving American Girl, the flapper/chorus girl.

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[199] Reed, *The Illustrator in America 1860-2000*, p. 87.
[200] See Peter Gay, *Modernism, The Lure of Heresy: From Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond* (London: William Heineman, 2007).
[201] Ibid.

In light of its supposed transgressive aesthetic therefore, modernism affected issues of gender and sexuality in the way in which a *concept* of womanhood was emerging to suit the zeitgeist. During the Modernist era, the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in America and (white) women won the right to vote. On a superficial level this appeared to end the work of the suffragists, and women had seemingly broken free from their second-class citizen status. Popular culture and commercial industry found ways through which to both encourage this apparent new status of female liberation and also to commercially exploit it. The *concept* of modern womanhood sold innovative clothes and underwear, cigarettes, cars and other luxurious items on the basis that the owners of these possessions were liberated or even revolutionary. Actresses and showgirls were increasingly heralded as examples of modern, emancipated womanhood:

> [Chorus girls] were staking a claim to public fame and were succeeding. In the process they were broadening even further what had long been the importance of the actress as a moulder of women's values. And essentially what the actress – and the chorus girl – represented was a new, *modern concept of womanhood*, one that involved independence, sexual freedom, and an enterprising, realistic attitude towards a career. Actresses showed American women a new sexual and personal style […] They inhabited a world of sensuality and pleasure, where men and women were not afraid to indulge themselves in the latest dances, the latest songs, the latest fashions.[202] [my italics].

More than this however, the concept of liberation had become attached to sex and sexuality, an association that had everything to do with the introduction of Freudian psychoanalytic theory to the American public in 1909.[203]

E. Fuller Torrey considers how Freudian thought influenced American culture in such a way that it determinably shaped American thought. In the early twentieth century the media in America sensationalized Freud's work by reporting on it with intended salaciousness by placing more emphasis on his theories on sexuality, thereby drawing greater public attention to

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[202] Banner, pp. 183-184.

[203] Freud was invited by Dr G. Stanley Hall (founder of the American Psychological Association) to Clark University in 1909 to promote sex education and encourage public discussion on sex. The exposure in the American media afforded to Freud and his theories incontrovertibly linked his name to sex: "By 1916 the association of Freud with sexual freedom was firmly implanted in the public's mind." E. Fuller Torrey, M.D., *Freudian Fraud: The Malignant Effect of Freud's Theory on American Thought and Culture* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), pp.13-37.

psychoanalysis. Thus defined by sex, his work prompted many to assume that inhibitions and "repression" were negative human conditions and they in turn urged others to express their "latent" behaviour and be "free."[204] Freudian theory was additionally popularized amongst the liberal arts melting pot of Greenwich Village in New York City. As a Marxist epicentre, art movements such as Cubism, Futurism, and Dadaism flourished. Margaret Sanger and Bill Haywood were prominent characters in this revolutionary community where the plays of Shaw and Ibsen were championed and the new dances of the turkey trot and tango popularized.[205] The deconstruction of morals and traditions that all these practices encouraged fit in with the work of Freud: "in and around this fertile New York ground of liberalism and revolt," explains Torrey, "the seeds of Freudian theory took root and grew." [206] Articles published in *Good Housekeeping, Everybody's Magazine,* the *New York Times,* the *New York Journal* and the *New York Times Magazine,* as well as various literary journals, cemented Freud's popular culture status amongst the New York intelligentsia by 1917. Freudian theory marked the first sexual revolution of the twentieth century:

> Sigmund Freud's introduction to most Americans in the early twentieth century was as an apostle of sexual freedom […] It was only when Freud became commanding general [of the warriors fighting Victorian morality] in the second decade that the forces of celibacy and puritanism were put to rout. Freud, as titular leader of the sexual revolution in America, became an appellative symbol of sexual freedom.[207]

Within New York City, as Torrey explains, Freud's theories dovetailed with the already prominent ideas relating to the status of women in society such as sexual freedom, birth control, divorce legislature, abortion rights and women's suffrage. [208] In the same publications that regularly featured proto-pin-up therefore, Freud's work was also being critiqued (*fig.34*). The increasingly sexual depictions of proto-pin-ups during the interwar period were influenced by Freud's fame and reputation, thus lending the visual characterization of the

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[204] Torrey, pp. 16-17.
[205] Torrey, pp. 23-24. Margaret Sanger pioneered the cause for the legalisation of birth control, Bill Haywood was leader of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).
[206] Torrey, pp. 23-24.
[207] Torrey, pp.13-14
[208] Torrey, pp. 32-33.

proto-pin-up a sheen of sexual legitimacy via the scientific status of psychoanalytic thought. Subsequently this may have also implied that the sexualization of women was progressive and therefore acceptable. Her sexualization was, according to the Freudian connection, an intellectual cause and advocated her equality with men.

Nothing exemplified this tie-in of Freudian theory, female sexual emancipation and commercialism as in the pointed effort of the American Tobacco Company to promote smoking amongst women. In 1929 Edward L. Bernays, publicist of the company and nephew of Sigmund Freud, consulted Dr. Abraham A. Brill – Freud's initial champion in the USA – on how American Tobacco could achieve this:

> [Bernays] was told that "smoking is a sublimation of oral eroticism" and that cigarettes are phallic symbols and thus masculine symbols. Cigarettes could therefore be used, said Brill, as "torches of freedom" by women to demonstrate the fact that they were liberated. Based on Brill's advice Bernays arranged for ten young debutantes to smoke publicly in New York's Easter Parade, causing a national stir with front-page stories in newspapers. Bernays contended that this was "the first instance of [Freud's theoretical] application to advertising."[209]

The risqué element involved in the image of women smoking no doubt helped sales during a time when smoking in public was still considered somewhat taboo for women.[210] Further promotion of the concept of modern womanhood alongside the promotion of cigarettes came from the direction of the Hollywood movies. By the 1930s and throughout the1940s, movies ceaselessly promoted cigarettes alongside characterizations of apparently headstrong, independent female leads.[211] The simultaneous inception of moving pictures and psychoanalysis points to a common voyeuristic tendency within both institutions. "Except for the Surrealists," claims art historian Peter Gay, "no party

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[209] Torrey, p. 32. Historian Kerry Seagrave casts doubt over the success of Bernay's publicity stunt, claiming the incident went mostly unreported. See Kerry Seagrave *Women and Smoking in America 1880-1950* (Jefferson, North Carolina, London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2005), p. 171.

[210] Seagrave, p. 125.

[211] The initial association of cigarette smoking with *femme fatales* came about from the movies, specifically *Carmen* (1915) and *The Vixen* (1917), starring Theda Bara. By the 1920s Greta Garbo had turned smoking into an erotic/sexual vehicle with her part in *Flesh and the Devil* (1926). Seagrave, pp. 114-115.

of modernists has been as eager as the makers of movies to benefit from, and provide benefits for, Freud's science."[212]

The iconicity of early cinema, which elevated the physicality of actresses such as Mary Pickford, Lillian Gish, Clara Bow, Greta Garbo and Louise Brooks, had begun to take effect on the way in which women viewed themselves and were viewed. Apart from affecting the widespread use of make-up, early silent cinema exacerbated the tendency to evaluate women on the basis of their appearance. The close-up of, in this case, the female performer on film, as uncomplicated by speech, or even by colour, held the attention of its audience to such a magnanimous degree whereby the image (of a woman, the performer) transformed into one of iconicity, through the power of its seductive simplicity and sensuality. Gilles Deleuze calls the close-up the *affection-image*, which in itself he equates to being the face. The close-up, or affection-image, thus operates through degrees of admiration and desire.[213] Art historian Stephen Bayley observes also, from a sociological perspective, the affective quality of the power of cinematic images:

> The first audiences [of the cinema] were predominantly working-class Americans and for the majority of these, English was not the first language. Silent movies allowed *images* of women to dominate the perceptions of viewers, uncontaminated by the complexities of language. Hollywood is as much a state of mind as a Los Angeles suburb and this state of mind passed into national, then international, consciousness. And with this state of mind came powerful images: the design of twentieth-century woman.[214]

If twentieth-century womanhood was being designed, then it was a collaborative process between artists, advertisers and film studio bosses, for a susceptible female public eager to ring the changes.[215] Art Deco, or the Style Moderne as it was known in the 1920s and 1930s, utilized all aforementioned talent (of mostly men) to appeal to women's growing sense that they wished to be New Women of the twentieth century. Subsequently a silhouette or outline of modern

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[212] Gay, p. 359.
[213] Gilles Deleuze, *Deleuze: Cinema 1, The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbera Habberjam (London; New York: Continuum, 1986, 2005), pp. 89-93.
[214] Stephen Bayley, *Woman as Design: Before, Behind, Between, Above, Below* (London: Conran Octopus, 2009), p. 214.
[215] In the fine art arena Surrealists such as Man Ray and Salvador Dali were particularly consumed by the idea of using the female body as a platform for making art, or even, imposing art on the female body, as with *Le Violin d'Ingres* (1924) and *Il Volto di Mae West* (1934-1935) respectively.

womanhood was literally designed (perfectly exemplified in Erté's fashion illustrations (*fig.35*)) as what both Roland Barthes and Lucy Fischer recognize as a semiological sign and abstraction of the female figure.[216] She was outwardly sleek and slender, streamlined and sophisticated, and having lots of fun.

For Show: Chorus Girls, Flappers and Hollywood icons.

The romantic eroticism of the Kirchner Girl would eventually be overtaken by a materialistic pin-up type that reflected the rapid pace of economic growth and industry of the American 1920s, as echoed in the illustrated pin-up types of Coles Phillips, Nell Brinkley, Montgomery Flagg and John Held Jr. By 1910, the "heyday of the French glorification of femininity was past."[217] However, France's glorification of femininity remained very much in the DNA of the American proto-pin-up. Florenz Ziegfeld Jr., known as the "glorifier of the American girl," was the Broadway producer responsible for importing and appropriating the Parisian "showbusiness-dreamworld" as historian Stephen Gundle would have it.[218] The Ziegfeld Follies revue, America's answer to the Parisian Folies Bergère, held up a mirror to the apparent fresh attitude adopted by the younger generation surfacing from apparent Victorian fustiness. The magnificent spectacle and culture surrounding the Follies was highly representative of a generation very much in awe of pageantry and display, and was responsible for producing an identifiable brand of femininity, one that Ziegfeld moulded out of his chorus girls and branded as "Ziegfeld Girls." These chorus- or show-girls, were not individual talents such as Eva Tanguay, Sophie Tucker or Marilyn Miller who sometimes shared the stage with them, but were the symbolic embodiment of visual abundance in all its forms:

> The expensive clothing and costumes they wore, the opulent scenery that surrounded them, the consumer objects they portrayed, and the racy songs and dances they performed symbolized the longings of modern women and men in search of personal freedom and self-gratification.[219]

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[216] Lucy Fischer, *Designing Women: Cinema, Art Deco & The Female Form* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), pp. 35-40.
[217] Gabor, p. 169.
[218] Gundle, p. 137.
[219] Banner, pp. 186-187.

Ziegfeld created a type of aspirational feminine excess based on consumer luxury, achieved by overwhelming the senses with sparkle and high glamour in Art Deco styling. He helped evolve the status of the chorus girl by making their somewhat secondary involvement integral to the shows, whilst also revolutionizing the theatrical performers' age-range by hiring younger more "wholesome" looking girls, in contrast to the more mature women who had traditionally dominated the stage.

All of this contributed more substantially to better pay, and being a showgirl became a legitimate career: "Ziegfeld glamorized the chorus girl and made her a symbol of the modern, independent woman. Her status, as well as her salary, increased, and she even became a suitable mate for the wealthy."[220] Ziegfeld's biographers and descendants Richard and Paulette Ziegfeld concede that, whilst offering up nearly nude women for public delectation was nothing new, Florenz Ziegfeld's "consummate accomplishment" was to recreate the reputation of the chorus girl in a manner that provided wider appeal to both sexes in the audience: "He showed enough flesh to lure male customers while still presenting the showgirls with class and dignity, so that women were just as eager to see Ziegfeld's shows as men."[221] The Ziegfeld Girls had by the early 1900s become "the acceptable face of feminine sexual spectacle in America and easily blended into the ideology of bourgeois consumer culture."[222] Interestingly, although Ziegfeld took inspiration from Paris, he managed to remove what Lois Banner observes as the "cosmopolitan worldliness of Paris" from his "girls," meaning, the eroticism or "sex" was lacking. They demonstrated instead the excesses of industry and commercialism. In effect, the Ziegfeld Girls belied their construction in the way that they promoted luxurious lifestyles and in this way only simulated art. It was left to artists such as illustrator Alberto Vargas and photographer Alfred Cheney Johnston to create pure art out of the Follies. Vargas put the eroticism of Kirchner into his illustrations of the Ziegfeld Girls whilst Johnston replaced the raw sex-appeal, reminiscent of the French Postcards, into his photographic work (*fig.36,37&193*).

The Ziegfeld Girl ilk was recognised in general terms as the chorus girl, a young, very modern and fashionable woman employed onstage in

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[220] Richard Ziegfeld, Paulette Ziegfeld, *The Ziegfeld Touch: The Life and Times of Florenz Ziegfeld, Jr.* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1993), p. 178.
[221] Ziegfeld, Ziegfeld, p. 178.
[222] Allen, p. 244.

showbusiness. In the proto-pin-ups of Coles Phillips and Nell Brinkley, the chorus girl was usually a fashionable brunette or redhead, either languidly elegant or buzzing with movement and energy (*fig.38,39&48*).[223] Chorus girls drew members of high society to Broadway and instigated the culture of Lobster Palace Society in the first decade of the twentieth century, which would later morph into the Café Society of the 1920s.[224] If the Montmartroise reflected the Parisian cabaret/showgirls and the bohemian lifestyle of the butte, then Ziegfeld's Girls promoted a concept of womanhood that echoed the fun and frivolity, and economic status (of the privileged few) of New York:

> [The chorus girl] was an invention of the 1890s and she has been compared to other new figures such as the shop girl, the barmaid, and the typist. All of these roles that were seen as typical of the evolving nature of work and of leisure. They were urban jobs that were typically performed by young women. In the public imagination, chorus girls summed them up. They were breezy, cheerful, and carefree girls on the make whose dancing and singing reflected a modern, vital spirit. By contrast, showgirls were purely icons of visual pleasure and fantasy. They did not really perform but […] posed, adopted attitudes and presented themselves as constructed ideas of femininity and consumption. However, the two were often blended and the public usually made little distinction between them.[225]

This generation of young women were the first to leave home and venture into urban spaces to work and live alone. They were the first generation of women permitted to provide for themselves economically and able to afford their own luxuries.

For many however the signal of change as symbolized by the figure of the showgirl/chorus girl was problematic and these concerns were notably

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[223] Nell Brinkley herself was a woman who defined her times. Initially an art-nouveau-style illustrator of "pretty girl" art, she defied the odds as a female artist (or in the words of her biographer, she escaped the vocational gender stereotyping of the "mother and child [illustration] ghetto that most other women cartoonists and illustrators seemed to have inhabited") and became instead highly successful and famous for her sexually aware, au courant Brinkley Girls. In a role reversal, the Ziegfeld Follies created a tableau dedicated to *her* illustrations, accompanied by a specially written song "The Nell Brinkley Girl" in 1908. Brinkley's drawings showed awareness of the working woman, but at the same time she was sure to provide her fans (and her boss, William Randolph Hearst) with more of what they wanted: "cherubs and romance." See Trina Robbins, *Nell Brinkley and the New Woman in the Early 20th Century* (Jefferson, North Carolina; London: McFarland & Company Inc., 2001).

[224] Lobster Palace Society refers to the after theatre/show crowds that filled the lobster palace restaurants on Broadway in New York. See Banner, p.175, and Gundle, pp. 155-156.

[225] Gundle, p.132.

moralised in Theodor Dreiser's novel *Sister Carrie*. Andrea Stuart considers the showgirl/chorus girl's symbolic implications on early twentieth-century morality:

> Symbolically, she straddles that crucial liminal boundary between the good woman and the bad, the hidden dark world of prostitution and the equally claustrophobic domestic space of the respectable *femme d'intérieur*. By constantly flirting with what is and what is not permissible, she both threatens respectability and helps to define it.[226]

The chorus girls' tendency towards celebrity and scandal presented society with a version of womanhood that reflected "the moral and psychological dilemmas of an era."[227] Stuart also observes that the showgirl/chorus girl is a fascinating paradox, as a figure of immorality she earns her keep in the "traditional" way, "via her decorativeness and sexuality." As a career girl however, her world is open to a life of "adventure, sexual freedom and financial autonomy."[228] These flaunting, sexual, good time girls inspired other women "to dream and experiment." On the one hand they were figures of optimism, however, they also signalled a permanent change in women's roles and subsequently a so-called crisis in masculinity.[229] The crisis in masculinity was particularly obvious in the renderings of J.C. Leyendecker's excessively virile sportsmen and gentlemen, whilst Norman Rockwell's nostalgic *misè-en-scene* style illustrations seemed to long for the "uncomplicated" days before the sexual revolution of the 1920s (*fig.40&41*). As Banner aptly puts it, "[the chorus girl] was not only a body to watch; she was a body to worry about."[230]

This could not have been more true of the women who performed the cooch dance as part of the evolving burlesque acts, which by the mid-1920s would develop into fully-fledged striptease acts.[231] This particular type of

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[226] Andrea Stuart, *Showgirls* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996), p. 8.
[227] Banner, p. 215.
[228] Stuart, p. 8.
[229] Banner, p. 216.
[230] Banner, p. 189.
[231] The cooch dance, fundamentally a belly-dance, was introduced to Americans at Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition 1893. The 'Little Egypt' acts as they were called were instantly absorbed into burlesque acts and contributed to raising the level of sexual spectacle to previously unchartered heights when the removal of clothing was introduced with the Dance of the Seven Veils. Robert C. Allen claims: "The inclusion of the cooch dance as a standard feature of burlesque after the 1890s centered the form once and for all around undisguised sexual exhibitionism. The cooch dance linked the sexual display of the female performer and the scopic desire of the male patron in a more direct and intimate fashion than any previous feature of burlesque. Here, all pretence that the performance was about anything other than sexual pleasure was dispensed with. The spectator's desire was not diffused among a company

showgirl (striptease/burlesque artists are included in this category according to Stephen Gundle's definition) was aggressive in her sexuality, and the concept of womanhood she made famous – although never really made popular – was related to the "vamps" or "vampettes" of early Hollywood, as made immortal onscreen by Theda Bara. Near naked exoticism and frenetic dancing defined the vamp, who was possibly the first amongst the "sex symbols" of popular mass culture, in the most literal and figurative sense of the phrase.

The creation of sexual symbolism – conveying sex with the minimum measure of pretence yet keeping within acceptable (but loose) censorship standards – was something German film studios had initiated with the development of the publicity photo still.[232] Still or portrait photographs of movie stars satisfied the growing demands of fans (i.e. fanatics), a relatively new phenomenon that chorus girls, actors, celebrities and film stars had been increasingly subject to since the late-nineteenth century.[233] According to Hanson, Hollywood picked up on the success of the publicity still as a form of advertisement and adopted the practice for its own film stars. With the publicity still, the product of promotion was the star and not necessarily the movie. The first glamour photographer was Edwin Bower Hesser, an established photographer of nudes, or "art" photography, who was hired by the studios during the mid-1920s to photograph such stars as Jean Harlow, Clara Bow, Louise Brooks and Joan Crawford. Hanson implies that the studios hired Hesser purposefully so to convey the sexuality of these stars, to glamourize them and, even more so, to further the already existing notion that actresses were whores (*fig.42*).[234] George Hurrell, infamous glamour photographer of the 1930s, refiner of the technique of airbrushing, and expert of the publicity still, claimed that, "For me, the word 'glamour' was only a way to avoid mentioning sex." (*fig.43&44*) [235] Such methods of photography, and illustration, in the inter-

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of performers or mediated by drama but focused exclusively on the body of a single woman. She, in turn, played only to him; her movements served no function other than to arouse and please him. Her dance was a pas de deux involving her body and his gaze. She was an exhibition of direct, wordless, female eroticism and exoticism." Allen, pp. 225-243.

[232] Hanson, p. 116.

[233] The Matinèe Girls were the first recognized group of fans who sought autographs, sent letters and flowers to actors etc. in the 1880s-1890s. Banner, pp. 178-9. It could be argued that the Stage Door Johnny was also a type of early fan.

[234] Hanson, p. 114.

[235] The publicity still/glamour portrait utilized Tungsten lighting, soft-focus lenses and airbrushing to create its luxuriant, sensual effect: "it was not character portraits that were sought but imagery charged with eroticism and poignancy." Koetzle, p. 524.

war period therefore provided a "socially acceptable erotica."[236] Actresses, and actors, were obliged to have publicity stills taken of them, which were then sent out to film fans as well as distributed to fan magazines like *Photoplay, Film Fun, Movie Humor* and *Real Screen* for editorial features and cover art.

The effect of publicity stills, in a similar vein to the *carte de visité*, created pin-ups out of movie stars and garnered mass exposure for individual actresses and actors, thus increasing their celebrity. Most importantly they gave the public the impression that they too could be like their favourite film stars, if not by means of their luxurious lifestyles then certainly by imitating their "look" and attitude. Stephen Gundle highlights the importance of fantasy tempered with reality in the promotion of the Hollywood star system:

> The most complete embodiment of glamour that there has ever been is the Hollywood film star […] no one was more highly polished, packaged, and presented than the men and women who became the majors' main lure in their efforts to captivate the public. Suspended between the ordinary and the extraordinary, the real and the ideal […] For audiences worldwide, these alluring personalities were the stuff of fantasy. A fantasy, however, that was somehow accessible […][Hollywood's key] premise [was] that anyone, potentially, could be a star.[237]

Film magazines during the 1920s and 1930s were mostly written by women for women.[238] In the 1920s, Hollywood gave flight to the image of the flapper at a time when film star pin-up imagery was firmly directed at women.[239] The flapper – an unwholesome, money-driven, fun-seeking, sex-crazed archetype of a woman – was typically personified on film by Clara Bow, initially in the movie *It* (1927). The "It Girl" Bow transcended her role in the movie to become the perfect embodiment of the fast-paced Roaring Twenties.[240] The flapper was the ultimate symbol of youthful female sexuality in the 1920s and

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[236] Koetzle, p. 524.
[237] Gundle, p. 172.
[238] Maria Elena Buszek quotes a figure of 75-83% of cinema audiences during the 1920s being female and claims that the content of film narratives centred on women's changing identities within society fuelled these figures. In these early years of cinema, according to Buszek, Hollywood created "a film culture much invested in feminist culture." Buszek, pp. 141-143.
[239] Buszek, p. 143.
[240] Over the course of her career and even after her death Bow remained the victim of lurid sex-related rumour, since proven untrue for the most part. Such stories of sexual excess about actresses fell in-line with the manner through which the studios chose to promote their stars. This was the era when the pornographic "stag films" made their first appearance, and the sordid, uncensored and potentially libellous "Tijuana Bibles" first came into circulation, many of which featured illustrations of movie stars in sexual scenarios.

was more a symbol of a zeitgeist attitude, which was cleverly utilized by the studios to lure women to cinemas to part with their money. Caroline Kitch observes:

> The symbol of the flapper represented the real life experience of only some American youth, yet the *idea* of her spread quickly across the country. In the decade that began with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, she redefined American women's freedom as sexual rather than political.[241]

Of course, women had been sexualized through imagery previous to the emergence of the flapper. But with her distinct popularity in culture and the media it was hard to turn back from this point, since female sexuality had now come to be synonymous with fun, fast-paced living, transgression, youth, change and vitality via the flapper trope. All of which was being publicised – internationally – through the new and immensely popular medium of the cinema, a medium that was proving to be a very lucrative concept.

The flapper became not just a symbol of modern female sexuality, but also an almost allegorical figure of modern urban America. Frank Xavier Leyendecker may have been the person who coined the term "flapper" (according to his brother's biographer) with his rendering of 'The Flapper' for the cover of *Life* in 1922 (*fig.45*). Nonetheless, John Held Jr. was the most adroit in his artistic capacity to capture the spirit of the flapper in his illustrations, whilst at the same time downplaying the danger associated with flappers in film (*fig.46*), making her instead a satirical, even comical figure (*fig.47*).[242] Held's flappers evoked the type of women written about by P.G. Wodehouse rather than F. Scott Fitzgerald. They were meant to appeal to the New York smart-set and usually featured in and on the covers of the *New Yorker* and *Life*. They were tall, lanky and boyish looking, reminiscent of urban skyscrapers and drawn with an exaggerated and distorted style typical of Modern art.[243] In these renderings, the flapper was childlike and silly, a characteristic inflicted on her probably because of her materialistic reputation. They contrasted immensely with Nell Brinkley's flappers, whom she often tried to give substance by portraying as something more than self-gratifying "It Girls." Brinkley depicted them instead as

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[241] Kitch, p. 122.
[242] Kitch, p. 122.
[243] Kitch, p. 128-129.

romantic figures and as women who could acquire their own wealth, rather than those dependent on the sugar daddies that often accompanied Held's illustrated flappers (*fig.48*).

From a contemporary perspective it is difficult to interpret this supposed sexual revolution as anything but cynical and exploitative and yet there were many women who admired the figure of the flapper and believed that she motivated women to reject tradition and social convention.[244] Increasing numbers of titillating magazines such as *Le Sourire* and *Paris Plaisirs* from France (1920s) and *Gay Book, High Heel* and *Silk Stockings Stories* from America (1930s) featuring scantily-clad showgirls, Ziegfeld Girls and Mack Sennett 'Bathing Beauties' are testament to the increasingly sexual manner through which women were being viewed by dint of the flapper/chorus girl trope.[245] As is the fact that by 1930 the Motion Picture Production Code would be put into practice, a reactive measure to the perception that the medium was becoming overtly preoccupied with sex.

Additionally, this was also the era in which the live beauty contest was born, an event legitimized by illustrators such as Howard Chandler Christy, James Montgomery Flagg, Coles Phillips and Norman Rockwell, who all participated on the judging panels at various times.[246] The beauty contest came into being in Atlantic City in 1921. As an ancestor of the photographic beauty contest of the mid-1800s, it was an event so well publicised that by 1905 it had become "an accepted feature of American life." In her outline of the history of the beauty contest in America, Lois Banner makes sharp observations about the way in which these contests made sex objects out of women by emphasizing the body, and rightfully observes that the contests epitomized the era's dependency on artificial and material methods of beautifying oneself. Furthermore she states:

> beauty contests also illuminate American attitudes toward sensuality and offer a gauge of the influence of Victorianism in American culture. They reveal the nature of commodity rites designed to further cultural homogeneity and to integrate social classes within the American democratic order.[247]

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[244] See Kitch, p. 130.
[245] Martignette, p. 33.
[246] Banner, pp. 266-267.
[247] Banner, p. 249.

What Banner almost touches upon here but does not quite mention, is that a feature of American life such as the beauty contest was aligned to a distinctly American affiliation with the theory – or pseudoscience – of eugenics; something that would prove pivotal in the lead-up to the creation of the first categorical (the classic) American pin-up.

Eroticism and Eugenics.

In order to fully understand the connection of eugenics to the pin-up, a short summary of the theory and its history in nineteenth-century France and America, prior to its links with Nazi German fascism, will be briefly detailed. As mentioned in chapter 2, the Gibson Girl arose amidst a climate of mass immigration and class aspiration in 1890s America. The Gibson Girl inspired a culture of imitation that reflected more deeply-rooted anxieties concerning the assimilation of immigrants, mostly from Eastern Europe, into an increasingly bourgeois society. The "nineteenth-century theme of degeneration" emerged in British and American culture at this time, as historian Daniel Pick puts it.[248] Degeneration themes, perhaps, called to attention underlying anxieties relating to on-going rapid progress particularly across developing (wealthy) countries and the influx of immigrants, giving rise to the view that "other races had degenerated from the ideal physique of the white races."[249] The belief that humanity was deteriorating into a mist of immorality, corruption and degradation from "crime, suicide, alcoholism and prostitution […] understood as 'social pathologies' endangering the European races," surely pointed to serious concerns relating to swift and disorientating changes in society.[250] But crucially these "social pathologies" were seen as inherent biological traits in the poor person or the immigrant, for instance:

> Degeneration was increasingly seen by medical and other writers not as the social condition of the poor, but as a self-reproducing force; not the effect but the cause of crime, destitution and

[248] Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c. 1848 - c. 1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, 1993), p. 6. Pick goes on to explain: "Degeneration was never successfully reduced to a fixed axiom or theory in the nineteenth century […] Rather it was a shifting term produced, inflected, refined, and re-constituted in the movement between human sciences, fictional narratives and socio-political commentaries. It is not possible to trace it to one ideological conclusion, or to locate its identification with a single political message." Pick, p. 7.
[249] Pick, p. 21.
[250] Ibid.

> disease. The putative biological force of degeneration produced degeneracy in society.[251]

In the late 1900s eugenics emerged from the "language" of degeneration themes as a more solidified theory. In the 1920s and 1930s eugenics followers were found in many countries other than America.[252] According to historian Christina Cogdell eugenics did not appeal only to those of white upper/middle-class capitalist economies but to ethnic groups as varied as Jews, African-Americans, Mexicans, Brazilians, Russians, Indians and the Japanese, not to mention socialists, political conservatives, radicals, fascists, anarchists, feminists and social conservatives also.[253] Eugenics, in short, was the observation of heredity, a forerunner of genetics but lacking in any legitimate scientific research. The aim of eugenics was to promote so-called controlled reproduction labelled "efficient biology" or "rational procreation," in order to eliminate disease and produce new generations at a peak state of physical fitness and health. "The very term, eugenics," remarks Fae Brauer, "signifies control of sexuality in terms of its rationalization or strict management to ensure that nothing is wasted in securing the betterment of a society, race or nation."[254] During the 1920s and 1930s eugenics was widely believed to be a science dedicated to the *betterment* of a society, nation or race and in such a way it gained mass appeal from those who were naively unquestioning.[255]

Eugenicists in America and France were followers of the more moderate Neo-Lamarckian eugenics, in comparison to Galtonian eugenics in Britain. Neo-Lamarckian eugenics was a merging of Darwinian evolutionary theory with

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[251] Ibid.

[252] Societies in Britain, France, Germany, Australia and New Zealand showed major interest in eugenics before its association with Nazi extremism. See *Art, Sex and Eugenics: Corpus Delecti*, ed. Fae Brauer & Althea Callen (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2008), p. 4.

[253] Christina Cogdell, *Eugenic Design: Streamlining America in the 1930s* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2004), p. xi. Cogdell points to Daylanne English's *Unnatural Selections: Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance,* which compares eugenic discourse between Anglo- and African-American modernist authors.

[254] Brauer, Callen, pp. 7-8.

[255] Cogdell admits to eugenics being a pseudoscience based on the criteria that much of the research and propaganda was "faulty and unproven" and yet proclaimed to be true and subsequently led to the instigation of various unsavoury social and political policies. However, in relation to the propensity towards racism within the belief and practice of eugenics Cogdell has this to say: "the desire to improve the genetic future of humanity did not *have* to entail a racist perspective […] 1930s mainline eugenic rhetoric shifted from naming entire "races" or classes as dysgenic to focusing on the individual […] most eugenicists were racist in that they believed in an evolutionary racial hierarchy […] most eugenics supporters were quite well-intentioned; eugenics, after all, was also known as race betterment, and improvement is generally esteemed as a laudable goal." Cogdell pp. xii-xiii.

Jean-Baptiste Lamarck's evolutionary observations from his *Zoological Philosophy* (1809). Whereas Francis Galton's brand of eugenics championed sterilisation legislation and racial hygiene, Neo-Lamarckians were encouraged to discipline their bodies through physical exercise (a relatively new practice) and sport, and to regulate their sexual activity.[256] The idea of regulating sexual activity through "rational procreation" was given momentum by France's most celebrated obstetrician Adolphe Pinard at a time when the anti-pornography lobby was successfully demanding the censure of various works of visual art depicting nudes. At the moment in which France was becoming inundated with the type of sexual imagery that had been inherited from the culture of Montmartre, a crisis in dwindling population figures was being reported as related to sexual degeneracy. The demographer Jacques Bertillon aligned himself with the (first) French Eugenic Society in 1912 to fight the supposed causes of France's population crisis: among them alcohol, prostitution, contraception, pornography and "unsavoury" art.[257] Brauer cites that, "images, particularly mass-produced images of the nude, were regarded as far more invasive than the printed word. In eliciting the spectator's gaze without their consent, they were singled out for posing one of the greatest dangers to public decency." [258] Furthermore, images of "perverted bodies" represented the supposed degenerate and disease-ridden illicit bodies of prostitutes and striptease artists. In response to this, Neo-Lamarckianism presented an alternative body, which was healthy, hygienic, whilst also desirable and "best" suited for procreation. Neo-Lamarckians upheld the art of Antiquity, such as the *Venus de Milo* (130-100 BC), as the pinnacle of perfection of the female body shape and praised the nudes of the Salon (though not all) for their show of pertness of breast and shapely buttocks as evidence of their fertility. [259] Men were depicted as muscular and therefore virile and women as potential child-bearers therefore giving credence to upright breasts and the natural s-curve shape (as opposed to the exaggerated s-curve achieved with corsetry in the previous century).

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[256] Fae Brauer, 'Eroticizing Lamarckian Eugenics: The Body Stripped Bare During French Sexual Neoregulation', *Art, Sex and Eugenics*, p. 98. It should be noted however that due to the popularity of eugenic thought in America, sterilisation laws were supported and put to widespread use.
[257] Brauer, p. 99.
[258] Brauer, p. 101.
[259] Brauer, p. 104, p. 110, p. 128.

Meanwhile, the beauty contest of 1920s America heralded an age of renewed interest in eugenics. The beauty contest is rightfully looked upon as the ultimate practice of objectification and yet it displays a curiously puritan sexuality, akin to the Neo-Lamarckian model of ideal beauty. This is a factor of beauty contests that is usually overlooked. Apart from the swimwear round (again, undeniably sexual but not especially erotic), the very matter-of-fact display of bodies and the measurement against a phantasmagorical ideal is very much rooted in the eugenic standard. Throughout the 1920s and 1930s the American Eugenics Society (AES) hosted the Fitter Family Contests, the first taking place at the Kansas State Free Fair in 1920. The contests consisted of giving participating families psychological and physical tests and awarding the fittest members in each category (father, mother, daughter etc.). Eugenics, as previously mentioned, found an audience in nineteenth-century America as a unifying theory of identity amidst the tumult of multiculturalism and mass immigration. By the 1920s there were local branches of the AES across small-town America that held lectures, hosted youth clubs and distributed information on social work, race suicide and preparation for marriage, amongst other topics. Eugenics was also taught at Ivy League schools, women's universities, state schools, industrial arts schools and private colleges across a spectrum of subjects including hygiene, home economics, sociology and physiology.[260]

Through these channels eugenics altered the way in which Americans psychologically responded to the human form. Robert Bogdan notices how during the 1930s the Victorian freak show became increasingly unpopular as Americans became more and more absorbed by displays of "beauty" and "quality" human beings:

> No longer amusing or wondrous owing to developments in genetics and increased understanding of glandular disorders, freaks instead were viewed as physically or mentally degenerate individuals who were sick, pitiable, and even pathologically dangerous.[261]

The eugenic ideal female form was further venerated in eugenics-inspired magazines of the 1920s, one of which was *Dawn Magazine* in which nude women filled the pages and managed to avoid the censor (*fig.49*). Such

[260] Cogdell, pp. 98-105.
[261] Cogdell, p. 99.

"studies" of female nudity especially promoted "normalized" levels of nudity. Anything excessive (erotic props and accessories) would have gone beyond the principles of eugenic rational procreation. Fae Brauer states: "Through nudity and provocative posing, aspirational imagery made it seem normal and natural to desire to have sexual contact with the delectable body for 'rational procreation'."[262]

Whilst the principles of eugenics were familiar to many Americans, the movement did not attract a particularly significant following; rather, it inspired a general familiarity with what appeared at the time to be an optimistic and progressive ideology that undertook to "increase [the] productivity, beauty, and intelligence of the national populace." By 1945 eugenics followers were seen as naïve and their beliefs unpalatable.[263] Still, eugenics had by then left a long-term mark on the average American non-follower by the way it affected common ideals on sex and sexuality. And whilst the hardcore base of followers melted away, eugenic principles came to reach most Americans through diluted cultural formats, as was the case with streamline design.

The Streamlined Petty Girl.

The subtle connection between eugenic principles and the Petty Girl is streamline design, which became fashionable in American art, architecture and product design in the late 1930s. Streamline design principles were similar to those of eugenics in two significant ways: it exacted control over a subject and it emphasized its efficiency. In terms of eugenics, the "subject" was the human body; whilst with streamlining it was the commercial product, which in turn also affected the human body. The Petty Girl embodied the streamline features of control and efficiency, and she became a polished, specifically American aesthetic ideal of feminine excess represented as a female figure of modernity. As streamline design became increasingly identifiable as an American design, the Petty Girl came to be viewed as an American phenomenon and archetype of femininity, far surpassing the popularity of any of her predecessors.

To understand the cultural anatomy of the Petty Girl one must initially understand the significance of streamline design, its connection to eugenics,

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[262] Brauer, p. 7.

[263] "It may well be that we have to look to 1945 […] to find degeneration really in retreat, truly and consistently a matter of mainstream scientific disavowel and embarrassment. For by then degeneration appeared inextricably intertwined with the web of fascist-ideology, the evils of the Nazi doctors, the unfathomable full horror of 'The Final Solution'." Pick, p. 237.

and how it came to be the first and most celebrated of industrial designs that was expressly and identifiably American. Steven Heller and Louise Fili explain:

> Streamline design was a distinctly American design style forged in the crucible of the social and economic turmoil of the 20s and 30s. Overproduction for inactive markets demanded radical measures and forced business into an unprecedented alliance with a new professional known as the designer. In an effort to stimulate consumption these white knights of industry launched a crusade against outmoded industrial output that resulted in the application of new futuristic veneers that brought out the inherent machine-made attributes of products and commodities. Influenced by Modern art, which to a certain degree was inspired by the machine itself, the industrial designer was not like the nineteenth-century decorator, an apologist for or rebel against mass production, but rather a visionary who understood art should be of its time and products should represent the era in which they are produced.[264]

Streamline design had been evolving since the 1920s, it was an offshoot of Art Deco, itself an offshoot of Cubism within the Modern art movement.[265] Historian Christina Cogdell argues that Art Deco's angular design was a metaphor for "civilised man's development of technology, his colonialist powers, and his desire for his own long-lost primitive vitality."[266] Conversely, it was nature, as well as the machine, that inspired streamline design, its aim was to capture the smooth and fluid movements of animals such as dolphins, fish and birds.[267] The rounded teardrop shape distinctive of streamlining found on desk lamps or car lights for instance, was reminiscent of a particle moving through the air or passing through fluid with the least amount of disturbance (*fig.50,51&52*). This shape and style lent itself brilliantly to aerodynamic machines such as the aeroplane, the train and the automobile.[268] Machines such as these were the status symbols of the day, they suggested much more than just American innovation in industry and represented a lifestyle of individuals like the fast-paced chorus girl and her Café Society crowd.

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[264] Steven Heller, Louise Fili, *Streamline: American Art Deco Graphic Design* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995), p. 6.
[265] Art Deco was originally referred to as "zigzag modern", the term "Art Deco" was coined in the 1960s. Cogdell, p. 6.
[266] Cogdell, p. 8.
[267] Cogdell, p. 9.
[268] Examples of streamlined machines are the Chrysler Airflow 1934-1937 automobile, the Lincoln-Zephyr V-12 1936-1940 automobile, Henry Dreyfus's 1938 "Engine 5450" locomotive and Raymond Lowey's 1938 "S-1" locomotive. See Heller, Fili, p. 80.

Streamlining brilliantly captured the aesthetics of glamour and underscored the essence of what the people who pursued glamorous lifestyles wished to project: "To be on the move, almost nomadic, is often a feature of the person of glamour […] a fast pace of movement, whether or not in a competitive environment, often arouses interest and envy."[269] Streamlining also hinted at an eroticism and sexual energy bubbling beneath the smooth veneer. Streamlined cars in particular seemed to emanate sexual energy, as well as provide spaces for sexual encounters: "The availability of automobiles was essential to the sexual revolution, for they provided ladies and gentlemen with mobile venues that could be used to explore new dimensions in their relationships."[270] Streamlining was mostly applied to mechanical products and technological equipment with the result of softening their shape and hiding their machinery by accentuating a superficial outward smoothness that connoted cleanliness and speed, often sporting the recognisable triple "flow" or "speed" lines, which were purely superficial. One of the fathers of streamline design, Raymond Loewy, explains that an "aluminium skin" is required to cover all the "confusing" parts of the machine, such as the wiring, tubes, ducts, rivets and so forth. Furthermore, the skin "saves the day and transforms it into a sleek masterpiece […] I believe that […] a plain, simple shield, easily removable, is aesthetically justified. This shield accomplishes something, and it becomes functional, the specific function being to eliminate confusion."[271]

Over the course of ten years, which is approximately how long it took the American public to fully embrace the style, streamlining would appear in architecture such as bus and gas stations, and automotive dealerships, reflecting its aesthetic affiliation with transport machinery. It would also be most noticeable in kitchen appliance and homeware products:

> shiny white enamel, chromed hardware, clean horizontal lines, and smooth curved surfaces replaced dark colors, intricate lines, and ornate decoration. Irons, electric mixers, record players, staplers, desk lamps, and fans all appeared in teardrop shapes, made even sleeker through the use of Bakelite and chromed metal fashioned into seamless forms.[272]

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[269] Gundle, p. 13.
[270] Torrey, p. 35.
[271] Raymond Loewy, *Never Leave Well Enough Alone* (Baltimore; London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1950, 2002), p. 219.
[272] Cogdell, pp. 91-93.

The style was promoted initially through magazine and poster advertising during the 1920s, in which the airbrush technique – strongly associated with Modernism and the Bauhaus style of art – perfectly enabled streamlining's immaculate lines and visions of perfection to be artistically realised: "the posters […] adorned with mythic streamlined images of great Modern metropolises rendered in airbrush […] symbolized the flawless grandeur of the Machine Age."[273] In the years 1933-1934 streamlining was to reach unprecedented popularity due to the significance and associations with which it was exhibited at the Chicago World's Fair.[274]

The Chicago World's Fair was a celebration of the pure and applied sciences and ultimately a showy attempt to regain the confidence of the American public in capitalism after the financial disaster of 1929. The fair showcased the colonial "achievements" of white Europeans and Americans, featured anthropometric research by Harvard professor Earnest A. Hooton as sponsored by the Eugenics Record Office and also displayed a well-known installation brought to America from the Deutsche Hygiene Museum in Germany. The Transparent Man was a model of a man lit from within, thereby exposing his muscle and organ structure and exemplifying popular twentieth-century analogies of the human as machine.[275] The control exerted over things by design was signalled as being ideologically common to both industrial products through streamlining and the human form through eugenics.

The biggest draw of the fair was a display of streamliner trains. They were impressive and mighty machines with sleek curvilinear outlines projecting a sense of glamour, and their streamline design heralded an era of high-powered speed and progress, "it was at once the engine of progress and a metaphor for the fast tempo of daily life," a visual association that in a short space of time would become a quintessentially urban American way of life (*fig.53*).[276] The popularity of the streamliner train at the Chicago fair affected the

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[273] Heller, Fili, p. 81.
[274] George Petty designed the poster for the 1933 Chicago World's Fair, as if to cement his reputation as an artist who made unique a style that married airbrushing and streamlining. Petty was the first to apply the airbrush technique to his renderings of proto-pin-ups. By the time airbrushing had become distinctive of Modernist poster design, Petty was already an airbrush aficionado, having had plenty of experience working at his father's photographic studio where he airbrushed portraits.
[275] Cogdell, pp. 84-86.
[276] Heller, Fili, p. 80.

public in such a way that streamlining quickly became the desired choice of America's distinctive outward appearance to the world:

> As a result of the public frenzy created by these trains and the huge popularity of the Chicago World's Fair, between 1933 and 1934, streamlining took the nation by storm, symbolizing at once evolutionary progress in science and industry, increased speed and efficiency of bodies and machines, escape from the problems of the Depression, and the onset of industrial design as a national passion.[277]

Popular metaphors presented efficient bodies and machines as interchangeable in the Machine Age. The female body especially became the subject of eugenic idealism by making desirable a functional maternal body which, by way of streamlining, was injected with excess, transforming the female body from a body of utility into an aesthetic feat of engineering rooted in the organic.

After the success of streamline design at the Chicago World's Fair, the industrial designer and commercial artist Egmont Arens advocated its potential to lift America out of the economic slump by firing the imaginations and lifting the spirits of the public. In a series of lectures and papers on the subject, Arens also acknowledged the market value of streamlining. In *Advertising Arts* (1930) he refers to the style as "modern dress" that did not really make products any more efficient but made them more appealing to consumers, especially female consumers.[278] Indeed, streamlining's projection of modernity and its promise to supply something new, was almost entirely an illusion:

> Modernistic graphics framed and "dressed" otherwise quaint and timeworn products. Yet, in what became a typically American marketing ploy, it was the advertising and packaging, not the product itself, that was smartly styled [...] Merely increasing the visibility of a product was no longer enough; it needed to be imbued with an aura that spoke more to image than utility. In addition to advertising, a product's packaging was as important as its function. So beginning in the 1920s advertising strategists turned from promoting *things* to selling *ideas*.[279]

The observation that streamlining was used as a form of "dressing" is ironic. Streamline fashion had more scope to appeal to women. It exemplified the way

[277] Cogdell, p. 91.
[278] Heller, Fili, p. 47.
[279] Heller, Fili, p. 9.

in which ideas were sold, and in this case the clothes would make the woman modern. The seamless satin dresses Jean Harlow made famous are an adroit example of streamlining being applied to clothes and popularized through the visual media (*fig.54*). Streamline design made categorical therefore the concept of modern womanhood, which, although driven by profit also demonstrated a renewed belief in the American way of life and of hopeful anticipation in the future. According to Heller and Fili, "style was not arbitrarily affixed to products but was added to distinguish old from new and to encourage national pride through a distinctly American aesthetic."[280] Clothes such as sleek dresses, tapered suits, cloche hats and modern prints epitomized the streamline style of clothes and the concept of modern womanhood for modern America.[281] Furthermore, Cogdell observes that:

> Advertisers even tried to convince American women that their bodies should be streamlined. Instead of flaunting the bony stick figure of the flapper, women were urged to gain ten pounds and round those Deco angles into smooth curves, accentuated by bras that shaped breasts like torpedoes. Or, if she happened to gain twenty, she could bring her girlish form back into line with a corset, hid beneath a dress cut on the bias, seemingly seamlessly sealed by a streamlined zipper.[282]

This connection made between the body and streamlining, rooted in the eugenic principle of bodily control, is never more apparent than in the manner in which women's bodies were encouraged in the ways of streamlining, particularly the streamlining of the breasts, of which George Petty's illustrated Petty Girl would exemplify.

In her excellent essay 'Streamlining Breasts: The Exaltation of Form and Disguise of Function in 1930s' Ideals', design historian Adrienne Berney considers how over time breasts became cultural objects of increasingly aesthetic value. Berney charts how a respect for the maternal breast evolved into a desire to attain the aesthetic non-functional breast. This she argues, happened with the introduction of artificial feeding implements and modified milk recipes during the Victorian era, rendering breastfeeding virtually defunct:

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[280] Heller, Fili, p. 14.
[281] Heller, Fili, p. 17.
[282] Cogdell, pp. 93-94.

> By the 1890s […] nursing breasts no longer appeared in mass-produced celebratory imagery of middle-class domesticity and maternity. Instead, breast-feeding began to represent poverty and ethnic minority status. Prescriptive literature had begun to present the ideal breast's aesthetic and nutritive functions as separate. Youthful, or non-maternal, breast aesthetics took on a growing importance in American popular culture as the significance of the potential nutritive function waned.[283]

Suddenly, since breasts no longer had to be defined according to biological function, female anatomy became a tabula rasa upon which contemporary ideas could be written, including eugenic principles and streamline design. In the case of the former, upright breasts dictated "healthy" breasts, and with the latter modern clothing and underwear accentuated the smooth aestheticism of the breast.[284]

The invention of the brassiere in particular had much to do with this new breast aestheticism. The Maiden Form Brassiere Company was set up in New York during the late 1920s in defiance of the flat-chested flapper fashions. In contrast to the downplaying of breasts, the *brassiére* was designed to separate, support and uplift, thus re-emphasising feminine curves which by 1930 were back in vogue.[285] Underwear such as the bra and girdle, and even the zipper, moulded the body into a slippery, smooth streamlined surface visibly comparable to any locomotive or automobile of the age. It is not impossible to understand how industrial designers and advertisers were quick to make parallels between female bodies and modern machinery (*fig.53&54*).

Berney observes that in his biography, the designer of the 1938 S-1 locomotive Raymond Loewy, makes an analogy between the design of his machines and 1940s pin-up Betty Grable's body[286]. Adrienne Berney states that:

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[283] Adrienne Berney, 'Streamlining Breasts: the Exaltation of Form and Disguise of Function in 1930s' Ideals', *Journal of Design History,* Volume 14, No. 4, 2001, Special Issue: Technology and the Body, editor Nicolas P. Maffei (Oxford University Press on behalf of Design History Society), p. 330.

[284] Brauer and Callen consider the importance of breasts within eugenic ideology: "breasts were crucial to the Neo-Lamarckian morphology of woman's body and a prime signifier of woman's beauty […] Floppy drooping breasts signalled not just a degenerative disease like syphilis, but also undesirable fertility and breast milk deficiency. By contrast, upright breasts encapsulated a woman's pre- and post-natal disposition for 'rational procreation' and bountiful breastfeeding. They also created the aesthetic s-curve." See Brauer, Callen, p. 29.

[285] Berney, p. 337. See also Willett, Cunnington, p. 154.

[286] See Loewy, p.220.

> He intended his machine designs to hide the working parts in the same way that a pin-up girl's image glorified her body's appearance without reference to its functions. The effort to streamline breasts, then, reveals the complex interplay of ideas about the human body and technology.[287]

George Petty's famous Petty Girl in many ways captured the interplay between the body and the machine. Petty's illustrations are a perfect example of the utilization of Loewy's theory of the "desirable shield", with which no betrayal of the flawed human aspect is visible in the rendering of the female form. But what is extraordinary about the Petty Girl – and the reason why she set the pin-up standard – is that she embodies the major changes of the first third of the twentieth century, as detailed in this chapter. It was an era for which America is best remembered as an expanding empire gradually reaching the height of its powers.

The Petty Girl has the distinction of being the first "pin-up" worthy of the description as such.[288] She is a model example of streamline design's influence on art and everyday life; she is a vessel of Modernity. Although Petty had been painting a version of his "girl" since the late 1920s, it would not be until she appeared as the 1939 gatefold (*fig.55*) – with the express intention of being pulled out and pinned up – in *Esquire* magazine that she would be recognised as a pin-up and "the feminine ideal of American men."[289] By the time the Petty Girl had arrived as the first true pin-up the flapper had been forgotten for some time, psychoanalysis had been abandoned as a fad with the onset of the Great Depression, glamour was giving way to utility chic, overt visual representations of sexuality were being suppressed through laws and conventions, eugenic ideology was about to be hastily abandoned, and streamline design was in its dying days. The era of the Varga Girl was immanent but before her arrival Petty's illustrated girl reigned as one of the most recognisable images in America.

Petty made his name at *Esquire* in the mid-1930s and went on to further his career and widen the appeal of the Petty Girl with national advertising campaigns, movie posters, events posters and film star portraits. The Petty Girl is significant because she encapsulates how the proto-pin-up made the

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[287] Berney, pp. 329-330.
[288] The Gibson Girl was the first *unintentional* pin-up.
[289] Reid Stewart Austin, *Petty: The Classic Pin-Up Art of George Petty* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1997), p. 10.

transition from a European erotic rendering of feminine excess, to a recognisable American symbol of industry, innovation, glamour, modernity and wholesome sexuality.

Trained at Académie Julian in Paris where John Singer Sargent, Alphonse Mucha and J.C. Leyendecker had studied, Petty was immersed in the culture of poster and advertising art and thoroughly understood the medium, which is the area of work he went straight into upon graduation. Petty developed his girl "type" within an advertising capacity. He used his ten-year old daughter Marjorie to pose for him, her preadolescent and "boyishly slim figure" typified the streamlined ideal of the 1920s and 1930s: "Her prepubescent figure, the flat hips and attenuated slenderness of adolescence, perfectly suited the flapper image requirement of the early thirties. Puberty gave her the softening curves necessary for the satin-and-crepe-gowned elegance of the mid to late thirties" (*fig.56&57*). [290] This was the beginning of a career-long collaboration between Petty and his daughter.[291] Petty revolutionized the use of the airbrush, commonly used to eradicate defects in photographic portraits. But as a poster art tool the airbrush enabled Petty to add extraordinary "depth and warmth" to skin tones, which was the standout feature of his pin-up girl.

The Petty Girl sold cigarettes, bathing suits, stockings and underwear in her advertising capacity. In particular, her appearance as the Jantzen swimwear muse did much to establish the connection between Petty's use of simple line-drawing and the fashionable, pared-down streamlined body shape. In rendering her, Petty would make Marjorie wear a cap to cover her curly hair, to give his illustrations added streamlined effects. She was often painted *en pointe* in ballet shoes to connote the grace and fluid movements of a ballerina and during one phase Petty explored her "sensuous muscularity […] rampant from fingertips to toes […] every line [expressing] unequalled athletic grace […] the artist reached for an apex of grace."[292] In this way she was reminiscent of eugenic bodily idealism (*fig.58*).

Petty was also commissioned to paint the poster advertisement for the movie *Ziegfeld Follies* (1945) and in 1950 *The Petty Girl* immortalised his

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[290] Austin, p. 56.
[291] Marjorie contributed ideas and helped with the painting of her fathers' commissions, as well as contributing her distinctive plump cheeks and wide wholesome smile. "We both felt," Marjorie said, "that capturing a fresh, youthful, spontaneous smile was significant to the beauty of the creation." Austin, p. 181.
[292] Austin, p. 101.

creation in film. In the 1950s, he was further commissioned by General Motors to design the ornamental female hood figure for the 1953, 1954 and 1955 Nash, thus solidifying his reputation as a pioneer of streamlining. His biographer Reid Stewart Austin laments: "Though designed after the heyday of art deco influence, today these flying ladies seem the last chrome-plated echoes of that streamlined school."[293] It would be her kinship with another modern machine however, the telephone, that the Petty Girl would be best remembered for. As Despina Kakoudaki insightfully observes, the telephone in the Petty images presented a "feminized/sexualized technological object" that at once connoted both the vision of the young female workforce (telephone operators tended to be women in the 1930s and 1940s) and its private, boudoir use, thereby allowing "viewers to fantasize talking *to* her."[294] The telephone, as with most props in the various pin-up images, included the viewer in the action and drew them in (*fig.55,57,58,59&60*).

For reasons such as this, the Petty Girl fronted a very successful series of ad campaigns; besides the aforementioned 1937 Janzen swimwear campaign, she was the body of Bestform Brassieres from 1944 to 1946. The Petty Girl without a doubt had commercial appeal and, like her forerunners, she could charm women in the context of promoting a luxury lifestyle or a concept of modernity. However, she is best remembered within the context of *Esquire* magazine. Although *Esquire* was a men's magazine, like the girls of *La Vie Parisienne*, the Petty Girl found admirers in both men and women. She radiated a uniquely innocent sexuality, so that "the effect was original and disarming, for even if the subject were jaybird naked such open innocence cancelled any possibility of predatory, come-hither sexuality."[295]

So, by 1939 the year of the Petty Girl's gatefold debut, pin-up sexuality had finally become conceptualized as a form of fantasy and within the next two years would be deployed in a much more precarious method; as a weapon of war.

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[293] Austin, p. 139.
[294] Kakoudaki, pp. 351-353.
[295] Austin, p. 82.

Chapter 3.

The Pin-Up as "Promise of Pneumatic Bliss": How Erotic Femininity Went to War.

In 1933 when *Esquire* magazine's first issue was being put together, Arnold Gingrich, then editor, was struck by a couple of advertising posters he came across featuring artwork by a relatively unknown artist, George Petty. Gingrich tells of the moment he saw Petty's artwork: "[the posters] featured girls who looked positively poured into their dresses. As I saw the first one I thought of the line in T.S. Eliot about 'visions of pneumatic bliss'."[296] As it happens, Gingrich misremembered the line, which actually tells of the "*promise* of pneumatic bliss."[297] This seemingly pedantic point actually highlights how, at a very crucial moment in the genealogy of the pin-up, Gingrich reveals a perceptive insightfulness regarding the inspiration behind the creative endeavour that would lead to the eventual conceptualization of the pin-up.[298] From a romantic and poetic perspective *Esquire*'s Petty Girl was meant to be a "vision" of the feminine ideal.[299] By 1941 however, as America entered the Second World War, the pin-up – the term having by this time entered into common parlance – was to have her eroticism and femininity appropriated in aid of the war effort.[300] In this way the pin-up became representative of a "promise" of security. This chapter will seek to examine how pin-up served, so to speak, in the two World Wars.

Throughout the 1930s therefore, the proto-pin-up moved closer towards conceptualization due in large part to the familiarity of the genre of "girl" art appearing across the media and culture. During the interwar period illustrator Rolf Armstrong had been mostly responsible for elevating proto-pin-up artwork

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[296] Arnold Gingrich, *Nothing But People: The Early Days at Esquire A Personal History, 1928-1958* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1971), p. 100.

[297] "Grishkin is nice: her Russian eye/Is underlined for emphasis;/Uncorseted, her friendly bust/Gives promise of pneumatic bliss." T.S. Eliot, 'Whispers of Immortality', *T.S. Eliot: Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London; Boston: Faber and Faber, 1974), p. 55.

[298] I use the term "conceptualization" to refer to the moment at which, circa 1941, proto-pin-up imagery reaches the point at which it becomes such a widely recognized and recognizable art-form that it is subsequently referred to as *pin-up* thereafter (i.e. "pin-up" turns into a concept).

[299] 'The Petty Girl, Triumph of Airbrush, Is Ideal of American Men', *Life,* June 26th 1939.

[300] The OED cites *Life* magazine as making the earliest mention of the term *pin-up* – in its twentieth-century context – in reference to Dorothy Lamour being the no. 1 pin-up girl of the U.S. Army, in the 1941 July issue. See *Oxford English Dictionary Online,* http://dictionary.oed.com, accessed 18/08/2010.

into the mainstream. His work appeared on sheet music, on the covers of theatre and film magazines; in addition, he was the best-selling calendar artist for Brown & Bigelow, and stars such as Mary Pickford, Greta Garbo, Marlene Dietrich and Katherine Hepburn all eagerly posed for him (*fig.61*).[301] By 1939 the term *pin-up* was categorically used to refer to illustrated and photographic imagery purposely made, in magazines such as *Esquire,* to be removed from their content and context, and pinned-up. Centrefolds, or double-page spreads, had previously appeared in late-nineteenth-century European "men's" magazines, as well as in America's *Life* magazine, to satisfy popularity for the Gibson Girl. However, as an institution of magazine culture, later magazines that utilized centrefolds took their lead from *Esquire*. The first pin-up of this kind was a Petty pin-up from the December 1939 issue (*fig.55*). During the Second World War, pin-up imagery virtually invaded American culture, inspiring songs, films and fashions through the advertisements, recruitment posters, calendars, matches packets, magazines and magazine centrefolds (or gatefolds) in which they were featured.

Cultural theorists have correctly observed the pin-up's "purpose" during this era as primarily serving the male gaze. Princeton's class of 1939 (an all-male university until 1969) voted George Petty their favourite artist over Rembrandt and Titian. The accolade, as reported in *Life,* brought the artist to major prominence but also proved that groups of segregated men such as college boys in this instance, or isolated soldiers, held erotic subject matter, no matter how artistic, in high regard. However, the pin-up's erotic fine art genealogical strain should make the Princeton class's comparison not as surprising as it initially should seem; rather, it emphasizes how erotic art, whether highbrow or mass-produced, is more often than not *intended* for a male viewer. But during this era pin-up also had popular appeal amongst women who emulated the sexy style of small waists, prominent breasts and wide hips, in a return to the s-shape fashion. This type of 1940s erotic feminine excess as portrayed in the pin-ups is ineluctably connected to the Second World War. The exaggerated femininity of this style, observes Elaine Tyler May, and its "explosive" quality is linked directly to women's sexuality/sexualization, and allegorically to the hydrogen bomb tests on the Bikini Islands.[302] Pin-up imagery

[301] Martignette, Meisel, p. 83.
[302] May, pp. 80-99.

that promoted a female sexuality based upon a feminine sexual excess tied to "destructive and disruptive force[s]," became the subject of socio-cultural and political debate, which would intensify in the postwar period. This chapter will aim to uncover how this type of overtly erotic femininity came to prominence in a cultural context, before exploring its postwar socio-cultural effects in chapter 4.

The utilization of pin-up as war propaganda during the Second World War was effective on both the frontline and on the homefront; as a sexy morale-booster for the soldiers stationed abroad, and as a call-to-action for the recruitment of Rosie the Riveters (women who worked on heavy-duty production lines at air and artillery plants). But pin-up also operated on other levels that deviated from and resisted the intended uses to which it was put by of government institutions such as the Office of War Information. I will begin with an exploration of the culture of the proto-pin-up in the trenches of the First World War, before exploring how the pin-up was interpreted in a manner of unofficial ways, contrary to the way she was deployed by authoritative institutions.

The Great War: Kirchner and the culture of the soldier.

Historian George Robb states that with regards to the reclamation of "neglected" or "forgotten" popular cultural sources, academia has largely depended on the memoirs, novels and poetry of "the cultural elite" to articulate the experiences of life during the First World War.[303] Within the process of historical recollection, this consequently leaves by the wayside lesser-known writings and artefacts by women, the working-class and the foot soldier. Furthermore such artefacts present a somewhat incomplete picture of history since most people at the time did not experience the war through the works of Roberts Graves, Wilfred Owens or Virginia Woolf, for example. Rather, it was mass popular culture – an increasingly Americanized culture – that was making an impact on the hearts and minds of ordinary people: "Most people viewed the conflict through the lens of popular culture: music hall reviews, films, postcards, cartoons, adventure stories, and sporting contests."[304] Cultural artefacts and events such as these were seemingly effortless disseminators of war

[303] George Robb, *British Culture and the First World War* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 2.
[304] Robb, p.160.

propaganda. Popular culture, as opposed to the culture of the elite, served the war machine with its enthusiastically "uncritical, jingoistic, and patriotic [attitudes]."[305]

The Great War was, as has been noted by many historians, the first modern war. This moniker need not only refer to the modern weaponry and artillery that was being used for the first time, but also to the first-time use of multi-media propaganda such as the various films and posters created in order to propagate support for the war. Children and women were specifically socialized into a militarized culture, as Robb suggests. Toys and war literature aimed at the under-aged glorified war to children, whilst commercial advertisements for consumer goods were made more appealing to women through advertisements that used patriotic rhetoric and imagery. The unprecedented proliferation of the poster medium used for advertisement purposes reached further and wider than previous conventional advertising methods. As was the case in Paris at the turn-of-the-century, posters gradually became an overwhelming feature of the urban landscape of other Western cities, towns and rural areas, appearing in shop windows, banks, schools, churches, libraries, offices, factories, recruiting stations and town halls. The simplicity and ease with which posters could spread messages through even the most remote areas proved an exceptional propagandist tool in the lead up to war, and during it. It was, as historian Pearl James calls it, a war characterised by the use of the poster art form, a "poster war": "The unprecedented numbers of posters produced and displayed across the combatant nations attest to the fact that governments, charitable and other private organizations, and manufacturers all perceived the medium as a crucial and effective link to the public."[306]

Patriotic culture-at-large was successful in uniting the public behind already pre-existing sentiments and traditions and packaging those factors in modern advertising techniques to influence the people's support for the war.[307] Recruitment posters and other recruitment strategies worked along these lines, operating in such a way as to lead men to the "logical" conclusion that they should enlist and fight for their country (*fig.62*). But once these men had entered

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[305] Ibid.
[306] Pearl James, 'Introduction: Reading World War I Posters', *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture,* ed. Pearl James (Lincoln; London: University of Nebraska, 2009), p.6.
[307] James further adds: "posters both reflect the views their audiences already hold and attempt to influence people." James, p. 21.

the realities of the war, soldiers discovered that the culture that had initially enticed them into the army was not exactly wholly representative of their day-to-day existence in the trenches. The close proximity to the realities of war naturally lent soldiers a very different view of the war than those who were not directly involved in combat. The unmediated way that life and death were revealed to them on the frontlines affected their cultural tastes and the entertainments they preferred, as well as affected their sense of humour.

Writing specifically about British soldiers, George Robb comments that they:

> had a distinctive culture of their own, which differed in many respects from the popular culture of civilians. Although millions of soldiers participated in a common mass culture of sport, music halls, cinema, and pulp fiction, they came to eschew the more stridently patriotic elements of these activities and art forms. Because of their first-hand experience of the horror and futility of modern warfare, soldiers developed a more critical, ironic, and fatalistic attitude toward the war than did civilians.[308]

Allied soldiers reacted in similarly ironic and fatalistic ways during the Second World War, as will be examined in a later section. Trench culture was tinged with what might be termed a measured anarchic response that reflected their "more sceptical and fatalistic attitudes toward the war."[309] For instance, troops of the First World War composed their own songs that parodied patriotic songs from home with lyrics that mocked their humble and idealistic messages. They even produced their own magazines with satirical articles that parodied articles from the wider press, such as the women's magazine *Vogue.*

Postcards were the most prevalent visual format amongst soldiers in the trenches largely due to their conveniently small and therefore highly accessible size. F. Mackain's *Sketches of Tommy's Life* (*fig.63*), a postcard cartoon series that humorously related the hardships of army life, were extremely popular: "These cards allowed soldiers to convey something of their lives to family and friends more clearly than many could explain themselves."[310] Rivalling the popularity of cartoon postcards were "racy images of women" that attracted

[308] Robb, p.178.
[309] Robb, p.161.
[310] Robb, p.172.

young soldiers.[311] The very act of displaying or pinning-up the "racy" postcards – and also images of women featured in underwear advertisements ripped out from the pages of *The Tatler* – similarly conveyed an anarchic sentiment because of the daring subject matter and the fact that they were unauthorized. As Robb observes: "pin-ups in the dugout were frowned upon by military authorities, which made them even more desirable to love-starved troops."[312] That they were unauthorized meant that the pictures were also transgressive images. They provided a means through which soldiers not only challenged authority, but created their own subculture (*fig.64&65*). Soldiers' collective identity was thus starkly distinct from the homely ideal of the earnest and patriotic defender of "civilized" society, as publicised by the media back home.

Soldiers coming from outside France had access, many for the first time, to erotic/pornographic postcards. Robb comments that, "given the sexual reticence of Edwardian society, and the sexual isolation of most soldiers, it took very little to awaken desire," but this statement appears to be an underestimation of what was, by 1914, an increasingly permissive society.[313] Whilst pornographic postcards were certainly not allowed to be displayed in billets, the early proto-pin-ups, which hinted at their pornographic relation, worked as effective substitutes and symbolized, in a way, a transitional stage from apparent Victorian restraint to an increasingly relaxed Edwardian morality. Social commentators of the time regarded this age as "Sex O'Clock [America]" characterized by a "repeal of reticence."[314] The partially-clothed "peek-a-boo" style of the proto-pin-up (and subsequently all later pin-up) points to the trepidation with which Edwardians inched towards a sexualized culture. The most approved of, therefore, and popular of the racy proto-pin-up images came from the pages of *La Vie Parisienne* and particularly the art postcards of Raphäel Kirchner, who was also published in the *Daily Sketch* and admired in the trenches on both sides of the conflict (*fig.66&67*). Displayed images such as these ended up in a hinterland of acceptability because, as Kakoudaki claims,

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[311] Although it should be mentioned that sentimental images of home, children, and of wounded soldiers were also popular.
[312] Robb, p. 54.
[313] Robb, p. 54.
[314] Kevin White, 'The First Sexual Revolution: The Emergence of Male Heterosexuality in Modern America', *Sexuality*, ed. Robert A. Nye (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 316.

pin-ups have the ability "to both 'pass' for mainstream images and to retain the excitement and explicit sexuality of their pornographic component."[315]

Kirchner, a formally trained and critically successful artist prior to the onset of the First World War, almost accidentally became a "pin-up artist."[316] The fad for postcards began to wane in the first decade of the twentieth century only to be revived again during the First World War out of pure convenience. Kirchner benefitted immensely as a "pin-up artist" when his notoriety coincided with the growing demand for the convenient postcard format. Postcards became an easy yet crucial method of communication through which soldiers and their loved ones could communicate regularly. They became so popular that at their height over one million postcards were being sent every day.[317] Kirchner owed much of his "pin-up" reputation to the fact that he often published his works in erotic magazines such as *Sect, Das Album, Le Frou Frou, Lustigen Blätter* and of course *La Vie Parisienne*. Kirchner archivists and collectors Antonio and Pia Dell'Aquila observe:

> Certainly it would not have been his intention, but these postcards were to become the first pin-ups in history: they would give company to many young soldiers and officers who would hang them on their barracks walls and in the trenches as a kind of distraction from the horrors of war.[318]

Amongst British troops these works were affectionately referred to as "Kirchners" (not yet *pin-ups*), which denotes the level of familiarity soldiers had with this artist's work. The cards were sold in portable sets of five or seven cards and could be bought very cheaply at six pence (2 ½ pence in today's currency) a set.[319]

Kirchner became internationally renowned, his Kirchner Girl did not only appeal to men but to women who imitated her waifish style.[320] His eternal

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[315] Kakoudaki, p. 344.
[316] The use of speech marks regarding the word "pin-up" is to denote that *pin-up* and *pin-up artist* were not yet established terminology at the time that Kirchner was an artist.
[317] Robb, p. 171.
[318] Antonio Dell'Aquila, Pia Dell'Aquila, *Raphael Kirchner and his Postcards* (Bari: Mario Adda Editore, 1996), p. 19. Antonio and Pia Dell'Aquila suggest that the Kirchner Girl, as others have suggested about the Gibson Gibson, was the "first" pin-up. According to the findings of this thesis, once again, as with the Gibson Girl, the Kirchner Girl can only be an *accidental* pin-up, whilst the Petty Girl is the first *intended* and therefore rightfully the first actual pin-up in history.
[319] Paul Leaman,'Kirchners', *Cross and Cockade International Journal,* Vol. 35, No. 1, 2004, p. 38.
[320] Dell'Aquila, Dell'Aquila, p. 21.

subject – "interpreting the unending conflict between matter and spirit, emblematically represented in the female figure"[321] – stemmed from his experiences of living and socializing in Montmartre, where he moved to in 1900 from his native Vienna. Kirchner's style, like many Parisian artists of the time, was affected by the feminine and luscious sensuousness of French Art Nouveau. Even though Vienna had pioneered its own Art Nouveau genre (Jugendstil), Kircher's immersion in the Parisian Belle Epoqué nightlife dictated that the female figures he painted were based on the real and risqué coquettish women he socialized with in Montmartre, as opposed to any of the ethereal deity figures of the Jugendstil art movement. Through his "girl" Kirchner conveyed the Montmartroise figure as a palatable representative of a newly emerging social woman (see chapter 2) who, by the outbreak of war, had morphed into an increasingly erotic and "decidedly more mischievous" figure. Antonio and Pia Dell'Aquila describe Kirchner's style:

> his drawings are a real reportage of a time that had rediscovered delight in pleasure in which the woman has a predominant role and of which she is fully aware. His watercolours portrayed smiling girls without cares […] His little women, delicately erotic during the first years, then become decidedly more mischievous. His is not chameleonic behavior but rather the effect of continuous psychological symbiosis with the subject he portrayed.[322]

Living amongst, and thus observing, the very women who were experiencing the first sexual revolution of the twentieth century – and possibly personally enjoying the fruits of this permissiveness one would imagine – it is not altogether unfathomable that Kirchner may have felt a psychological affinity with his favourite subject, which would transpose itself into his art.

Harking back to the *bijinga* of Japan, Kirchner explored "types" of women, as he saw them. He had previously published a series of postcards entitled *Weiner Typen* that had had great success at the First International Exhibition of Picture Postcards in Venice in 1899.[323] As insulting as the inference to women as "types" is from a contemporary perspective, the intention – considering Kirchner's first-hand experience – was possibly his attempt to capture how women were emerging from strict nineteenth-century moral

[321] Dell'Aquila, Dell'Aquila, p. 9.
[322] Dell'Aquila, Dell'Aquila, p. 16.
[323] Dell'Aquila, Dell'Aquila, pp. 10-11.

confines, and to represent the many ways in which it was exciting to be a woman in the early twentieth century, or at the very least, a woman in Paris. An article from the *Daily Sketch* understood this to be the case at the time:

> she is the girl of every day, "the girl in the street" […] We are accustomed to speak of the Kirchner Girl in the singular; but it would be more appropriate to say the Kirchner Girls, for there is, so to speak, a plurality of her. She is a type, but a type without sameness. Although one, she is many […].[324]

Towards the end of his career Kirchner's specialism in "types" was put to use when he was hired by Florenz Ziegfeld to decorate the foyer of the new Century Theatre on Broadway. His painting of ten panels depicted the actresses from the show *The Century Girl* as symbolic types from the musical. Simone D'Herlys was 'Pride', 'Luxury' and 'Temptation', Hazel Lewis was 'Covetousness', Charlotte Davis was 'Envy' and Lillian Tashman was 'Anger', amongst others.[325] At that moment in 1917, Kirchner was perhaps the most suited of all world-renowned artists to produce portraits of the women showcased by the "glorifier" of American women himself, Florenz Ziegfeld. What this last phase in Kirchner's career highlights however, is that even though the Kirchner Girl may have been inspired by a changing status in women's social lives, on the other hand the limiting use of their image as feminine allegory still persisted in a centuries-old tradition. This, claims Pearl James, is why feminine symbolic imagery was employed so heavily during the war.[326]

Feminine allegories such as those inspired by Kirchner and Ziegfeld – 'Luxury', 'Temptation' and so forth – were allegories that they and a general public were traditionally accustomed to and remained, for the most part, unchallenged. The use of these allegories "has its origins in verbal rhetoric, which follows the rules of grammar: in Greek, Latin, and many of the other languages that derive from them, many abstract nouns […] are feminine in grammatical gender."[327] On the subject of war poster imagery, James asserts that the classical or allegorical figure helps to make universal ideals such as "Justice," for example. Where this type of allegory concerned America, it helped

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[324] Dell'Aquila, Dell'Aquila, p. 24.
[325] Dell'Aquila, Dell'Aquila, p. 22.
[326] Pearl James, 'Images of Femininity in American World War I Posters', *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture,* pp. 276-277.
[327] James, p. 277.

trace a "heritage to ancient times" for a nation that was virtually rootless. The classical figure in war imagery also permits detachment and distance from emotion, since allegory provides an abstract visual idea.

By the First World War however, the feminine allegory, whilst still intact, began to be refigured as an eroticized female, something that was to become especially prevalent in American public imagery during the twentieth century. This was possible because of the influence of the work of commercial artists such as Harrison Fisher, Howard Chandler Christy and Montgomery Flagg, who lent their "pin-up approach" of representing women to the war effort posters, thus influencing and changing the allegorical approach to war imagery (*fig.68*). As James observes:

> in some instances allegorical figures are eroticized, and they consequently become less abstract. In American World War I posters the sexual appeal common to commercial advertising frequently enters the visual field. The categories of feminine imagery overlap and infiltrate each other.[328]

In the dugouts however, the imagery took on a different meaning. The erotic imagery won out over the allegorical female, but not singularly because of more prurient tastes amongst isolated young soldiers. It may be seen to have operated on two other levels that stem from what James recognizes as the "Damsel in Distress" archetype, a sexualized female archetype used in posters on the homefront to over-emphasize the physical risks the German aggressor posed to *American* women such as rape, torture, injury, death (*fig.62*). James explains:

> The metaphoric representation of war as a threat to women is both extremely common in American war posters and highly unrepresentative of what the war was actually like. Most of those killed and wounded in World War I were, after all, men. But reminding male viewers of that fact did not make for very successful enlistment campaigns, and posters picturing male injury and death are few and far between. In American posters, injury is frequently feminized […] Portraits of female vulnerability function to deny and displace male vulnerability and to engender a notion of difference (women are victims, men are actors and defenders) that the war threatened to make untenable […] Yet […]

[328] James, p. 281.

> images often retain traces of the denied or displaced spectacle of male injury.[329]

Erotic imagery in the dugouts functioned along the same lines as these. Whilst it could not be said that the proto-pin-ups from *La Vie Parisienne* or of the Kirchner Girl were vulnerable to torture or injury in the context of those illustrations, what they did do in their capacity to portray excessive femininity is to "deny" the potential threat of death/injury to the men admiring them through the escapism they provided. The "pin-up" and her context was all about what she did *not* refer to.

In that same capacity they also reinforced the soldiers' masculinity, fostering a parallel mindset of excessive masculinity in the viewer required to survive and fight a war: "The more explicit appeal of the damsel in distress […] goes out to the male rescuer, the active, honorable man who will come to her defense."[330] Nonetheless, the utilization of sexualized female figures in the context of victim-themed imagery was a shocking source of propagandist psychological manipulation that depended not, as James argues, on "factual evidence but on sexual fantasy and gender […] stereotypes."[331] This is all the more deplorable considering that rape, torture and death were realities for many women who found themselves trapped within warzone territories, about which much more could be written than I have space for here.

In summary, the "pin-ups" of the First World War appealed in four ways to the common soldier: they satisfied the prurient imaginations of the mostly young and isolated men; their eroticism-as-transgression enabled an outlet for reactive or anarchic responses to authority within the army and to their desperate situation; their excessive femininity underlined the soldiers' masculinity and appealed to their protective instincts thus encouraging "action"; they did not refer to the potential of injury/torture/death to the men. During this era "pin-ups" were largely "civilian texts" as Kakoudaki observes. Any "benefits" the "pin-ups" may have had to the psyches of the soldiers who decorated their billets with them were almost entirely arrived at by the soldiers themselves. By the Second World War these effects of the "pin-ups" had not gone unnoticed and were to be encouraged, thus leading to the eventual conceptualization of

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[329] James, pp. 285-287.
[330] James, p. 284.
[331] James, p. 283.

the pin-up, her Americanization, and the solidification of her specific purpose: as a "state-sanctioned" morale-booster.[332]

The Second World War: frontline pin-ups.

The Army Air Force (AAF) regulations 35-22 of August 1944 read as follows:

> 2. *Policy*. The custom of decorating organizational equipment of the Army Air Force with individual characteristic design is authorized by the Secretary of War (memorandum from the Adjutant General, dated 19 December 1942) and is encouraged as a means of increasing morale.
>
> 3. *Definitions:*
> a. "Equipment" as used herein means operating equipment, i.e. airplanes.
> b. "Design" or "Organizational Design" as used herein refers to the markings applied to organizational equipment and does not refer to group or other unit coats of arms not to uniform insignia or shoulder or sleeve insignia covered by AR 600-40.[333]

According to the above, pin-up art – "markings applied to organizational equipment" that does not "refer to group or other unit coats of arms" – became state-sanctioned aircraft nose-art in 1944, even though paintings of nudes and pin-ups had dominated aircraft fuselages and noses since America first entered the war in 1941. By 1944, according to military historians Jeffrey L. Ethel and Clarence Simonson, the abundance of erotic art on airplanes not only appalled Charles A. Lindbergh upon a visit to an airstrip in 1944, but also caused something of a minor public outcry when photos of the planes were leaked to the American media.[334]

The Secretary of War however, makes clear in the AAF regulations that the "designs" are there for the purposes of "increasing morale." Increasing morale, or morale-boosting as it came to be referred to, could not singularly depend on rousing speeches by politicians for the purposes of keeping soldiers' spirits up. Evidently experience from the previous world war proved that soldiers responded to a culture they created for themselves which, by the Second World

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[332] "The wartime pinup constitutes a state-initiated, propagandist, mainstream image, while the pre-1940s and the postwar pinups are seen as "secular" or "civilian" texts: not state-sanctioned, not specifically patriotic, and not specifically American." Kakoudaki, p. 337.
[333] As quoted in Jeffrey L. Ethell, Clarence Simonson, *The History of Aircraft Nose Art: WWI to Today* (Somerset: Haynes Publishing Group, 1991), p. 25.
[334] Ethell, Simonson, p. 26.

War, was expressly manipulated by government as something that could be encouraged for the benefit of war productivity. “Morale-boosting” therefore was statutory terminology for legally enabling the display of pin-up artwork on aeroplanes, and subsequently authorizing the deployment of the pin-ups’ four main useful criteria (as mentioned above: appealing to prurience, providing a permitted space for reactive/anarchic behaviour, underlining masculinity, distracting from mention of injury or death). The term also expanded to include all types of entertainments (or distractions) that could be regarded as keeping troops in high spirits, such as the screening of movies in camps, and the various USO activities that were regularly organized.[335]

Pin-ups had far more prominence as a feature of barracks and army life during the Second World War and their appearance was not as accidental or as circumspect as it had been during the First World War. *Wonder Woman* creator William Moulton Marston intentionally created his pin-up comic book heroine as a fetishistically-clad manipulative expression of female sexuality, who first appeared in issue no.8 of *All Star Comics* in December 1941, and a few months later in her own comic leading troops into battle (*fig.69*).[336] And in Britain the *Daily Mail* comic strip heroine *Jane* (also featured in America’s *Stars and Stripes*) created by Norman Pett, became something of an army mascot who was believed to rewardingly “disrobe for victory” and who, true to form, finally appeared completely naked at the end of the Normandy campaign (*fig.70*).[337] But arguably the Second World War pin-up was to be defined by the Esquire Girl. *Esquire* supplied a military edition of its magazine for free to American soldiers. Petty and Vargas pin-ups from *Esquire,* and pictures of movie star pin-ups such as Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth appeared in barracks and lockers and were pinned to aircraft fuselages as well as carried around on soldiers’ persons (*fig.71,72,73&74*).[338] But perhaps the most interesting development in the involvement of pin-up during wartime was their use as aeroplane nose art.

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[335] According to Max Allan Collins however, the Navy and Marine regulations “largely ruled out the morale-boosting artwork,” as opposed to the Army Air Force. Max Allan Collins, *For the Boys: The Racy Pin-Ups of World War II* (Portland: Collectors Press, Inc., 2000), p. 5.
[336] See Les Daniels, *Wonder Woman: The Complete History* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004).
[337] John Costello, *Virtue Under Fire: How World War II Changed Our Social and Sexual Attitudes* (Boston; Toronto: Little, Brown and Company, 1985), p. 155.
[338] Many other magazines provided similar imagery such as *Life, Look, Tid-Bits of Beauty* and *Glamorous Models* alongside British magazines *Blighty*, *Reveille* and *Men Only*.

Historically nose art had been applied to aircraft as soon as the machines first came into use just prior to the First World War.[339] Initially identification markings were seen to be necessary in order to avoid incidents of friendly fire when German Fokker (E.I.) E-type monoplanes were confusingly similar in appearance to the French Morane-Saulnier Type N machines. Subsequently by 1916 the British and French squadrons painted the cowlings, cabane strut, undercarriage legs and wheels a distinctive bright red.[340] The Germans took the practice one step further with what would become known as The Flying Circus: a group of elite fighter squadrons, the *Jagdgeschwader*, that were planes painted in various rainbow primary colours. Gradually other nations such as Belgium, France and Russia began to introduce cartoon characters and nude females to the sides of their planes. When the United States finally entered the war their planes displayed Frontier iconography such as Indian heads, bison, kicking mules and Uncle Sam imagery. By 1941 the pin-ups of Petty and Vargas were the favoured choice in aircraft markings. As Kakoudaki observes, the lightness of touch with which the pin-ups were rendered with the airbrush seemed to make them perfectly suited for flight:

> Since flight was registered as sublime at the time, the pinup on the airplane or on the page succeeds most when resonant with the desire to fly: first to fly as a pilot in the mobilization years, but later also to fly away, or transcend the grimness of war.[341]

Vargas's image originally entitled 'There'll Always Be A Christmas' (*fig.75*) is a good example of how this allegory worked to show how the streamlined female body was in alignment with futuristic ground-breaking technologies (see chapter 2). The image was initially used on the B-25 as 'Heavenly Body' during the Second World War and later reappeared on two USAF B-52s as 'Special Delivery' and 'Diamond Girl'.[342] In the image the pin-up literally is in flight and in itself merges the ideas of the streamlined desirable shield, the freedom and

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[339] According to Ethell and Simonson, the first country to use aircraft during wartime was Italy, deployed in Tripoli in 1912 and 1913. Identification markings and a sea monster were painted on it. Ethell, Simonson, p. 14.
[340] Ethell, Simonson, pp. 17-18.
[341] Kakoudaki, p. 345.
[342] J.P. Wood, *Aircraft Nose Art: 80 Years of Aviation Artwork* (London: Salamander Books Ltd, 1992), pp. 114-115.

transgression of the modern woman's sexuality and the breathtaking spectacle of new technology.[343]

Yet underlying these noble characteristics of the pin-up are the familiar parallels between the mastery of the machine, possession of the skies and ultimately the possession of the woman, something Kakoudaki goes as far as to say is the "fundamental premise for the pinup at the time."[344] But also fundamental to the pin-up as nose art is the way she was fashioned into a talisman, a practice harking back to ancient times. Anne Josephine Hayward of the American Red Cross in England painted pin-ups on the planes and bomber jackets of aircrew members. She recalls that this ritual's purpose was "worthy, to bolster military morale in a terrible time" and she describes how:

> The members of each crew came to feel that their plane and their painting were somehow special and would bring them luck, a safe return from hostile skies. The art may have been frivolous at times, but it was *never* anti-social.[345]

Crew-members also painted bomb symbols on jackets and aeroplanes to mark the number of successful missions they undertook, thereby tying the pin-up and the plane to the feat of survival (*fig.76&77*). Perhaps the most famous example of the talismanic pin-up is that of the Memphis Belle. The Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress passed into legend for being one of the first heavy bombers to complete twenty-five missions without losing a single crewmember. The bomber featured a Petty pin-up on either side (one in a blue swimsuit and one in red) copied from the April 1941 issue of *Esquire,* her oblique caption read: *"I'm the one with the part in the back"* (*fig.78&79*). Anthony Starcer of the 441st Sub Depot repainted the pin-ups when the Memphis Belle was grounded in Bassingbourn, England.[346] Starcer comments on the relationship crews had with their aeroplanes: "The attachment between the men and the planes was so great the men called the planes by name, never by their call letters or serial numbers. It was a machine you fell in love with."[347] They were usually named

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[343] The image has in more recent years been appropriated for Virgin Atlantic Airlines.
[344] Despina Kakoudaki, 'Pinup and Cyborg: Exaggerated Gender and Artificial Intelligence', *Future Females, The Next Generation: New Voices and Velocities in Feminist Science Fiction Criticism,* ed. Marleen S. Barr (Roman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000), p. 174.
[345] Ethell, Simonson, p. 112.
[346] Graham M. Simons, Harry Friedman, *Memphis Belle: Dispelling the Myths* (Peterborough: GMS Enterprises, 2008), p. 77.
[347] Ethell, Simonson, p. 27.

after wives or girlfriends, which gave them personal and familiar attributes and possibly afforded pilots and crew a psychological sense of trust in the machine. The existence of the nose art pin-ups further solidified this relationship between the men and their aircraft.

In other words, female sexuality via the pin-up was borrowed and appropriated by soldiers and assigned a cause. The genre of "American pinup," writes Kakoudaki,

> is indelibly linked to the Second World War and the role it played as a talisman of patriotic action […] Just as World War II presents the last war that now seems morally clear, so the 1940s pinup also appears classic, mainstream, patriotic, innocent – and morally clear.

The pin-up's apparent characteristic of modesty and wholesomeness stems in part from the seemingly clear-cut morality of the Allied cause. The pin-up increasingly stood for American values and patriotism and for many it became a reminder or symbol of tenderness and security, which, within the trope of the pin-up, became embroiled in her potent eroticism. On the homefront the employment of this type of eroticism presented an alternative cause for its intended female viewers.

Homefront pin-ups.

There were two types of pin-up that women responded to during the war. The first type were the pin-ups of *Esquire*, because they would quite literally be pinned-up, the pin-up image transcended the boundaries of the magazine, and affected people other than its intended audience (this aspect will be discussed later in greater detail). The second type were images such as those approved of by the Office of War Information (OWI) and the War Manpower Commission (WMC) that made famous the persona and image of Rosie the Riveter.[348]

The two most famous illustrated Rosie images are by Howard J. Miller (*fig.80*) and Norman Rockwell (*fig.81*).[349] In her discussion of the impact of

[348] Rosie the Riveter was a moniker given to all women who undertook heavy-duty war work – usually assembling military armoury – in America during the Second World War. A collective image of her was popularized through photographs, illustrations, pin-ups, songs and film.
[349] At the time, Miller's "We Can Do It!" image was far less well known since it was created for the Westinghouse Company, whilst Rockwell's publication of his Rosie coincided with the release of the song *Rosie the Riveter* and became nationally and internationally renowned.

Rockwell's Rosie, Melissa Dabakis argues that such "mythic constructions" initiated change for women, with regards to inspiring more women to want to work outside of the home. But that while such imagery contributed to shaping women's experiences, it did not necessarily accurately reflect them.[350] Mythic archetype/constructions such as Rosie were clearly shaped by federal policy, industry leaders and war contractors, Dabakis notes, and these were aimed directly at white, middle-class women, irrespective of the fact that the workforce was diverse in age, class, ethnicity, marital status etc., by creating a "monolithic category of woman […] which had little to do with the actual experiences of women in the workforce."[351] The reference to mythic constructions harks back to Pearl James's observations of the use of archetypes in First World War posters. But now the archetype was adapted to include signs of the pin-up, such as glamour and excessive femininity, in order to make a familiar yet strong impact on women and was a part of the patriotic propaganda visual media machine.

This is supported by contemporary commentary. For instance, plant worker Juanita Loveless recalls that the reasons she decided to take up war work was at least partially guided by propaganda: "what attracted me [to war work] […] was not the money and it was not the job […] but the ads – they had to be bombardments: "Do Your Part," "Uncle Sam Needs You," "V for Victory." I got caught up in that patriotic "win the war," "help the boys." The patriotism that was so strong in everyone then."[352] Such imagery targeted women by portraying a noble and spirited pin-up Rosie in which femininity and sexuality played a secondary role (albeit a significant one) to the patriotic intentions of this image and persona. Cartoonist Cy Hungerford communicates this intention quite clearly in his poster, which depicts Rosie as "[The] Real Pin-Up Girl" of the army boys, thus elevating her work for the war effort above her "morale-boosting" capacity.

Whilst many pin-up artists were employed to create war propaganda posters, instructional charts and pamphlets, it is interesting to note that an

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Miller's famous image was never intended to depict a Rosie but the image garnered the reputation for itself over time.

[350] Melissa Dabakis, 'Gendered Labor: Norman Rockwell's *Rosie the Riveter* and the discourses of wartime womanhood', *Gender and American History Since 1890*, ed. Barbara Melosh (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 185.

[351] Dabakis, p. 188.

[352] Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, The War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987), p. 135.

illustrator such as Rockwell, with a reputation for sentimentality and nostalgia, and without the least bit of interest in creating erotically-charged art, was used to promote war work to women.[353] Furthermore, Rockwell based the physicality of his Rosie on Michelangelo's *Prophet Isaiah* (*fig.82*) lending her a "drag" quality that placed the power of her image on traditionally masculine features of muscle and brawn.[354] Dabakis observes how "Rosie's swelling muscles, denim work clothes, and phallic riveting tool across her lap marked the masculine order into which she transgressed."[355] Even before him, Howard J. Miller employed that allegory also with his Rosie brandishing a bulging bicep. The message was clear: women can do men's work. There was a drawback however: portraying what have been traditionally defined as masculine characteristics to promote work to women meant that excessively feminine attributes also had to be included in order to rebalance the over-masculinization implicit in the work itself. This was inevitable during an era in which traditional ideas of what was "masculine" and "feminine" prevailed, when what we currently recognize as gender performativity was assumed to be a natural extension of biological sex. The masculine/feminine symbolic order would intensify in the postwar period.

Rockwell's Rosie and the photographs that were circulated of women at work in the various war plants did not address the "fears" that women might become "masculinized." Excessive femininity and eroticism in the homefront pin-ups reminded everyone, men and women, that women were still women. Their work in the plants was only temporary and men would return to reclaim their jobs so that they could return to the domestic sphere.[356] There was, as Sherna Berger Gluck observes, a "cultural expectation that women were there only for the duration [of the war]."[357] Culturally speaking, the creative forces behind government agendas tried to make more palatable the idea that women were getting involved in the war effort. The movie *Pin-Up Girl* (1944) is a prime example of how sexuality and femininity were used to reassure the public about the limited nature of women's involvement on the homefront. Betty Grable, by this time America's most prominent pin-up, provided a bridge between being a showgirl/pin-up and contributing to the war effort. In a telling scene at the very

[353] Reed, *The Illustrator in America*, p. 257, p. 163.
[354] Dabakis, p. 196.
[355] Ibid.
[356] May, p. 61.
[357] Gluck, p. 262.

end of the movie, she is a showgirl who appears on stage to lead an entire platoon of WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) in a choreographed march. The female spectacle remains intact as dozens of glamorous women in uniform are the centre of attention, thus providing a merging between the pin-up, glamour and the military.

The "iconography" of pin-up, as cultural historian Elaine Tyler May refers to it, appealed to women in a different way than it appealed to soldiers who used and possessed the pin-up on the frontline. Certainly the exaggerated signifiers of women's sexuality in 1940s pin-up did not go unnoticed by women, encouraging them to use their sexuality as a tool of independence.[358] The war changed women's social status very quickly and many women found themselves working for the first time.[359] This, along with their involvement in the USO, led to women leading more active social lives, and being encouraged to interact and socialize with soldiers. This increased their independent status but at the same time caused concern over suspected promiscuous behaviour.[360] May explains how "the independence of wartime women gave rise to fears of female sexuality as a dangerous force on the loose. The iconography that decorated thousands of fighter planes, for example, reflects the association between sexy women and aggressive power."[361] This seems contrary to the earlier description of the "wholesome" characterization of the pin-up; the point is that there were anxieties that the pin-up's underlying popularity was due to her sexuality. Both May and Kakoudaki have analyzed the pin-up's eroticism as an allegory of the aggressive and violence associated with war.

Yet, the iconography affected its audience on other levels. For instance, G.I.s preferred to watch light-hearted movies such as musical comedies, the *Road to…* movies being amongst their favourites, which made Dorothy Lamour one of the most popular movie pin-ups of the war.[362] One marine explains his preference for traditional "feminine" tastes in a 1943 letter:

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[358] Pin-ups as a general rule appeared during the 1940s with upright and full breasts (an effect achieved with bullet bras), cotton-candy hair, long legs and tight clothing.
[359] According to Gluck, by 1944 16% of working women held jobs in war industries (p. 10) and Dabakis claims that 18 million women entered the workforce during the war, 6 million for the first time. Gluck, p. 186.
[360] May, p. 62.
[361] May, pp. 59-60.
[362] Costello, p. 143.

> I know what it is to be cut off from everything […] Those hours can stretch into centuries […] if it weren't for a movie now and then. Movies that stop us from thinking of ourselves and our surroundings. Movies that remind us that there are such things as pretty girls, gay music, and a civilization worth living for […].[363]

Such evidence, and considering her use as a talisman also, makes it clear that G.I.s looked to the pin-up as something nostalgic, as reminiscent of home, wives, girlfriends or even mothers, as comforting visions and precious, escapist fantasy.

In contrast, movies that depicted women at home taking on traditional men's work such as *Rosie the Riveter* (1944), were "not a hit with the American male audience, nor were the other wartime 'women's pictures' in which Hollywood catered to its large female wartime audience with films that depicted women coping with the war by fulfilling traditional male roles."[364] The *reality* as opposed to the fantasy was a factor G.I.s wished to ignore. Quite possibly these movies would have been experienced as emasculating by a military male audience.

Women on the homefront did not always interpret the signs of pin-up sexuality, which they imitated, as transgression; rather, viewed them as a passport to sociability and fun in a topsy-turvy world in which they had command of the land whilst the men were away. This concept was related in movies such as *Pin Up Girl* (1944) in which Betty Grable's pin-up character adopts a zany fun-filled alternate identity; *Cover Girl* (1944), in which Rita Hayworth is reluctant to settle down due to her pin-up/cover girl career; and *On the Town* (1949), in which Betty Garrett's character wins first prize in a pin-up contest and embarks on romance and adventure in New York City. Pin-up iconography invaded every aspect of culture. They were featured in advertisements, in men's magazines, women's magazines, on aeroplanes, in barracks, on posters, eulogized on film and celebrated in song. In the song Glenn Miller made famous, *Peggy the Pin-Up Girl* (1944), the mythology of the pin-up is related as if it were a well-known fairy tale: "Peggy Jones had her picture took/It got in *Life* and it got in *Look*/Then the cameras began to click/And

[363] Costello, p. 144.
[364] Costello, p. 147.

that my friend really did the trick/Then her fortunes began to climb […].”[365] In the song the pin-up is taken “all over the world” by men in service, “Down at Guadalcanal” and “over Berlin,” she is found “in the barracks,” “on the wall,” “In a plane or on a train,” insinuating in such a way that the pin-up is an overwhelming presence in the lives of servicemen. In one sense the pin-up provides a metaphor for America spreading liberation across the globe. From another perspective the song gives a prescient indicator of how that particular version of sexualized femininity – as “liberation”, as uniquely American – would become such a dominating and influential archetype of the twentieth century. The question of how pin-up came to make such an impact requires a further look.

The Pin-Up: centrefolds and conceptualization.

“Our American troops are ready to fight at the drop of an *Esquire.*” – Bob Hope.

Esquire gave birth to the conceptualized pin-up girl.[366] However, when André Bazin wrote in 1946 that the pin-up is: “A wartime product created for the benefit of the American soldiers swarming to a long exile at the four corners of the world,” he does not factor-in the pre-history of the pin-up and assumes her origins lie with *Esquire*, in addition to the movies and adverts that perpetuated the pin-up aesthetic and persona.[367] Tracing a genealogy has thus far has proved that origins are slippery, but recognizing how the pin-up circa 1941 was conceptualized requires a consideration of her pre-history.

When Arnold Gingrich spied Petty’s ads for the first time and thought of the T.S. Eliot line, the *raison d’être* of the conceptual pin-up girl was conceived. The fact that the Petty work conjured up a poetic line makes her a romantic figure. At the same time the fact that the line refers to the disrobing of a woman, and to the promise or vision of “pneumatic bliss,” suggests a licentious yearning for satisfaction or comfort in an excessively (“*Uncorseted*”) feminine female body. The combined insinuations to “fine arts and pinups,” as Kenon Breazeale puts it, linked *Esquire* with “recognized ways of seeing: aesthetic contemplation

[365] *Peggy the Pin-Up Girl*, lyrics by Redd Evans and John Jacob Loeb, recorded by Glenn Miller (1944).
[366] The “conceptualization” of the pin-up refers to the entry of the term *pin-up* into discursive currency, as a recognizable concept-image.
[367] Bazin, p. 158.

and consuming desire." Yet at the same time, "the pinup was highly problematic, fraught with downscale (i.e. working-class) suggestions of deprivation and sweaty need."[368]

Such aspirations to highbrow texts, as with the Eliot poem, are not accidental. The composition of many of Petty's, and especially Vargas's pin-ups, resemble the poses and body stylizations of the erotic muses of well-respected artists (as Thomas B. Hess also observes, see chapter 1), such as Giorgione, Ingres, Baudry, Goya, Manet and Titian, who usually depicted or made allusions to the goddess of love and sex Venus (*fig.83,84,85&86*).[369] Correspondingly however, when these compositions and stylizations are repeatedly used in mass-produced pin-up – unlike Ingres's one-of-a-kind painting for instance – they become, as Bazin would have it, "standardized," and the once high-brow aspirational quality becomes open to interpretation in the opposite direction:

> The pinup, signified by specific postures such as raised elbows with hands held behind the head and jutting of breasts or hips, often engages the spectator's gaze with a seductive come-on. Such gestures of sexual invitation and readiness let us know that the pinup intends to exhibit her body. Yet raised elbows held behind the head also widely signify surrender. Combined with the pinup's usually standardized look and body type, this emblem of capitulation conveys submission to the spectator's desires. Thus, the pinup's exhibitionism is not often an autonomous pleasure.[370]

Much of what is mentioned in this quote has been noted in the pre-history of the pin-up in previous chapters. The 1940s pin-up did not invent any of these "gestures" or "come-ons" (see chapter 1). Rather, what the standardized poses and gestures would point to is an alignment of this new pin-up with her pornographic relation in both its highbrow (Ingres's painting) and lowbrow (Braque's photographs) incarnations.

The 1940s was the era of the Varga Girl at *Esquire* and her absorption into the culture of both the frontline and the homefront set up an age of heightened sexual awareness in the postwar period (see chapters 4 and 5). It is

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[368] Kenon Breazeale, 'In Spite of Women: "*Esquire*" Magazine and the Construction of the Male Consumer', *Signs*, Vol. 20, No. 1, Autumn, 1994, pp. 1-22.
[369] Art historian Buszek sees the compositional aspect of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres's painting *Grandes Odalisques* in the work of Vargas for instance. Buszek, pp. 205-206.
[370] Jill Fields, *An Intimate Affair: Women, Lingerie, and Sexuality* (Berkley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2007), pp. 208-209.

fitting that Alberto Vargas was the most famous pin-up artist of the Second World War, considering he was once hired to replace Raphäel Kirchner, the favourite pin-up artist of the First World War. And just as he was hired by Ziegfeld to emulate Kirchner's style, he was similarly hired at *Esquire* to replace and emulate Petty's pin-up work. At each stage of his career however, Vargas's "girl" somehow appeared more sultry, more sexual and more in command than his two predecessors' "girls." Buszek goes as far as to assign characteristics of empowerment to the Varga Girl:

> the Varga Girl represented and helped popularize a remarkably self-aware and aggressive female sexuality that had in previous generations been viewed as the domain of very particular women – the demimondaine, the suffragist, the film star – but without a real woman's fear of character defamation.[371]

Her analysis here underpins the fear inherent in the figure of the sexually aggressive woman, notably, the threat of defamation of character. The Varga Girl gave flight to a female fantasy that women could wield sexual performativity in such a way as to proclaim their independence and self-assuredness. However, the idea of power-through-sexuality appears again. And yet, Vargas's pin-up was never coy, seemingly defiant in attitude, always sophisticated and never frivolous with her direct gaze out towards the viewer (*fig.87,88&89*). According to Vargas's own testimony and that of his biographer, the Varga Girl was a product of the artist's own awe when, as a teenage immigrant, he was struck by the "freshness and the air of self-assuredness" of American women, unlike the girls he had previously encountered in Europe as a student.[372] Tom Robotham claims that, "[Vargas] would eventually bestow these qualities upon his Varga Girls."[373] Again, these views compliment the perceived controversial nature of female sexuality in the early- and mid-twentieth century.

Good intentions, it may be said, were there from the start but by the war's end, the Varga Girl, or more generally, the pin-up girl began to lose her innocence and for some she became "an industrial product, subject to well-fixed norms and as stable in quality as peanut butter or chewing gum."[374] The

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[371] Buszek, p. 186.
[372] Reid Stewart Austin, *Alberto Vargas: Works from the Max Vargas Collection* (New York; Boston; London: Bulfinch Press, 2006, 2008), p. 10.
[373] Tom Robotham, *Varga* (North Dighton, MA: JG Press, 2003), p. 9.
[374] Bazin, p. 158.

centrefold exacerbated pin-up's tendency toward these sorts of comparisons because it almost turned the pin-up into a fine art object, that is, something to be scrutinized, objectified, or eulogized, which the centrefold achieved by institutionalizing the pin-up as a literal "*pin" "up".* This is something *Esquire* accidentally instigated, although the magazine's motives for doing so lay elsewhere.

"To curry favor with the War Production Board," claims Arnold Gingrich, "and to try to get more favorable consideration on paper allotments, we began straining to show larger percentages of our pages as being 'calculated to enhance the morale of the troops'."[375] With paper shortages and government rations imposed on the publishing industry *Esquire's* only option of steering around the quota limitation was to prove that its content could raise the morale of troops. What Gingrich saw as the main draw of the magazine, the "full-page cartoons in color" by E. Simms Campbell, Alex Raymond, Howard Baer and George Petty et al., – which did not appear in the content of any of their competitors – had to be capitalized upon for the sake of the paper quota:

> That meant that the girl drawings, which had been only incidental to the cartoons of Petty, Bundy, Baer and Campbell, now began to be featured simply as "pinups" and greatly augmented in size. What had been full-page drawings now became double-page spreads, and even larger, with foldouts. There was even a Petty girl that was close to life size, with five folds, making it spread out like a Japanese kakemono wall painting.[376]

As we have seen earlier, the very fact that the pin-up was devised to be removed from the actual magazine and pinned-up allowed her to transcend her assumed exclusive male audience by being removed from her original context. Whilst the Gibson Girl had occasionally been made available as a pin-up with the occasional double-page spread from the 1890s, and the Kirchner Girl had been available in poster and postcard formats, for the most part "pin-ups" were previously ripped from magazines at the buyer's whim. *Esquire* formally introduced the gatefold and thus initiated the purpose and autonomy of the pin-up. Simultaneously she was also created with the troops in mind, and opened up to widespread scrutiny.

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[375] Gingrich, p. 157.
[376] Ibid.

For an "incidental" creative afterthought, the pin-up managed to court enough controversy. Vargas's frank renderings of excessive femininity, in comparison to Petty's more "wholesome" approach, garnered much attention for *Esquire*, when in 1943 U.S. Postmaster General Frank C. Walker challenged the magazine's second-class mailing privileges on the grounds that the Esquire Girl was obscene, lewd and lascivious.[377] As Robotham comments, "not everyone bought the morale-boosting argument."[378] Indeed, it appears more likely that the morale-boosting angle occurred in order to secure the paper distribution, produce the *Esquire* special Military Edition and thus maintain the circulation figures. And yet *Esquire* had never been so unpopular. What started out as a publication with "slightly risqué cartoons" but also articles that gave "bright and lively explorations of contemporary culture," appeared to lose its way during the war by putting out cruder and more explicit material in an attempt to second-guess what the troops wanted more of, "which considerably cheapened the cartoons and fiction."[379] This is something Gingrich himself agrees with in his autobiography.

Such leanings however only highlighted the foundations upon which the whole aesthetic of *Esquire* was built. Breazeale recognizes that when the magazine was established the targeted readership was the "neglected" male of the Depression era.[380] It mimicked, in quite revolutionary ways, the gender-dichotomizing and stereotyping nature of the women's magazine for the "reliably prosperous cohorts in U.S. society" i.e. educated, middle-class, white men: "*Esquire* appropriated the mix of contents that has characterized women's magazines from the 1920s on: a centrepiece of seductive "lifestyle" features whose job is to service advertisers by transforming reader into consumer, leavened with visuals and fiction."[381] In doing so, Breazeale argues, the magazine created a "meta-commentary on female identity," placing consumption – formerly the domain of women – and desire as very masculine pursuits.[382] In this supposed clandestine "Man's World" *Esquire* aimed for, women featured as secondary characters in its overall context, as appendages

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[377] David E. Sumner, *The Magazine Century: American Magazines Since 1900* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), p. 83.
[378] Robotham, p. 16.
[379] John Tebbel, Mary Ellen Zuckerman, *The Magazine in America 1741-1990* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 186.
[380] Breazeale, p. 5.
[381] Breazeale, pp. 5-6.
[382] Breazeale, pp. 1-2.

and mere observers to the male readers' assumed lives of sophistication and fun. The visual imagery, specifically the cartoons and later the pin-up/Esquire Girl, appear to support this notion by "arty manipulation." Their purpose was not to transform "the woman in the image" but rather "the man looking at it – from voyeur to connoisseur."[383] All of this underlying assumption was all cleverly executed under a sheen of sophistication and class:

> Once the decision had been made by *Esquire's* founders to feature cheesecake, the challenge was to contrive a balance, or better put, a tension, between a sub rosa assertion that the magazine was enjoyably salacious and a more overt claim that it was absolutely respectable, belonging on the coffee table, not hidden upstairs in the sock drawer.[384]

The drawback to this of course is that the magazine would inevitably fall into the hands of women who were just as susceptible as men to the imagery and the general *Esquire* "code of conduct." The sophistication and aspirations to highbrow art did not necessarily confuse readerships but did not actually exclude women from the scene altogether, in fact it made that Man's World attractive to them also:

> Because of *Esquire's* aura of literary sophistication and its entrée into the American home, the Varga Girl was very soon as popular with the female sex as with the male, as the Petty Girl had been. Young women of a certain age willingly swapped their Shirley Temple paper dolls for the more potent charms of the Varga Girl. Sweethearts and mothers would unhesitatingly send the Varga calendar to their boys in the service.[385]

Pin-up has a history of appealing to women through its aesthetic visual field, as well as the sexual overtones often (mis)interpreted as means to power. By the end of the Second World War American culture was flooded with pin-up imagery from all quarters of daily life. By that time pin-up had emerged from the war as an allegory for liberation, and moral and patriotic America. It represented its women as fun but with fighting spirit. The pin-up did not remain in the domain of male voyeurism since she was so successfully varied in her many guises throughout levels of society: "Through calendars, magazines, and films, the

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[383] Breazeale, p. 15.
[384] Breazeale, p. 11.
[385] Austin, *Vargas,* p. 53.

Varga Girl contributed to the growing visibility of the pin-up genre beyond the realm of privileged male viewing, and where it was embraced as part of the consciousness and culture of American women," says Buszek.[386] Furthermore, her eroticism and allusions to the pornographic were controversial enough but modest enough to allow her entry into the mainstream and keep her there as an apparently transgressive figure that women wished to emulate.[387] But the limitations of modesty within which she operated during the war would gradually deteriorate over the postwar years and her charm would quite literally turn her into a joke. Her "peek-a-boo" styling would serve as more and more of a prohibitive barrier just waiting to be shattered, and with the inauguration of the era of *Playboy* that last taboo in mainstream pin-up was on the way to being fully eliminated.

[386] Buszek, p. 222.
[387] Buszek details the apparent fad for what she terms as "homemade cheesecake," photographic evidence of everyday women posing for photographs and using very obvious pin-up gestures. Buszek p. 225. The homogenization of pin-up posing in such a way can be seen to have had an effect on the chosen career paths of Marilyn Monroe and Bettie Page (see chapters 4 and 5 respectively).

Chapter 4.

Postwar Pin-up I: Making "Sexy" Bodies Socially Acceptable in the Era of Excess.

In the postwar period the pin-up figure becomes a register of the vast economic wealth of America, as well as all the social and political maladies that accompanied such wealth. The pin-up figure in this sense becomes a figure of abundance, her exaggerated femininity and sexiness mirrors the abundance and higher standards of living for the average American in the postwar years. However, political fears rooted in the "Red Scares" of communism as well as the suspicions inherent in this newfound material wealth, were *projected upon* the female body and those fears and suspicions were extended to questions regarding women's sexual behaviour and social role(s). Nonetheless, the pin-up also dualistically served as a *projected* symbol of America, proudly displayed on the international stage. In this capacity the pin-up was an advocate of commercial America and furthered a fantasy of "American Dream" idealism for which a "sexy" femininity, via pin-up, became a virtual symbol.

This chapter begins with an overview of the immediate aftermath of the Second World War in America, and addresses its economic and social benefits and burdens. It goes on to designate the type of pin-up that came to prominence during this era and questions how it influenced societal perspectives on femininity and female sexuality. The chapter will also seek to make a close analysis of the pin-up career of Marilyn Monroe, the most famous pin-up girl of all time, and consider her status as the era's ultimate *symbol* of postwar feminine sexiness.[388] A critique of the postwar female body and a reassessment of postwar womanhood follows, which aims to revise historical accounts of women's apparent subservience and their acceptance of domestic ideology. The chapter ends with an explanation for the emergence of *Playboy* magazine, an analysis of the social implications of the lifestyle it promoted and the version of erotic femininity that it propagated and popularized. This era of pin-up would be defined by artists Al Parker, Gil Elvgren, Earl Moran, Zoë Mozert, Pearl Frush, Al Buell and Bill Ward, as well as photographers such as Andre De Dienes, Bunny Yeager and Bernard of Hollywood. De Dienes, Yeager

[388] Dian Hanson lists Marilyn Monroe as America's top cover girl and Bettie Page second. See *Dian Hanson's: The History of Men's magazines, Volume 2: Post-War to 1959* (Köln; London: Taschen, 2004), p. 407.

and especially Elvgren's work will be discussed at length to uncover their impact on making "sexy" acceptable in the mainstream.

The makings of a "furtive" society.

Having avoided the devastation left in the wake of the war, such as in most parts of Europe, the United States experienced a postwar era of unprecedented wealth and many individuals were upwardly mobile financially. With their resources mostly left intact Americans were able to move on with their lives far more easily than Europeans. Subsequently, American men and women increasingly entered the workforce and higher education, thus swelling the ranks of the middle-class. They moved in growing numbers to the suburbs and had more money than ever before to spend on everyday luxuries. Excess in all things seems to best characterize the postwar age in America, from consuming habits to design, architecture, fashion and women's bodies. During the 1950s especially, the consumption of homeware items and cars of the "Populuxe" style – "a flamboyant decorative style […] employing pastel colors and futuristic contours" – and the sprouting of suburban white-picket fence communities such as the Levittowns, typified the aspirations of a gregarious baby boom generation.[389] More recent studies in the cultural history of postwar America have shown that nostalgic perspectives of the period have proven insufficient and that, whilst indeed the "good life" had finally arrived in America, it was a far more complex society than had been previously conceded.[390]

The life-altering events and consequent experiences of the 1940s provided the foundations for what can be understood as a paradoxical social existence throughout the postwar era. On the one hand a greater share in the wealth of the country afforded more people material satisfaction, but on the other hand seismic shifts in moral codes, instigated by the many social changes brought on by the war, problematized the collective consciousness of a society that had inherited this Golden Era of prosperity. As historian William Graebner has observed:

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[389] Thomas Hine, *Populuxe* (Woodstock; New York: The Overlook Press, 2007), p. viii. Hine states that the "essence of Populuxe […] is an expression of outright, thoroughly vulgar joy in being able to live so well." Hine, p. 4.

[390] The culture of 1970s America is partially responsible for recasting the view of the 1950s through rose-tinted lenses, as evidenced in the television shows and movies of that decade, such as *Happy Days* (1974) and *Grease* (1978).

> The separation of the forties into half-decades – the first half characterized by World War II, the group [mentality], democracy, sentimentality, and production, the second half by the cold war, the individual, freedom, domesticity, and consumption – provides the most basic sort of outline for understanding some of the [1940's] major themes and developments.[391]

The difference between these half-decades was profound: within ten years, a generation had traded one set of social and economic patterns for another. This shift bred a paradoxical culture of precariousness and conservatism. Additionally, the war and its effects gave way to a predominant culture of paranoia. Graebner notes that the perceived Communist threat in the aftermath of the war also yielded further paranoia in the shape of the "sex crime panic" of the late 1940's and the UFO scares of 1947 onwards.[392] Furthermore the use of the atom bomb, which heralded the "Atomic Age," as well as the actual experiences of live battle (thus affirming the possibility of sudden death) unleashed a general mood of contingency: "the seminal events of the forties seemed to confirm that humanity had, indeed, been set adrift from its ethical moorings."[393] According to Graebner manners were embraced over morals "as a way of getting along in a shifting and transient world."[394] As if to confirm these fears of transiency, Alfred Kinsey published his first study on human sexuality in 1948, resultantly upsetting what were thought to be the stable boundaries of what was considered "normal" regarding male sexuality. His publication coincided with the wave of sex crime panic, hysterical homophobia and the growing prevalence of the psychiatrist.

In this paradoxical atmosphere, the pin-up publishing phenomenon exploded, fuelling what one cultural critic has described as "the era's furtive interest in sex."[395] Postwar culture would become inundated with pin-up imagery and pin-up type symbolism throughout the general mass media. After the war a wealthy America overtook France as producers of men's magazines; as Dian Hanson notes, "they had the means to make quality magazines in

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[391] William Graebner, *The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), p.16.
[392] Graebner, p. 22. Against the backdrop of this social climate, pulp fiction writer L. Ron Hubbard began writing *Dianetics*, the literary basis for the establishment of the Church of Scientology.
[393] Graebner, p. 20.
[394] Graebner, p. 35.
[395] Elizabeth Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 40.

unlimited quantity, and the fascination with all things American created an eager international market."[396] Furthermore, the easy use and accessibility of personal cameras made potential pin-ups and pin-up photographers out of anyone. Illustrators in general were in high demand for the increased production of magazines whilst advertising campaigns regularly required the work of the pin-up illustrator to sell almost anything with a picture of a tame pin-up girl.[397] Meanwhile, the spicier "only for men's eyes" pin-up thrived in the pages of saucy magazines and calendars.

In his 1954 study of the popular iconography of the USA, Geoffrey Wagner decries "the plethora of girlie magazines which weekly load newsstands and squander, at a conservative estimate, billions of tons of newsprint a year," so that, "if you enter a drugstore and see *every* book, no matter what it is about, decorated with a writhing, bosomy blonde, saturation point is reached."[398] This is verified by a contemporary, the pin-up muse Myrna Hansen, who regularly modelled for pin-up illustrator Gil Elvgren and featured in many national advertisements:

> Every billboard in the city of Chicago was some form of me, at one time […] Of course I would be the only one that would really know it, because I'd be blonde with brown eyes, or red with green eyes. The artist would paint any color they wanted.[399]

Illustrators were often known to use variations on the same model and also to recycle their images for different advertising purposes. Such a practice not only highlights the crossover between "men's" publishing pin-ups and general advertising, but also proves how in-demand pin-up imagery became in a commercial capacity.

Even as far back as 1947 author John Steinbeck observed how ubiquitous pin-ups had become and makes a point of it in his novel *The Wayward Bus*:

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[396] Dian Hanson, *Dian Hanson's: The History of Men's Magazines, Volume 3: 1960s At The Newsstand* (Köln: Taschen, 2005), p. 7.

[397] By the end of the 1950s however, the advent of television sapped up most of the advertising work of the illustrator and they became relegated to work in the book cover design industry. Reed, *The Illustrator in America*, p. 305.

[398] Geoffrey Wagner, *Parade of Pleasure: A Study of Popular Iconography in the USA* (London: Derek Verschoyle Ltd, 1954), p. 115, p. 119. A variety of cultural historians have observed the overwhelming visibility of the pin-up during the postwar period, Eric John Dingwall for example, refers to it as the "American pin-up craze." Eric John Dingwall, *The American Woman: An Historical Study*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1976), p. 231.

[399] 'Myrna Hansen Interview', *Outré* magazine, January 1st 1998, p. 40.

> The walls, where there was room, were well decorated with calendars and posters showing bright, improbable girls with pumped-up breasts and no hips – blondes, brunettes and redheads, but always with this bust development, so that a visitor of another species might judge from the preoccupation of the artist and audience that the seat of procreation lay in the mammaries.
>
> Alice Chicoy, Mrs Juan Chicoy, that is, who worked among the shining girls, was wide-hipped and sag-chested and she walked well back on her heels. She was not in the least jealous of the calendar girls and the Coca-Cola girls. She had never seen anyone like them and she didn't think anyone else ever had.[400]

Steinbeck, like Wagner, finds there to be an over-abundance of pin-up imagery in everyday life and treats the subject satirically. Here his character Alice dismisses the pin-up images as unthreatening fantasy women whose proportions border on the ridiculous, although unluckily for her she eventually meets an actual woman who does look like a pin-up, and she feels inferior.

Even a young 1940s pin-up model known as "Jean Norman," later to become Marilyn Monroe, understood the illusory nature of her chosen profession.[401] When debating the issue with famed pin-up photographer Bernard of Hollywood, she allegedly said to him as he posed her for a shot:

> "Oh, you want to make a Varga Girl out of me – all legs and a shrunken head. I know what you're up to, Mr. Bernard."
>
> "What's wrong with the Varga Girls?"
>
> "Not a thing. I wish I could look like his Ziegfeld beauties in *Esquire.* They're divine. But no real girl could look like those drawings, could she?"
>
> "Not quite. But a photographer can create a similar illusion by elongating the legs from a low perspective […] but not so low as to distort the proportion of the head too much."[402]

Both model and photographer thus collude to create a pin-up girl based on the famed illustrations of *Esquire*. The above exchange, Steinbeck's observation, and Hansen's testimony suggest that both the industry's insiders and outsiders

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[400] John Steinbeck, *The Wayward Bus* (Geneva: Heron Books, 1947, 1971), p. 3.
[401] Marilyn Monroe modeled under the name Jean Norman. See Lois Banner, *Marilyn: The Passion and the Paradox* (London; New Delhi; New York; Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2012), p. 105.
[402] Susan Bernard, *Bernard of Hollywood's Marilyn: Images by Hollywood's Great Glamour Photographer* (London: Boxtree, 1993), p. 6.

were wary of the charms of the pin-up. But at the same time, they were not unaffected by the template of sexualized femininity they promoted. The pin-ups' omnipresence in postwar culture points to a fascination with sex, sexuality and specifically, female sexuality that held a firm grip on what people began to regard as reality. What pin-ups represented, how they operated in culture, how they were received and how their blitz on visual culture at this time affected the way women's bodies and women's sexuality were regarded will be investigated in this chapter.

The Pin-Up: a postwar state-of-mind.

André Bazin argues that the postwar pin-up loses her meaning and purpose after she is deprived of her patriotic associations at the war's end. He deduces that the pin-up's "revival" came about through a separation of her "eroticism" from her "morality," the former employed in men's magazines and the latter targeted at mainstream culture.[403] As observed in chapters 1 through 3, the pin-up's genealogy, traced from the onset of the Industrial Age, shows how her postwar "revival" was illusory, since she simply returned to her prewar status after the Second World War. The only difference was, she had entered a postwar culture that was cautiously and "furtively" more curious about sex.[404] Pin-up's compartmentalization between acceptable mainstream erotic images (such as those found on the covers of magazines like *Life*, or used in advertising) and those that were more daring (such as "soft core" comics and men's magazine pin-ups) had been the norm since the 1860s. Simultaneously however, the "acceptable," the "daring" and even the pornographic genres of pin-up have constantly played off each other, exchanging symbolism and conspiring to push the boundaries of censorship. This would eventually lead, by the 1970s, to a legalization of pornographic materials in mainstream culture. The Second World War had so "glorified female curves" in illustration and photography that the demand generated by U.S. servicemen for this type of imagery resulted in a boom for what would eventually result in a "cheesecake" industry.[405] Servicemen had been exposed to both *Esquire*'s wholesome pin-

[403] Bazin, p. 160. As proven in this thesis, proto-pin-up imagery predates the Second World War, thus pin-up imagery was employed during the war and not invented for that purpose, as Bazin appears to assume.
[404] The pin-up would actually experience a revival in the late twentieth century. See chapter 6.
[405] Fraterrigo, p. 19.

ups and the more graphic nudes and pornography that could be more easily picked up in France.

Back in America however, where pornography could not be openly published and sold, the pin-up industry splintered into different markets and genres and always strove to include whatever it could get away with, hence the emergence of more "risqué" imagery. Elizabeth Fraterrigo observes that the Second World War had provoked "an increase in the production of sexually explicit material," but by the 1950s had brought with it "sustained debates over its suitability for public consumption."[406] The emergence of an "adult market" – which at the time just about got away with publishing bare breasts – was spurred on by these debates and solidified in a landmark case, *Roth vs. USA* (1957), which formulated the distinction between what was suitable for mass consumption and what was considered obscene.[407] The legislation "had the effect of legitimizing cultural production aimed at an adult market rather than a family-oriented mass market, opening the door for increased production and distribution of sexually-oriented material."[408] In the meantime, eroticism and erotic material invaded popular commercial culture.

As in the late nineteenth century, the postwar pin-up era was to be buoyed up by the revitalization of the photographic industry when cameras and photographic equipment became less expensive. In 1941 Robert Harrison, a man journalist Tom Wolfe nicknamed the "aesthete du schlock," published his magazine *Beauty Parade*.[409] He had hit upon the idea of creating a men's magazine with pin-up artist Earl Moran to capitalize on the "current craze for

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[406] Fraterrigo, p. 39.

[407] Samuel Roth was a publisher of erotic books during the 1920s for which he was imprisoned for three years, after which he resumed his trade by distributing his material through the mail in violation of the Comstock Law. By 1951 he was distributing his own magazines, the first of which was *American Aphrodite* and by 1953 the more risqué *Good Times*, which brought him to the attention of Senator Estes Kefauver, the head of the committee for the Investigation of Juvenile Delinquency. Roth was subpoenaed to appear before the committee that charged that his material "caused sexual perversion in adolescents." In the years that Roth continued to stand firm against the charge, American newsstands came close to overflowing with nude publications (circa 1957). When eventually Roth was imprisoned for five years the justices had been forced to define obscenity and its distinction from art as follows: "Whether the average person, applying contemporary community standards, finds the dominant theme of the material taken as a whole appeals to prurient interest." *Roth vs. USA* proved a ground-breaking piece of legislation that made it impossible to prosecute on the grounds of an indecent passage in a book or a single photograph in a magazine. On the other hand, as Dian Hanson observes, it also meant that "if there was some bit of art or redeeming value in a work it could not be judged obscene." See Hanson, *Vol.* 3, pp. 395-400.

[408] Fraterrigo, p. 40.

[409] Tom Wolfe, *The Kandy-Kolored Tangerine-Flake Streamline Baby* (London: Vintage, 2005), p. 177.

pin-ups."[410] This magazine was shamelessly dedicated to photographic pin-ups, mostly posed for by strippers and burlesque dancers. This was significant as it aligned the genre with a working-class ethic, something Hugh Hefner would eventually seek to reverse with *Playboy*.

Beauty Parade was the first of the "girlie" magazines. It stylistically incorporated the patriotica trends of the war period but unapologetically put the focus on leg and breast fetishization. It was tame and there was no nudity, according to Harald Hellmann, since Harrison found nudity "offensive."[411] Wolfe claims that Harrison introduced two distinctive features to the girlie magazine genre through this and his subsequent more salacious titles; one was the inclusion of fetishistic attire inspired by the writing of Krafft-Ebing (see chapter 5), and the second was the invention of the photostory (*fig.90*). The photostory skits would revolve around a nonsensical plot – such as a girl getting stuck in a barrel, for instance – as a means to create shots of skirts flying upwards thus revealing underwear. At best they could be seen as illogical "slapstick skits."[412] Wolfe, half jokingly, describes just what the photostory meant to the men's magazine industry. It was, he writes:

> sort of like Braque coming up with the collage at a crucial point in the history of painting […] instead of having a lot of unrelated girlie shots stuck into a magazine […] Harrison arranged the girlie shots in editorial sequences. A whole set of bust-and-leg pictures would be shot around the theme, "Models Discover the Sauna Baths!" Class.[413]

The fact that they were "unclassy" is what made them such a success; these photographic pin-ups did not resemble the classical art bodies of the Varga Girls, and mostly featured performers that the procurers of the magazine would have recognized from burlesque culture. And since *Esquire* had tired of fighting the censors over pin-ups, subsequently dropping them to concentrate on a return to sophistication, Harrison's magazine readily filled the pin-up void.[414] In essence what happened with *Beauty Parade,* and the other Harrison girlie titles that followed throughout the 1940s and 1950s (*Titter, Wink, Flirt, Eyeful*) was that Harrison not only cemented the working-class connotation of the girlie

[410] Harald Hellmann, trans. Christian Goodden, *1000 Pin-Up Girls* (Köln: Taschen, 2008), p. 6.
[411] Hellmann, p. 128.
[412] Hanson, *Vol. 3*, p. 43.
[413] Wolfe, p. 187.
[414] Banner, *Marilyn*, p. 107.

magazine which had been fomenting since the early twentieth century, but he also strengthened the link between the visual representation of women's bodies and humorous context. This he achieved through the knowingly silly slapstick photostories and the use of burlesque dancers as models, whose performances had been linked to satire and humour from its very early days. The association with burlesque was not accidental in the relationship between humour and women's bodies. Harrison purposely aimed for "a kind of burlesque show for beneath the pillow" with his magazines.[415]

Burlesque had evolved considerably since the days of the British Blondes. By the 1920s stripping had been introduced into burlesque routines as a way to keep the shock factor fresh and the audiences keen.[416] As a result, the burlesque era of the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s experienced a revival that created household names of performers such as Gypsy Rose Lee, Lili St. Cyr and Ann Corio. Gypsy Rose Lee in particular remains the most renowned of burlesque performers whose physicality vied with her witty onstage personality for most attractive characteristic. Her candour, frankness and sharp observations about sex and nudity lent her the type of persona that Mae West made famous on stage and film. Women such as these were setting the example that the traditionally associated virtues of modesty and timidity with women were becoming outmoded. Burlesquers such as Gypsy, St. Cyr and Corio placed the accent on the "tease" of striptease, they used their bodies to tell a story and deliver a punchline, as well as provide voyeuristic satisfaction. This was precisely the element Harrison wished to imitate with his publications that were "burlesque shows in magazine form."[417] This type of humour towards the female body would become indelibly tied to postwar pin-up imagery, due in great part to Harrison's dissemination of such an association through his magazines.

A more complex portrayal of the body/humour paradox came through in the burlesque art of Reginald Marsh. Marsh, "America's Hogarth," produced etchings and paintings of typical scenes from the American burlesque halls of this era (*fig.91*). His depictions did not promote the glamour and finesse that were associated with the big-name burlesque girls, or even with the flawless

[415] Hellmann, p. 9.
[416] Allen, p. 243.
[417] Hanson, *Vol.* 3, p. 183.

bodies of the Varga and Petty pin-ups.[418] His burlesquers were complex caricatures, near grotesques even and they were often portrayed as bodily imperfect. On the one hand, the burlesquers' body/humour archetype promoted an unrestrained sexual expression for women. On the other, Marsh's – and to some extent, Harrison's – interpretations betray anxieties about women's bodies. At the time this related to other postwar paranoia about communist insurgency, atomic annihilation, alien invasion, sexual deviancy and sexuality in general:[419]

> The burlesque show […] served as a microcosm of the culture's ambivalence toward the female body. The alternation between strip and chorus numbers with comedic skits made certain that the fear and discomfort caused by these brusque, unconventional women were immediately discounted by laughter […] Humour had become a way to ease the threat women presented.[420]

If Spies's quote above appears to be making a Freudian point it would explain much about a postwar society that had re-embraced Freudian theory and practice. According to Freudian analysis then, the suppressed fear or disapproval of the aggressive and "unconventional" woman of postwar society, is relieved by the unconscious through the humour of burlesque, which sends-up women's bodies.[421]

As if to verify these latent themes, Harrison most famously went on to publish the notorious *Confidential* scandal magazine, which was expert in exposing, often times libellously, the allegedly secretive, decadent lifestyles of celebrities and well-known figures. The success of these magazines came from titillating its readership in almost exactly the same way that the scantily-clad photostory girls did. The intended readership therefore, was the same. As historian Barbara Epstein recounts:

> The scandal magazines were directed toward men, especially men of the working and lower middle classes […] In their attempt to assure their market, the scandal magazines appealed to

[418] Kathleen Spies, '"Girls and Gags" Sexual Display and Humor in Reginald Marsh's Burlesque Images', *American Art*, Vol. 18, No. 2, Summer, 2004, pp. 32-57.
[419] See Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound*, for a detailed dissection of the alignment of fear with female sexuality in postwar America, pp. 80-99.
[420] Spies, pp. 44-45.
[421] See Sigmund Freud, *The Joke and Its Relation to the Unconscious* (London: Penguin Classics, 2002).

> prurience, voyeurism, and fear, often mingled together. Articles dealt with threats from many quarters: homosexuals, sex perverts and criminals, Communists, spies and foreign agents, dishonest politicians, corrupt trade officials, blacks, Asians.[422]

The type of imagery furthered by *Confidential* and its imitators does not just point to an increased curiosity about sex specifically, or even a furtive interest in sex, but in general, a furtive outlook and furthermore, a furtive existence – especially at the time of the McCarthy Communist witch-hunts – that appeared to occupy postwar society entirely. The miasma of paranoia that settled upon American culture during the war and increased after it, was reflected in the detective stories, *film noir* movies and *femme fatales*, and the "purple prose" rags (see chapter 5) that were lapped up by the public. These cultural escapisms contributed to the furtive attitudes that consequently affected the voyeuristic and secretive way in which female sexuality was observed, regarded and represented. Harrison's pin-ups exemplify how furtive behaviour gradually became the norm, specifically by using the female body as a site upon which to exercise such behaviour. Humour obscured the remarkable unease with which this was done.

With the prevalence of the camera the intentions of pin-up imagery changed. The pretence of glamour associated with the movie star pin-ups began to slip away and in its place a more pornographic purpose was conveyed, even if the images were not yet definitively pornographic.[423] Camera Clubs, which were not as innocent as they sound, came about as a consequence of the collision of the low cost of cameras and the pin-up industry boom. The clubs first formed in New York, when amateur photographers paid women to pose naked for them in both indoor and outdoor locations. The photographs were often sold under the counter or out of the backs of cars (see chapter 5). But there were also many legitimate and professional photographers

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[422] Barbara Epstein, 'Anti-Communism, Homophobia, and the Construction of Masculinity in the Postwar U.S.', *The Cold War: Cold War Culture and Society, Volume 5*, ed. Lori Lyn Bogle (New York; London: Routledge, 2001), p. 75.

[423] Art historian Lynda Nead states that, "The assumed immediacy and accuracy of the photographic image is invested with a pornographic intent; whereas the abstraction and mediation of artistic methods such as painting and drawing are believed to be contrary to the relentless realism of the pornographic project." Lynda Nead, *Female Nude: Art Obscenity and Sexuality* (London; New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 52. Glamour began to be associated with a more (semi) pornographic aspect and subsequently the connotation of the term 'glamour modelling' would change by the 1960s to refer to nude modelling for the heterosexual male gaze, as opposed to the initial highly stylized 1920s-1950s Hollywood studio aestheticism. Gundle, pp. 296-297. See also chapter 5.

who elevated the pin-up photo almost to an art form such as Andre De Dienes, whose most famous model was a young Marilyn Monroe; and Bunny Yeager, who famously brought Bettie Page to mainstream attention with their collaboration for *Playboy* (*fig.92&93*).[424]

Fetish photographer Eric Kroll recalls how, as an adolescent, he first encountered Yeager's pin-up photographs:

> Bunny Yeager's photographs were never obscene. Erotic and glamorous, yes. Cheesecake, perhaps, but not pornographic […] The world she created with her photographs was an island of female beauty without blemishes, an idealized world […].[425]

The idealism of these photographic pin-ups, executed with more in mind than pure prurience, made them more akin to the quainter and romanticized illustrated format of pin-up imagery, as opposed to the tawdriness of the Harrison photostories. The aesthetic in the photographs of De Dienes and Yeager radiate exuberance and a sense of fun and clearly celebrate female sexuality through the pin-up figure (*fig.94&115-118*). Harrison's photos may also speak of fun, however, the humour employed in them is questionable and unmistakably directed at a male audience. The use of the body/humour burlesque models only partly provided a space in which to revere a type of alternative femininity unlike that of the humble housewife or innocent girl. Overall Harrison's photostories mostly subverted those stereotypes, mocked them, and reinforced the tragedy of inactive, subservient female roles. Thus pin-up imagery began to splinter into two modes: one that retained a reverence for the female form, and another that cheapened, and would eventually demean, the female body.

The great demand for pin-up reflected an attitude of excess characteristic of the times and would inevitably spill over into an insatiable demand for female nudity which would, by 1967, lead to an almost total elimination of any boundary keeping pornographic imagery from mainstream culture. Genres increasingly fused, artistic pin-up photographs shared an aesthetic with mainstream illustrated pin-up, and the contextual humour employed in many of the

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[424] Yeager also made herself the subject of her pin-up work and is believed to have inspired postmodern feminist artist Cindy Sherman's portraits. See Petra Mason, *Bunny Yeager's Darkroom: Pin-Up Photography's Golden Era* (New York: Rizzoli, 2012), p. 13.
[425] Eric Kroll, Bunny Yeager, *Bunny's Honeys: Bunny Yeager, Queen of Pin-Up Photography*, ed. by Eric Kroll, (Köln: Taschen, 1994), pp. 24-28.

illustrated images was like that of the more out-of-view girlie magazine gags. Advertising bridged the gap between risqué (men's magazine) pin-up and wide-appealing "pretty girl" art in mass-market magazine titles (*fig.95*). Mainstream images became increasingly daring and their presence was unmistakably visible; and one illustrator in particular helped to make sexy morally acceptable.

The emotional engagement of Gil Elvgren's "sexy" pin-ups.

By the 1950s, illustrator Gillette Elvgren became one of the most popular pin-up artists in America, due in great part to a style and aesthetic that seemed to capture the mood of the period. He and his contemporaries took their creative initiative from the two generations of "pretty girl" illustrators that had preceded them.[426] They were also likely influenced by the prevalence of photography, and could be regarded as early vanguards in photorealism. Out of all his contemporaries, arguably it was Pearl Frush who possessed the most refined skill at painting remarkably realistic, almost photographic quality pin-up images (*fig.96*). At the same time, Al Parker continued the populist tradition of "pretty girl" illustration, bringing together the All-Americanness of Rockwell's style, the seriousness of artist Edward Hopper, and the wide-appeal of the fun and frolicking pin-ups, to become a highly regarded illustrator in great demand by all the mainstream magazines (*fig.97&98*). But it was Elvgren whose calendar pin-ups and international Coca-Cola advertisements enshrined the classic Americana aesthetic, which helped mythologize the American 1950s through a rosy and nostalgic hyperrealist filter.

However, before Elvgren there was illustrator Haddon Sundblom, who first came to prominence in the 1920s. He conceived of the nostalgic "sunlit glow" that is often associated with the postwar period, a style that inspired all the major pin-up artists from the 1930s through to the 1960s. He is probably most celebrated for his series of Santa Claus illustrations for the Coca-Cola Company (*fig.99*); in fact, it could be said that Sundblom invented the modern-day image of Santa Claus, with his ruddy complexion and red and white Coca-Cola-inspired colour scheme. Sundblom's work featured in all the major publications and he was hired to advertise the most famous of household

[426] Charles G. Martignette, 'The Art and Life of Gil Elvgren', *Gil Elvgren: The Complete Pin-Ups*, Charles G. Martignette, Louis K. Meisel (Hong Kong; Köln; London; Los Angeles; Madrid; Paris; Tokyo: Taschen, 2008), p. 13.

products.[427] The key to Sundblom's success lay in the new trend of working in gouche on a smaller scale, which emphasized greater detail.[428] This style created a unique aesthetic that provoked "emotional engagement" with the subject matter – something he and contemporaries Clarence Underwood and Norman Rockwell valued greatly. As historian Catherine Gudis explains:

> The goal was not simply to make viewers *see* the ad, but to make them *feel*. For most of these designers, wholesome, sincere characters – such as the dewy-eyed, rosy-cheeked young women and children who populated Sundblom's Coca-Cola ads […] were the route to emotional engagement.[429]

With his "characteristic sunlit glow, free-spirited brushstrokes, and wholesome yet romantic imagery," Sundblom was the architect of the "look" of American popular culture.[430] According to his biographers, during his peak period in the 1940s, he produced at least half of all Coca-Cola advertising, which would have garnered him mass exposure both at home and abroad, "his generous and quite personal conception was everywhere."[431] Thus he, and later Elvgren (who adapted Sundblom's style), would be responsible for impressing on the world stage a uniquely American "look".

By the 1930s Sundblom had branched out into pin-up girl imagery and remained relevant right up to his last days when, in December of 1972, he painted the Christmas covergirl for *Playboy*, wearing the infamous Santa hat of course (*fig.100*).[432] Sundblom's *Playboy* cover serves as a perfect metaphor for the manner in which the erotic pin-up of men's magazine culture crossed-over into advertising to make acceptable sexy femininity for public consumption, through the artistic employment of nostalgia and emotional engagement. But Sundblom had not achieved this alone. Elvgren applied Sundblom's sunlit glow and emotional engagement to his own men's magazine-type pin-ups in order to endorse their risqué sexualization, consequently making them socially acceptable. He thus furthered the sexy feminine ideal throughout culture.

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[427] Martignette, Meisel*, Great American Pin-Up*, p. 387.
[428] Reed, p. 257.
[429] Catherine Gudis, *Buyways: Billboards, Automobiles, and the American Landscape* (New York; London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 75-76.
[430] Martignette, Meisel, *Great American Pin-Up*, p. 387.
[431] Barbara Fahs Charles, J.R. Taylor, *Dream of Santa: Haddon Sundblom's Advertising Paintings for Christmas, 1931-1964* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1992), pp. 15-16.
[432] Martignette, Meisel, *Great American Pin-Up*, p. 387.

Sundblom mentored Elvgren and many of his contemporaries, who transformed their mentor's sunlit glow into a creamy, textural, luscious aura nicknamed "mayonnaise painting," and were thus recognized as the "Sundblom Circle" (*fig.101,102,103&104*).[433] Elvgren by far excelled in the practice of mayonnaise painting, he incorporated the "silky-smoothness" and the emotional engagement into the genre of pin-up calendar work and altered the pin-up aesthetic for another generation. By the mid-1950s pin-up artists such as George Petty, who painted single figures without backgrounds, had begun to look outmoded.[434] In contrast, Elvgren's greatest strength was an innovative use of context, creating clever comic situations that would somewhat justify the nudity in a more sophisticated manner than the Harrison skits did (*fig.105&106*). In this way Elvgren's pin-ups were relevant in their "daring, tongue-in-cheek situation images, in which an accidentally sexy event happened to an absolutely innocent all-American girl," and seemed to reflect a society that required more naughtiness with its wholesomeness.[435] The sexiness of Elvgren's pin-ups were typical of the confused naughty-but-nice attitudes towards women's sexuality at the time. Elvgren's calendars and the various items that he lent his artwork to had no trouble selling, which is why he became so closely associated with the calendar firm Brown & Bigelow over the years, a significant factor in the genealogy of pin-up.

The calendar was very important to the survival of the pin-up girl in the postwar era.[436] She found a home in advertising, pulp magazines, mutoscope cards sold in arcade vending machines, in men's magazines and in speciality products usually requested by businesses, who also ordered speciality calendars for their clients. The calendar proved to be the most popular format for pin-up, even more so than men's magazines.[437] This was likely due to their advertising potential, but also because there was no stigma attached to a calendar (as opposed to a men's magazine). Calendars were inoffensive, as was the artwork that only hinted at its more daring capacity.

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[433] Martignette, 'The Art and Life of Gil Elvgren', p. 28.
[434] Austin, *Petty,* p. 156. Austin claims the pin-up in general was in decline by 1955. A couple of years after the initial run of *Playboy,* the illustrated pin-ups began to look quaint. The movie *The Petty Girl* (1950) had failed to inspire audiences, and Petty's calendars did not sell as well as they used to. Additionally his work began to suffer as he tried to keep his "girl" up-to-date by obsessively exaggerating her proportions. Austin, *Petty*, p. 160.
[435] Meisel, 'The 'Fine' Art of Illustration', p. 25.
[436] Martignette, 'The Great American Pin-Up', pp. 34-35.
[437] Martignette, 'The Great American Pin-Up', p. 33.

Brown & Bigelow made their name from the controversial calendar of 1913 featuring *September Morn* by Paul Chabas (see chapter 1). By the 1940s however, *Esquire* presented competition with its Varga calendars, so Brown & Bigelow exploited the financial potential of sexier calendars. Gil Elvgren was perfect for the role of maintaining the standards of quality and good taste of Brown & Bigelow pin-ups, whilst also being able to inject them with a knowing naughtiness they had not previously attempted.

Elvgren established himself as a pin-up artist during the war alongside Vargas and Petty and, like them, he benefitted from the demand from G.I.s for pin-up. Unlike his competition, he did not have the promotional backing of a successful international magazine, although he did work commissions for the Louis F. Dow Calendar Company (a company that had also jumped on the pin-up bandwagon). The company re-issued a set of twelve Elvgren pin-up prints as booklets for G.I.s that proved to be a roaring success, thereby creating a buzz around his name, beyond illustration circles. And even on the homefront, Elvgren's work reached a wider public when his Dow calendar prints were often used to raise money at bond rallies.[438] Just like Vargas during the war, Elvgren's art had the capacity to capture the imagination of the people and give them momentary respite from the dark hours of daily wartime life.

Elvgren would regenerate the feminine ideal of the pin-up in the years that followed the war. He looked to George Bridgman – the "father of modern anatomical drawing" – and to illustrator John La Gatta's feminine aesthetic, to devise his own pin-up type (*fig.107*).[439] Bridgman influenced the way Elvgren rendered the female form, so that the latter artist's figures were technically more anatomically realistic than the disproportionate, almost cartoonish Petty and Varga Girls. From La Gatta, Elvgren borrowed the sensual, chic style of 1920s-1930s modern, adapting these images of modernity to make his pin-ups successful.[440] In a 1950s interview in *Figure Quarterly* Clair Fry assesses Elvgren's technical brilliance:

> Gil has excellent taste […] Gil also has wit […] his situations having a humorous turn […] ingenuity and inventiveness shown in his color schemes, poses, gestures, and all that goes into a lively,

[438] Martignette, 'Gil Elvgren', p. 21.
[439] Martignette, 'Gil Elvgren', p. 22.
[440] According to Martignette, Elvgren painted hairstyles on his pin-ups that he felt would not date to keep the image germane and useable for a few years ahead. Martignette, 'Gil Elvgren', p. 37.

> exciting statement that captures universal attention. His work is sincere and honest. The reaction to Gil's paintings is that here is a real girl. The carefully thought out gestures and expressions are done with such mastery that they convey the exact meaning Gil intended without the phoney quality that exists in such a vast percentage of commercial painting. Gil has his finger on the pulse of the current evaluation of feminine beauty.[441]

In other words, according to Fry, Elvgren's pin-ups had surpassed Vargas's in terms of modernity and relevance, and had succeeded them in terms of representing the feminine fashion of the postwar era. Elvgren pin-up girls appeared widely throughout various media outlets. For the men's market, he produced the speciality products such as playing cards and the calendars. In advertising, he famously took up residence at Coca-Cola and with it furthered the "current evaluation of feminine beauty" in America to the far corners of the earth.

This was the first instance of the stereotype of the beaming smile and busty, exuberant, usually blonde young woman. Asked what he thought of American women by *Modern Man* magazine in 1951, Elvgren said that he found them to be "infinitely smarter," "more beautiful," and "more natural" and "not tying themselves in like they used to." What Elvgren had noticed therefore was that since the war women had become steadily more independent, they paid more attention to their appearance, they were more liberated, and less inclined to settle for conventional life choices (i.e. marriage). According to Elvgren, the change in "old-fashioned standards" was probably due in some part to the influence of television and magazines, but "calendar art has probably had more influence than any of these."[442]

In essence, Elvgren was saying that pin-up imagery had had a profound effect on American standards of the feminine, and even on the contemporary American woman's psyche. Since his were the biggest selling and most abundantly visible pin-ups in postwar America it stands to reason that his images had such as effect. It follows then that his pin-ups should be studied to determine what values they promoted – and how. Martignette and Meisel champion Elvgren's work, claiming that "from the 1940s through the 1960s, his pin-ups "epitomized the All-American Girl." His pin-ups were, according to them, "pictures of real girls in real, everyday situations. Sometimes they were a bit

[441] Clair Fry interview, *Figure Quarterly*, quoted in *Gil Elvgren*, p. 30.
[442] *Modern Man* interview quoted in *Gil Elvgren*, p. 30

exaggerated, but they always worked."[443] The word "exaggerated" is key to fully grasping the effect of pin-up on culture at this time. For, while it has been stated that Elvgren's pin-up girls appeared far more anatomically correct than the streamlined super-humanly elongated Petty and Varga Girls, Elvgren embellished the female form in other more subtle ways. It could be said that he enhanced what was already there:

> When asked about his techniques, he explained the distinctive "touches" he added to every painting – how he built up the bust, lengthened the legs, pinched in the waist, gave the body warmer and more attractive curves, worked over the facial features and expression, added just a little more of a tip and tilt to the nose, made the mouth fuller and more sensuous and the eyes a bit larger. He ended by saying that he liked to create the feeling that, underneath all the surface charms, there was a delicious warmth of mischief behind the model's eyes.[444]

If calendar art influenced American women, it stands to reason that the exaggerations – the "touches" or the excesses – would come into vogue. In one (or perhaps more accurately, two) of the most distinguishing features of the pin-up would catch on with more enthusiasm than all the other "surface charms."

Populuxe, and exaggerated bodies.

It is worth reminding ourselves how much Elvgren's pin-ups represented a bodily ideal of the postwar American woman that was based upon excess. Susan Glenn observes:

> Excess has historically been an important element in popular comedy. Too-muchness – too much fat, too much noise, too much physicality, too much political or worldly ambition, too much of whatever exceeds the normative standards of femininity – has provided the comic grist in many different societies.[445]

The continued symbiosis between humour and the excessive female body throughout the postwar period mirrored the era's furtive interest in sex. The fact that sex was such a taboo subject during this era explains the sudden explosion in pin-up imagery, production in men's magazine titles and continued sale of the

[443] Martignette, 'Gil Elvgren', pp. 36-37.
[444] Ibid.
[445] Glenn, pp. 46-47.

"sex humour" titles.[446] A covered-up or covert sexiness, was steadily becoming fashionable, which spoke volumes about the confused conservatism and simultaneous fascination with sex.

Nothing reflected this paradoxical feminine fashion more than the Sweater Girl look, which made a feature of women's breasts whilst at the same time kept them completely covered. In the 1940s, movie studios used "The Sweater Girl" as nickname to market the actress Lana Turner (*fig.108*). This moniker brought less attention to her clothing and more to her breasts. Throughout the 1940s, breasts received an inordinate amount of attention in popular culture. Howard Hughes's movie *The Outlaw* had been denied its initial release date in 1943 due to the controversy over Jane Russell's publicity still for the movie, which made a feature of her large breasts. That did not perturb the G.I.s from making the heretofore unknown Russell a favourite wartime pin-up; by the time the movie was eventually released in 1946, her breasts had garnered legendary status, and breasts had more generally become something of a national fetish.

Pin-up imagery was almost certainly responsible for instigating this craze for breasts "beneath a sweater and apparently about to burst the stiches."[447] The sale of sweaters increased remarkably and Sweater Girl competitions became popular, so that there were 10,000 entrants for the title of Sweater Girl of 1943. In that same year, the Sikorsky aircraft plant found itself in the news for banning their female workers from wearing sweaters on safety grounds. The personnel manager insisted they were worn to attract men, so the women's appeal to the War Labor Board Office ultimately failed.[448] "Breasts," claims Eric John Dingwall, "were everywhere, and brassieres became ingenious bags of gadgets for raising them, protruding them and generally emphasizing their existence. False ones were on sale – cheaters, falsies and boob-baits, the men called them – and these were modeled so carefully as almost to defy detection."[449] In 1948 4,500,000 "breast pads" or falsies were sold and by 1950 85 percent of women over fifteen wore bras and girdles, whilst corsets were

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[446] Sex humour titles had been produced and sold in America since 1919 (the last one survived into the early 1990s) the first of which was *Captain Whiz Bang* amongst the first wave of them, which also included the "Tijuana Bibles." A second wave of them occurred in the 1940s with a somewhat improved taste in crass humour. See Hanson, *Volume I*, pp. 241-252.
[447] Ibid.
[448] Dingwall, p. 181.
[449] Dingwall, p. 178.

being sold at an annual turnover of $500,000,000.[450] Whirlpool bras (so-called because of the circular stitching that created the protruding effect) became a staple of the1950s woman's wardrobe.[451]

The preoccupation with Sweater Girl fashion may be, as Elaine Tyler May observes, linked to the postwar containment of female sexuality, which is reflected in the literal containment of women's bodies in restrictive undergarments.[452] What it did contribute to was a cultural fixation on breasts, which the whirlpool bras fittingly gave a missile-shape to in the Cold War era of fashion. And yet Dian Hanson's assessment of this preoccupation is that, "breasts became hugely popular in America because men could finally see them nude [in magazines]." In the 1920s and 1930s photographed bare breasts were only published in nudist magazines. Patriotica pin-up during the war made sure breasts were covered up, but by 1950 *Modern Man* magazine regularly featured topless models, and by 1955 most American men's magazines had gone the same way.[453] Once this censorship barrier had been removed it encouraged the consumption of more breasts and bigger breasts, so that even "after they got over the thrill of getting to see breasts at all," male consumers, "wanted to see bigger ones."[454] Thus followed the specialist breast magazines, the first of many being *Fling* from 1957.[455]

This response for more, of anything and everything, – a demand for excess – was precisely what the Populuxe decorative style of the time symbolized:

> During the Populuxe decade, the objects people could buy took on a special exaggerated quality. They celebrate confidence in the future, the excitement of the present, the sheer joy of having so much. Today we are inclined to marvel at the naïveté of the period or feel nausea at its overindulgence.[456]

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[450] Marjorie Rosen, *Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies & the American Dream* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1973), p. 267.
[451] Frederick's of Hollywood invented the first push-up bra in the 1950s. Frederick Mellinger set up his company in 1946 after returning from war, having been inspired by pin-ups and his fellow G.I.s desires. He began designing underwear for women based on what these men found to be a turn-on. See Cox, pp. 119-120.
[452] May, pp. 96-99.
[453] Hanson, pp. 175-177.
[454] Ibid.
[455] Ibid. According to Hanson, future filmmaker of the kitsch and excessive, Russ Meyer, was a photographer at *Fling*.
[456] Hine, p. 4.

Overindulgence in luxury items relates to the influence it had over the literal re-shaping of women's bodies. From one perspective, the emphasis given to the exaggeration of female bodies celebrated wealth and health, and the illusion of the possibility of turning fantasy into reality. "Populuxe," claims Thomas Hine, "is a way of referring to the moment when America found a way of turning out fantasy on an assembly line."[457] In the spirit of that moment in time anything was possible, even real women could resemble the fantasy figures in pin-up calendars. "Every consumable, from salt shaker to house, was added an overlay of fantasy, of personalization, of style," Hine claims.[458]

On the one hand, this was a period in which dreams were seemingly turning into a reality, and women's bodies registered all the exuberance, wealth, luxury and excess through an exaggerated physique. On the other hand, women could also be seen to be the products being spewed out on the production line. If "recollections of Marilyn Monroe [and] Jayne Mansfield […] were parked out front," meaning, cars such as the shapely Chryslers and Oldsmobiles of the 1950s resembled the curves of these two sex icons, then women were being compared to nothing more than inanimate machines. This took an almost literal turn with the naming of "Dagmars." Many cars were fitted with "Dagmar bumpers" which were two artillery shell-shaped conical Populuxe design embellishments fitted to the front grille or bumper. They were named "Dagmars" after the large-breasted actress/model/TV personality Dagmar (*fig.110&111*). These examples called into question whose "dreams" were actually being realised. Certainly the traditionally masculine status symbols of the cars designed to register the shapely form of the "sexy" postwar woman, insinuated a wish to possession and control.

Some were not seduced by the superficial dazzle of the Populuxe production line: "for most design professionals, the Populuxe attitude bordered on the immoral." And magazines such as *Life* questioned the "ornamental overindulgence" of this new design style.[459] But ultimately the lure of having it all, coupled with the ability to do so, was too much of a temptation to ignore. Populuxe promoted a lifestyle that had nothing to do with holding back and everything to do with excess, taking advantage of the wealth of the nation in

[457] Hine, p. 5.
[458] Hine, p. 11.
[459] Hine, p. 14.

what seemed to be a transient world. Underneath it all, the motivation for excess was powered by fear.

In the postwar era, fetishization of breasts coincided with a variety of cultural phenomena. Initially, the proprietary manners-over-morals conservatism of the time dictated that women's bodies should be covered up and contained, but also hint at carnal possibilities. In light of the cultural silences around sexuality, this was a typically furtive reaction to female bodies. Since men's magazines and pin-ups had contributed to the fetishization of the breast, women's fashion began to shape the bodies of everyday women into a silhouette that mimicked the pneumatic shape of the pin-up. The popularity of shapely movie stars such as Lana Turner, Jane Russell, Marilyn Monroe and Jayne Mansfield reflected this trend for sexiness in the postwar period.

This fetishization was such a defining feature of the representation of women's bodies, and so tied to a culture of excess, that it reached parodic proportions. In fact, feminist cultural historian Wini Breines states that, the importance placed on large breasts became a kind of cultural joke that became a gross parody of women. This caricaturizing of women's bodies was "even more bizarre in light of prudishness about sexual intercourse and of dreamy romantic representations of heterosexual relations."[460] Parody and pastiche are important elements in this analysis of the breast fixation. It also returns the argument back to the initial connection between female bodies and humour – a linking for which the film star Marilyn Monroe became famous. In this respect, her public persona provides an important case study.

Marilyn Monroe: pin-up and parody.

In 1953, when Marilyn Monroe came to prominence as a movie star, the biggest fan magazine in America, *Photoplay*, wrote that she had "launched a new sex era." [461] As frivolous as such remarks about showbusiness can be, this statement would turn out to be prophetic. Her legendary status has since eclipsed the seemingly unremarkable fact that she was once an ambitious, working-class pin-up model, like many others at the time, who used that avenue

[460] Wini Breines, *Young, White and Miserable: Growing Up Female in the Fifties* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 101.
[461] *Photoplay,* February 1953.

of work as a way to break into the movies.[462] As *the* sex symbol of the 1950s, we should understand exactly what Monroe represented in order to comprehend the version of sexualized femininity that she promoted and, in the long-run, turned into a timeless stereotype – via the vehicle of the pin-up.

Monroe is often confused with the "dumb blonde" persona that she created, but as Lois Banner examines in her excellent biography on Monroe, she did in fact invent her version of the dumb blonde from an amalgamation of historical Commedia dell' Arte comic types, burlesque figures and the pin-up persona. The Marilyn dumb blonde was the very personification of the 1950s linking of female sexuality and humour. In 1956 *Time* magazine printed a feature on Monroe in which the journalist Brad Darrach compares her to pin-up-type cartoon characters Betty Boop and Daisy Mae, but ultimately claims that she mostly resembles the Petty Girl. "And like the Petty Girl," Darrach writes, "the Monroe is for the millions a figure of fantasy rather than of flesh. She offers the tease without the squeeze, attraction without satisfaction, frisk without risk."[463] This was no flippant remark. Monroe began her career as a very successful pin-up model during the war, when Varga and Petty Girl types and Sweater Girls were at their most fashionable. Pin-up photographer David Conover who took Monroe's (at the time still Norma Jeane Dougherty) photo at the Radioplane plant where she worked on the fateful day he unwittingly "discovered" her, remembers asking her to change into a sweater, "since he was taking "morale" photos and the shape of her body needed to show. She put on a red sweater she had with her […] She would often wear it in subsequent pinup photos" (*fig.109*).[464] One of the photos from the shoot appeared on the cover of *Stars and Stripes* magazine and Monroe set out to become a pin-up model on the basis of that success.[465] According to Banner, modelling by the 1940s had come to be regarded as a glamorous occupation and was no longer associated with prostitution.[466] Monroe's look however did not conform to the slender and elegant models used in *Vogue*. Her figure was far more suitable in the girlie magazines that required shapely and busty women: "they were logical

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[462] See Banner, *Marilyn: The Passion and the Paradox* for the most up-to-date, feminist biographical portrayal of Marilyn Monroe.
[463] Brad Darrach, 'To Aristophanes & Back', *Time*, May 14th 1956, p. 74.
[464] Banner, p. 99.
[465] Banner, 103.
[466] Banner, 102.

places for Jean Norman photos."[467] In this capacity she was a runaway success; she was photographed by pin-up "aesthete" Andre De Dienes and glamour photographers such as Bruno Bernard and Lazlo Willinger, and regularly posed for illustrator Earl Moran (*fig.112*), appearing in a whole breadth of pin-up related publications as well as advertisements. As a model for Moran's illustrated pin-ups Monroe is rendered virtually unrecognizable (*fig.113&114*). Like Myrna Hansen, her likeness as opposed to her individuality was made to fit the "pretty girl"/"sexy girl" crossover formula. As Banner notes: "in the many illustrations by Moran for which she posed, she looks like just another blonde, nothing special […] her look was so unexceptional that even when she was a star no one identified her as the model for those illustrations."[468]

As a photographic model however her distinctive photogenic draw is starkly obvious and she becomes, as Kathryn N. Benzel states, "the pin-up *par excellence.*"[469] It was the quality that would make her so very watchable on the big screen. Academics Benzel and Banner have respectively succeeded in rewriting Marilyn's mythology as one in which she defies patriarchal subordination and exhibits strong feminist traits long before feminism came to be defined. For Banner, Marilyn was a maverick of her time, sympathizing with civil rights and communist causes and standing up to the dictatorial male studio moguls. She was well-read, kept company with authors such as Carson McCullers and Truman Capote, married playwright Arthur Miller and was far more intelligent than widely perceived. For Benzel, Marilyn's early pin-up photographs are the key to understanding how she creatively contributed to and expressed her own brand of femininity within an oppressive and male-led industry that she eventually made her own when she became famous. "Most photographers of Monroe acclaim her artistic presentation and acknowledge her contributions to their own artistry,"[470] claims Benzel. She argues that Monroe's stills:

> more nearly represent the truth than other pin-ups of young starlets because she breaks down the barrier between the viewer and the photographic representation. Looking at photographs of Monroe, the viewer has the feeling that she will step out of her

[467] Banner, 107. Norma Jeane modelled under the name Jean Norman.
[468] Banner, pp. 113-114.
[469] Kathryn N. Benzel, 'The Body as Art: Photographs of Marilyn Monroe', *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 25, Issue 2, pp. 1-29, Fall 1991, p. 1.
[470] Benzel, p.11.

> frame at any moment. In this illusion, the viewer is made to feel less a voyeur and more a participant because Monroe, her pose, her expression, her costume, all encourage interaction rather [than] anonymity on the part of the spectator.[471]

Monroe thus contributed to the era's definition of femininity by breaking out of the stock pin-up poses and promoting action over stasis: "she isn't really posing but in the middle of an action."[472] Early photographs of Monroe by De Dienes best exemplify how he captured her in action: laughing, dancing, performing acrobatics, in a manner that suggests they are not premeditated poses (*fig.115,116,117&118*). In a sense this links her with the Elvgren pin-ups that were active, as opposed to the inertly posed Varga and Petty Girls.

Of course this wasn't true of all Monroe photos throughout her career, but where she was allowed more input – especially with photographers she knew personally – her creativity is most apparent (*fig.119,120,121,122*). When Monroe did use her artistic imagination, her photography sessions resulted in more active images, which transcended the vacant expressions of so many pin-up models. She contributed to a more spontaneous and seemingly "natural" femininity, a 1960s type of femininity before its time. It was an unusually authoritative and unique approach as a model to have "experiment[ed] with the pin-up motif" and "revise[d] the pin-up pose."[473] "Her naturalness," Benzel continues, "disrupts the distance between the viewer and the representation, disrupts the typical notion of the pin-up woman as idealized and unattainable."[474] Benzel refers to specific photographs where Monroe's "naturalness" is most apparent, that is, where she uses her body to connote action as opposed to inertness. It could be said that Monroe presents a fluid, rhizomatic female sexuality; that is, she uses the conventional sexuality of the pin-up and subverts it by combining it with spontaneity, gregariousness, jollity. She thus advocated a sexualized femininity that did not take itself too seriously, and she did much the same thing with conventional representations of the burlesque dancer when she created her own on-screen persona.

Monroe's most famous pin-up image is no doubt Tom Kelley's 'A New Wrinkle', from whom Hugh Hefner bought the rights to launch *Playboy* (*fig.123*). Out-stretched on a red velvet theatre curtain she is all at once an "active" pin-

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[471] Benzel, p. 3.
[472] Benzel, p. 14.
[473] Benzel, p. 5.
[474] Benzel, p. 4.

up, a classical nude and a horizontal feast for the male gaze. In this photo, Banner notes:

> She invites the viewer to look at her, but she is in control of the sight lines, with a relaxed tension in her body that suggests motion. She is poised for the male gaze, but she gazes back at the same time. She doesn't look vulgar in these photos.[475]

Monroe studied famous nudes before the shoot, including Manet's *Olympia* (*fig.85*), and was inspired by the iconography of burlesque dancer Lili St. Cyr (*fig.124*). St. Cyr's manner of posing her lithe out-stretched limbs to connote movement is very apparent in much of Monroe's pin-up poses. To prepare for one of her earliest roles in the burlesque-themed movie *Ladies of the Chorus* (1948), Monroe performed at a burlesque hall (under the pseudonym Mona Monroe), and also went to watch St. Cyr's act at the Florentine Gardens.[476]

These experiences stayed with the fledgling actress who drew on burlesque to create her "dumb blonde" persona. "Her comic character," Banner says of the dumb blonde persona, "[…] can't be understood without examining the women of burlesque and striptease."[477] The mythological Marilyn Monroe in which the real person and the dumb blondes of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953) and *How To Marry A Millionaire* (1953) et al are confused, was constructed upon the body/humour parallel of burlesque. In her article on Reginald Marsh's burlesque etchings, Kathleen Spies notes the connection between the Harrison girlie magazines and the "curvaceous female body and humour […] that proliferated in American popular culture between the world wars."[478] Monroe drew on the excesses and protuberances glorified in pin-ups and burlesque iconography – hips, breasts – and incorporated her signature wiggle walk and girlie voice to personify the Populuxe female body. Just as Charlie Chaplin had devised The Little Tramp, to reflect on the deterioration of the class-system of the inter-war period, the Monroe blonde made flesh the working-class sexuality of the "identifiably working-class" women Marsh portrayed.[479] Her pale flawless airbrushed-looking skin was reminiscent of the Varga Girls; her childishness, wide-eyed innocent sexuality and girly smile was

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[475] Banner, p. 153.
[476] Banner, p. 144.
[477] Banner, p. 241.
[478] Spies, p. 33.
[479] Spies, p. 34.

pure Petty Girl. And her sexiness was borrowed from Elvgren imagery, and the knowingness of her sexuality from the tease of the striptease. Like The Little Tramp, it was parody. Altogether these factors generated a type of female sexuality that threatened to spill out of sweaters and girdles, and corrupt anyone who looked at her. If Americans in the Cold War period lived under the constant pressure of political brinkmanship, Monroe's body represented that looming threat of combustion.

The unorthodox subtext of Monroe's persona only becomes fully clear when contrasted with the graceful, untouchable femininity of Grace Kelly or Audrey Hepburn – two public figures much more in tune with postwar conservatism. Next to these immaculate, sophisticated, and impenetrable bodies – dressed in Dior's New Look fashions, with their hard angles and cinched-in waists – Monroe's body and sexuality appeared positively out of control.[480] From one perspective her sexuality appeared to pander to male desire, from another it speaks of a momentary carnivalesque Bakhtian body that operates outside of the civilized order and thus endorses freedom from constraint and control. It is unusual to refer to Monroe's body and the sexuality it represented, as grotesque. But Bakhtin's grotesque realism of the carnivalesque, which unites the body with humour, embraces exaggerated forms and degraded bodies, and helps us understand why a sex symbol like Monroe should rise to fame at such a time in America. In much the same way, argues Spies, Reginald Marsh's etchings of burlesque dancers:

> portrayed a temptingly crude and down-to-earth sexuality, encompassing the ambivalent feelings he and his viewers had towards these women. His combination of the comic and the grotesque is not as contradictory as it first might seem; studies have found the two to be interrelated and based on similar elements of excess, randomness, and disorder.[481]

The grotesque body is "universal" meaning it represents the people. Its exaggerations are "positive" and "assertive" by furthering suggestions of fertility, growth "and a brimming-over abundance." These manifestations, argues

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[480] Marilyn was apparently notorious for forgoing underwear such as girdles and panties, something considered extremely inappropriate at the time. If true, it proves an unwillingness to follow convention. See Cox, p. 120. Marilyn also purposely rejected Dior's New Look, see Dyhouse, p. 85

[481] Spies, p. 34.

Mikhail Bakhtin, refer to "the collective ancestral body of the people."[482] And the laughter that such bodies provoke is precisely to materialize and degrade, meaning, to bring the body down to earth:

> To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to the acts of defecations and copulation, conception, pregnancy, birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one.[483]

In comparison to the bodies of Hepburn and Kelly that were metaphorically viewed as dignified, statuesque and sexually demarcated, Monroe's body appeared to seethe with life and lust, was earthly and real to the extent that it inspired visions of sex, birth and ultimately death, but also rebirth, a spirit that lives on. "The body," says Bakhtin, "stands on the threshold of the grave and the crib."[484] The delicate balance of thresholds and political brinkmanship that colour the furtive mindset of postwar America therefore, produced the body of Marilyn Monroe. Her body was a celebration and a degradation, an escape from propriety, a cause for laughter and for concern.

The anxieties surrounding Monroe's body and sexuality have consistently been scrutinized. Monroe herself became concerned when she could not break free of her persona and was perpetually limited to roles that were ever-paler imitations of the dumb blonde. "Playing dumb," claims Shira Tarrant, in her article on Mirra Komarovsky's feminism in the 1950s, was a very real role imposed upon college women in the postwar period:

> [Komarovsky] stated that "playing dumb" was a coping mechanism that some women used to succeed in college without being penalized for this success in their interactions with men. "Playing dumb" was a way to deal with the paradox that intellectual, academic, or professional success could penalize a woman and get in the way of interpersonal and emotional interactions (with men).[485]

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[482] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 18-19.
[483] Bakhtin, p. 21.
[484] Bakhtin, p. 26.
[485] Shira Tarrant, 'When Sex Became Gender: Mirra Komarovsky's Feminism of the 1950s', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, p. 349.

Certainly it has been observed that in many areas of the media the notion of the infantilized woman was avidly kept alive. Elia Kazan's movie *Baby Doll* (1956) epitomized this woman-child persona turned sour, as did the extreme silliness of Jayne Mansfield's insipid imitation of Marilyn Monroe, parodying a parody as it were, with her overblown surreal bodily proportions and obsession with the colour pink (*fig.125*).

In addition, Marjorie Rosen suggests that American economic wealth had created a breed of women who became idle and preoccupied with their appearances, which would explain the exacerbation of the stereotype of the infantilized – and relatedly, the domestic – woman:

> Not only did they have the time to care, but the emphasis on femininity – hourglass shapes harshly defined by cinch belts, peasant skirts, strapless gowns, bulky crinolines, or sheath dresses ensuring that young ladies would sit with their legs together – deliberately abandoned functionalism for style. And sex appeal. All that idleness and dissatisfaction, had created a group particularly susceptible to the media.[486]

What had knowingly started out as a creative comic parody of femaleness, eventually entrapped Monroe professionally and pointed to a wider palpable bind that many other women found themselves in. The persona of the infantilized adult woman to some extent highlighted the patronizing manner in which postwar women were regarded. However, it would be inaccurate to suggest that all women accepted or played up to this notion. Historically, postwar women have been dismissed as submissive, docile and of "playing dumb" but it may be that the reality was likely more complex.

Discontent, domesticity and revisionist history.

Marilyn's fight against her dumb blonde persona underscores those complexities of postwar women's status in both a professional and more general capacity. The feminist critic Jacqueline Rose claims that:

> She didn't realise that the audience were laughing, not because she was ridiculous but because of the genius with which she played her part. It was in fact her unique talent to play nearly every part she played as if it were a mockery of itself. But it was not what she wanted. 'I had to get out, I just had to,' she said about the

[486] Rosen, p. 268.

> huge commercial success of *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *How to Marry a Millionaire*, 'The danger was, I began to believe this was all I could do – all I was – all any woman was.' Women could do better.[487]

Marilyn was afraid that she had breathed life into a caricature of Woman who became so well loved that she herself, as well as the public, were in danger of believing her to be real and thus normalizing or acculturating – and in the case of women, internalizing – the feminine "type" she parodied. However, a general postwar dissatisfaction appeared to have arisen out of all the jumbled abundance and conventionalism of the 1950s. Novels such as Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (1963) and J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (1951), *Franny and Zooey* (1961) and his short stories, as well as Richard Yates' *Revolutionary Road* (1961) and *The Easter Parade* (1976), are products of an era's frustrations concerning demarcated gender roles, supressed sexualities and the untruths of it all.

Discontent and disappointment amongst both men and women in the postwar period arose from the frustrating and confusing paradoxical social existence within which a reinforcement of gender stereotypes came to coexist alongside what was perceived to be a slackening of sexual morality. Politically, the Cold War had escalated fears of immanent attack from communist states, the threat of which slipped Americans into a social malaise whereby a stable job, family life and creature comforts were all that most young people aspired to.[488] A 1951 issue of *Time* carried a soon-to-be-famous article entitled 'The Younger Generation', which paints a portrait of American youth as a mostly inert generation. This generation – the "Silent Generation" – were apparently happy to exist in "silence" and content with getting "nowhere near the rostrum." *Time*'s surveys and interviews portrayed a view of a generation characterized by shrunken ambitions, who were retreating to "suburban idylls." This indicated that the U.S. had become a "highly organized society," in which the young (18-28 year-olds) felt that the "frontiers of the U.S. economy have been reached"

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[487] Jacqueline Rose, 'A Rumbling of Things Unknown', *London Review of Books*, Vol. 34, No. 8, 26 April 2012, http://www.lrb.co.uk/v34/n08/jacqueline-rose/a-rumbling-of-things-unknown , accessed 11/10/12.
[488] See May, *Homeward Bound*.

and there was a "lack of worlds to conquer." Interestingly, this silent generation was also "less showy about sex."[489]

Yet, perhaps contradictorily, there was also great variety within this younger generation:

> Some are smoking marijuana; some are dying in Korea. Some are going to college with their wives; some are making $400 a week in television. Some are sure they will be blown to bits by the atom bomb. Some pray. Some are raising the highest towers and running the fastest machines in the world. Some wear blue jeans; some wear Dior gowns. Some want to vote the straight Republican ticket. Some want to fly to the moon.[490]

For all this, the article is revealingly critical of young women, who are referred to as "emotional D.P.s" (displaced persons). They are the "granddaughters of the suffragettes, the daughters of the cigarette-and-short-skirt crusaders" who flock in droves to cities in search of careers and believe in equality with men. "They are dressed to kill in femininity. The bosom is back; hair is longer," and these women are "not ready to admit that all [they] want is to get married." These women, claims the article, are aggressive and confusing to men. They are posed as the biggest threat to society with their behaviour "certain to have most serious social consequences."[491]

As previously noted, the postwar era was felt to be a transitory phase in history for Western society. Within the grand Text of women's history, women of the postwar period are believed to have been encouraged back into the domestic sphere after the war. This, according to various historians, stemmed from a national need to provide security that began with nurturing the stable family unit, and creating surety for returning G.I.s who psychologically needed a return to "normality." Women thus were encouraged to play the parts of wives and mothers with a certain feminine fervour usually associated with Victorian society. Fashions reflected this, as did the voluptuous body type. The "sexy woman" type not only conjured up the image of fertile, baby-making women and continued the idea of the "liberated" All-American Girl, but crucially, the sexy woman posed a political opposite to the women of communist Russia, who

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[489] 'The Younger Generation', *Time*, November 5th 1951. http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,856950,00.html, accessed 22/10/12.
[490] Ibid.
[491] Ibid.

were viewed in America as Soviet labourers, unfeminine and unconcerned with their appearance.[492] In other words: unaffected by consumerism.

The view that most women fell inline with this unarticulated doctrine has been contested more recently. Notably, Joanne Meyerowitz challenges Betty Friedan's thesis on "her version of the dominant ideology, the conservative promotion of domesticity."[493] Friedan is considered a leader of the "second-wave" feminist movement due to her writing *The Feminine Mystique*. The book relies on a mixture of information taken from the experiences of her white, middle-class, college-educated peers and a survey of short stories and fiction from popular magazines of the era. Meyerowitz finds the work dubious and sets about critiquing Friedan's "sweeping generalities" by surveying not only popular magazines (as well as those left out by Friedan such as *Ebony* and other African-American titles), but other books, articles and films from the era. Meyerowitz finds that Friedan's work only covers "one piece of the postwar culture puzzle." She continues:

> The popular literature I sampled did not simply glorify domesticity or demand that women return to or stay at home. All of the magazines sampled advocated both the domestic and non-domestic, sometimes in the same sentence. In this literature, domestic ideals coexisted in ongoing tension with an ethos of individual achievement that celebrated nondomestic activity, individual striving, public service, and public success.[494]

"Tension" is indeed the key word, and this assessment of postwar culture would seem to comply with the portrait of women as emotional D.P.s. It was a tension that affected both women and men and created a general dissatisfaction with regards to expected gender "norms."

The *Time* article is haunted by this tension without outright naming it as such, but recognizes it as displacement and aggression instead, and correctly credits this (albeit in a negative way) to the increased number of women striving for careers, a cultural environment Meyerowitz describes:

> For the past few years, historians have questioned the stereotype of postwar women as quiescent, docile, and domestic. Despite the

[492] May, pp. 12-13.
[493] Joanne Meyerowitz, 'Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958', *The Cold War*, p. 98.
[494] Meyerowitz, p. 100.

> baby boom and despite recrimination in employment, education, and public office, married women, black and white, joined the labor force in increasing numbers, and both married and unmarried women participated actively in politics and reform […] Postwar magazines, like their prewar and wartime predecessors, rarely presented direct challenges to the conventions of marriage or motherhood, but they only rarely told women to return to or stay at home. They included stories that glorified domesticity, but they also expressed ambivalence about domesticity, endorsed women's nondomestic activity, and celebrated women's public success. They delivered multiple messages, which women could read as sometimes supporting and sometimes subverting the "feminine mystique."

Furthermore, critical work such as Meyerowitz's highlights the general ignorance with which postwar women have been viewed. They were capable and intelligent enough to reject outright the media images and stereotypes peddled to them. Again, Meyerowitz is worth quoting on this subject:

> despite the magazines' endorsement of feminine beauty and heterosexual allure, Friedan's polemical claim that "American women have been successfully reduced to sex creatures" seems unabashedly hyperbolic. Try as they might, popular magazines could not entirely dictate the responses of readers. In most cases, we have little way of knowing how readers responded to magazine articles, but in the case of sex appeal, we have explicit letters of dissent. In the African-American magazines, some readers, women and men both, objected to the photos of semi-clad women […] In *Ladies' Home Journal,* too, readers responded with rare indignation to one article on sex appeal. In the offending article, "How to Be Loved," movie star Marlene Dietrich lectured housewives on enhancing their allure.

It is also likely that for the many women who did adopt the sexy fashions and dominant persona, – "dressed to kill in femininity" – that they did so as a mistaken expression of sexual liberation.

As has been noted throughout this thesis, and as Foucault would assert, sexual licence is often mistakenly linked to freedom and liberation, hence, seeming independence. While it may, in the present day, be regarded as a misguided expression of independence, the point is that it was probably intended in that way, and not necessarily regarded at the time as a submission to authoritative gender stereotyping. Ironically, whilst this generation may have been "less showy about sex" in comparison to the hedonistic generation of the 1920s, sex remained evident as both a growing scientific area of interest and as

a profitable commercial enterprise. In science, Kinsey altered the wholesome notion of the All-American Girl, whilst in the commercial arena, Hugh Hefner created the accompanying image to the altered notion of wholesomeness with the *Playboy* Playmate and with that steered the pin-up aesthetic into new territory.

Playboy: a model for rebellious sexuality?

Both *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* and *Playboy* were first published in 1953. Kinsey's work, in comparison to its earlier counterpart on the sexual behaviour of men, somehow managed to cause greater shock waves throughout the nation with its near iconoclastic results, shattering the image of the assumed obsequiousness and sexual naiveté of everyday women: "After an initially exuberant response, the *Female* volume quickly came under fierce attack for undermining America's moral fibre; critics were outraged by its findings that nearly 50 percent of all women had premarital affairs, and 26 percent had extramarital affairs."[495] Kinsey henceforth came to be regarded as "a de facto spokesman for women's right to sexual expression and satisfaction."[496] His publication is a critical factor in the sexual awakening, as it were, of modern American women, something that was increasingly apparent throughout the gamut of cultural representation at the time including, of course, the pin-up girl. "[H]is *Female* volume," says Kinsey researcher Karen Winkler, "offered a profoundly new and convention-shattering view of women as sexual beings, with sexual bodies that were knowable."[497] These were the infant beginnings of *the* Sexual Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s and images like the pin-up girls did indeed reflect this at the time, as did *Playboy*.

Hugh Hefner always insisted that he "promoted sexual freedom for women as well as men," in his magazine; he was apparently distraught when, by the 1960s, the rapidly growing women's movement targeted him as a representative of male domination and female exploitation, a charge he has never been able to shrug off.[498] Hefner was in all probability earnest in his proclamations of sexual liberty for all, but *in practice* his magazine, the culture it

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[495] Karen Winkler, 'Kinsey, Sex Research, and the Body of Knowledge: Let's Talk About Sex', *Women's Studies Quarterly*, p. 287.
[496] Winkler, p. 304.
[497] Winkler, p. 307.
[498] Steven Watts, *Mr. Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream* (New Jersey: Wiley, 2008), p. 5.

instigated, its representation of women and subsequent trend-setting, did eventually largely contribute (and continues to do so) to the contemporary pornification of Western culture and the "normalization" of the objectification of women. However, *Playboy*'s somewhat "innocent" beginnings are important in this genealogy, since the Playmate is both an ancestor of the pin-up and a portent of her eventual downfall.

Hefner belonged to that Silent Generation which saw him married with children in his early twenties. The "tension" and "discontent" of his generation, which he experienced first-hand, spurred him on to create the *Playboy* world of play, a life he felt he and other men his age should not have missed out on. "Hefner," writes Elizabeth Fraterrigo, "tapped into powerful undercurrents of discontent running through postwar society." [499] *Playboy* was directed specifically at men in the tradition of *Esquire* (where Hefner began his publishing career) whereby fine wine, food and women were the order of the day. The magazine "extolled the virtues of singlehood," and shunned the responsibilities of the settled-down life. [500] It also offered a vision of the American male that was cultured, sensual, stylish, enjoyed cooking and "share[d] his leisure time with women and like[d] it."[501] This was a radical masculinity to promote amongst the other men's magazines in which brawn and brashness equalled "true" masculinity. The *Playboy* male was urbane and urban, educated and in touch with popular culture and happily participated in consumerism. The magazine "supported a thriving bachelor subculture and brought forth new visions of middle-class masculinity."[502] It was, like the new "teen" market of the 1950s, another commercial market ripe for the picking, something Hefner was not ignorant of. Instead of Elvis, rock 'n' roll and blue jeans, Hefner was peddling sex and sophistication, nothing original but it was a shade more daring than anything previously made available on the American mass market. This type of culture that glorified prurience and made Americans "sex-conscious and sex-obsessed," claims Eric Dingwall, "exhibited a curious kind of permanent adolescence and immaturity which was reflected in [this generation's] sexual habits […] amusements […] and […] language." *Playboy* thrived on it, selling in its millions on a monthly basis. To be fair, *Playboy* was,

[499] Fraterrigo, p. 15.
[500] Fraterrigo, p. 4.
[501] Hanson, Vol. 2, pp. 214-215.
[502] Fraterrigo, p. 8.

up until the 1960s, a "text-led magazine," as Dian Hanson puts it.[503] She makes a case for Hefner's magazine by pointing out how *Playboy* represented a backlash or a rebellion against the Puritanism that had taken over in the age of communist paranoia and political witch-hunts, amidst a "poisonous ethos of bland consumerism." *Playboy* she claims, "provided the antidote […] by offering an alternative universe of eroticism and sybaritic delight."[504] But Hanson also credits *Playboy*'s initial success with the sensational publication of Marilyn Monroe's nude photos – which Hefner purchased the rights to for $500 from photographer Tom Kelley – a landmark event in the genealogy of pin-up.

Playboy cartoons, Femlin and the Playmate.

Regardless of the intended male market and the calibre of (male) writers Hefner featured in the magazine, *Playboy* would, ironically, become synonymous with (nearly nude) women, or, pin-ups. As well as being the subject of many of the features, women visually featured in the magazine as cartoons, mascots and Playmates.

The cartoons, with captions that became more and more risqué as the decades went on (*fig.126&127*), were included to massage male egos, serve as voyeuristic pleasure, and "provide respite from the doldrums of frustrations of a hard day's work," claims Fraterrigo.[505] This cannot be denied, but to contextualize the humour (specifically to the 1950s), women's sexuality, as has been established, was *de riguer* and this type of humour was employed in nationwide advertising campaigns (*fig.128*) and thus had far-reaching appeal whilst managing, just about, to stay on the right side of offensive material.[506]

Since 1957 the regular illustrated mascot Femlin also featured in *Playboy*.[507] Drawn by artist LeRoy Neiman, she is a mischievous nude female sprite dressed only in stockings, stilettos and opera gloves (*fig.129*) who was modelled on a "perky girlfriend," and "risqué near nude "girly club and titty bar"

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[503] Hanson, p. 243. Writers included Henry Miller, Norman Mailer, Ray Bradbury, Philip Roth and John Updike.
[504] Hanson, p. 235.
[505] Fraterrigo, p. 126.
[506] This point is made here not to defend what is latterly recognized as sexist humour but, as a revisionist argument requires, to remind the reader of the original historical context within which this type of humour was, to some extent, socially acceptable for a short while. The change in tone of women-directed humour from cheeky to outright sexist or even misogynist eventually became a justified and major cause for concern.
[507] Hefner and Neimen came up with the name after observing that she was both "strictly feminine" and "a gremlin," thus "Femlin." See LeRoy Neiman, *LeRoy Neiman Femlin: 50th Anniversary Collection* (Milwaukie: Milwaukie Press, 2007), p. 3.

drawings.[508] Hefner was inspired to include Femlin as a tribute to an image he had always admired from a vintage drink book, *Bottoms Up*, of a nude lounging in a champagne glass (*fig.130*). "I wanted her to be the personal pixie of a bachelor," says Hefner, "similarly inclined to get into mischief [as would a gremlin] […] she is the girl of our dreams. You can put her in your pocket, but she won't stay there."[509] Neiman and Hefner speak of Femlin with great affection and devised her to provide comic relief in a cute inoffensive way.[510] However, the fact that Neiman studied children at play to create scenarios for her, coupled with her stripper garb and the occasional showing of pubic hair, makes for an uncomfortable representation.

By 1960 Hefner had also hired Alberto Vargas to contribute his dream-girl pin-up, the Vargas Girl, to the occasional issue. But central to the magazine was the photographed pin-up, the Playmate of the Month.[511] The Playmate was originally to be known by the more romantic moniker of "Sweetheart," which was changed just before publication to connote "fun and only temporary companionship."[512] As a young boy Hefner's feminine ideal was the Petty Girl, whose pictures he collected and stuck to his bedroom wall; something his strict Protestant mother disapproved of but turned a blind eye to.[513] Then as a college graduate, Hefner worked as a copywriter for a short while at *Esquire* in 1951 and was disappointed to find that "there weren't any Petty Girls working [there]."[514] Hefner generally felt let down by the men's magazine market that had abandoned the idealistic imagery of Petty and Vargas. According to Hanson he started up *Playboy* because "he was tired of seeing nothing but strippers in other men's titles."[515] This no doubt is a reference to the Robert Harrison ilk of men's magazine. Hefner thus set about creating a persona for the type of girl that would be associated with *Playboy* magazine that distanced itself from the tawdriness of the Harrison pin-ups. The women in his *Playboy* world would recall the wholesome beauty of *Esquire*'s illustrated girls but they

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[508] Neiman, p. 2.
[509] Neiman, pp. 168-169.
[510] Neiman's book celebrating his signature drawings accompanies one Femlin picture with these lines from Baudelaire: "When she is near I cannot say/What gives me such intense delight./She dazzles like the break of day/She comforts like the fall of night." Neiman, p. 167.
[511] Note that Alberto Vargas reclaimed his original surname – "Vargas" – when he worked for *Playboy.* Previously at *Esquire* he had unwittingly signed over the rights to his name, "Varga" (without the 's') to the publishers.
[512] Fraterrigo, p. 42.
[513] Watts, p. 32.
[514] Fraterrigo, p. 123.
[515] Hanson, p. 181.

would somehow be real, she was to give the impression that every young man would be likely to come across her at the office or on the street. She would be the beautiful "girl-next-door," someone within every man's reach and yet someone extraordinarily attractive (*fig.131*). The essence therefore, was on making her seem *real*: "The whole girl-next-door idea, [Hefner] noted […] 'was intended to make the Playmates more a part of real life for our readers.'"[516] The featured Playmates were given short biographies and were described as airline stewardesses, telephone operators, students, secretaries and so forth. The manner in which they were posed also suggested that it was a real-life action in which they were being caught on camera. This recalled the type of naturalistic poses Marilyn Monroe favoured, the *illusion* of the unposed, therefore adding to the context of the "reality" of the Playmate:

> important elements of fantasy went into the presentation of these "real" young women. The photos were artfully posed to create the *illusion* of being unposed. The texts accompanying the photos were verbal creations (often highly exaggerated) designed to enhance the "natural" quality of the Playmates' lives and underscore their sexual interest. Thus *Playboy* subtly created an erotic vision.[517]

Whilst the Playmate borrowed certain conventions of femininity from the more traditional pin-ups their "untouchable" quality was removed and replaced with the "naturalness" of the poses and the everyday-ness of the biographies:

> Instead of focusing on movie queens or showgirls, *Playboy* humanized the female pinup by presenting young women from everyday life who (at least theoretically) were attainable, non-intimidating, and possessed of a healthy sexual appetite. The Playmates were "attractive girls that we find all over America," Hefner explained […] Their typicality was matched by their modern attitudes. The *Playboy* centerfold [sic] appeared as an icon of sexual liberation in the 1950s, suggesting that, as Hefner liked to put it, "nice girls like sex, too."[518]

The humanizing of the pin-up was something that all pin-up artists of each generation had worked at, aiming to make their fantasy as tangible as possible. Hefner, as a pin-up creator, became part of this tradition. The very photographic

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[516] Quoted in Watts, p. 117.
[517] Watts, p. 117.
[518] Watts, p. 116.

element of his pin-up, and the tricks applied to making her seem more real convinced generations since the 1950s of the "reality" of such women, and through that seeming reality convincingly "normalized" the notion that there were thousands if not millions of women, possible living right next door, that were sexually available and perpetually turned-on.

Debates continue to rage about concerns for the type of femininity *Playboy* promotes. Concerning *Playboy* in the postwar period, cultural historian Elizabeth Fraterrigo does not defend Hefner's "man's-world" but with regards to the representation of women's sexuality, she finds it hard to deny that Hefner set out with good intentions. And Dian Hanson claims that, "Hefner has always been of the opinion that *Playboy* was liberating women from sexual repression." For Fraterrigo though, Helen Gurley Brown's book *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962), – a type of philosophy for the modern woman, which Gurley Brown famously applied to *Cosmopolitan* magazine, and the template of which continues to dominate most contemporary women's magazines – delineated the female counterpart to the *Playboy* playboy, as found in the magazine. It was groundbreaking for women *at the time*, to be told they should have sex lives before marriage, take up jobs, live alone in big cities and so forth. Gurley Brown was merely articulating what was left unsaid about women in *Playboy*. But she did come under criticism for directing the idea of self-cultivation ultimately towards the pursuit of men, and in that sense she fell inline with the part of *Playboy* that envisioned women as playthings.

More recently James K. Beggan and Scott T. Allison attempt to revise the image of Playmates as "tough women" in accordance with Sherrie Inness's articulation of strong images of women in culture, from her book *Tough Girls: Women Warriors and Wonder Women in Popular Culture* (1999).[519] They go through the biographies of hundreds of Playmates to find that, fundamentally, *Playboy* promotes a type of femininity in which the women are assertive, cultured, educated, strong-willed, out-doorsy, have overcome great hardships, and so, by posing nude, these "tough" women "contradict the Madonna/whore dichotomy that seems to govern societal views of women."[520] It is a unique and interesting perspective that further complexifies the argument of whether there

[519] See James K. Beggan, Scott T. Allison, 'Tough Women in the Unlikeliest of Places: The Unexpected Toughness of the *Playboy* Playmate', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 38, No. 5, 2005.
[520] Beggan, Allison, p. 813.

is alleged power in pin-up imagery, if not slightly naïve in its optimism. Furthermore they write:

> As counterintuitive as it might seem, *Playboy* magazine represents a unique means of socializing within the collective psyche of men, a new definition of femininity that includes, as a subtype, the tough woman. *Playboy* is an especially effective change agent because it appears embedded in an ideology consistent with dominant male patriarchy. As such, it is seen as representing the interests of men. Thus, when *Playboy* presents images of Playmates with tough elements, it encourages men to assimilate non-traditional images of women. In this fashion, then, *Playboy* acts as an effective means of altering stereotypes about women.[521]

In practice however, *Playboy* reflects the *fantasies* of men rather than presenting them with any challenge to preconceived notions about women. As has been repeatedly asserted in this thesis, the pin-up is a fantasy figure. Whilst the identity of the "tough" woman may be socialized "within the collective psyche of men" via *Playboy*, she is still fundamentally doing so nude, and therefore sexualized. But the argument does prompt the question of whether she is a sexualized subject or an object, which will be further discussed in chapter 6.

Hefner saw himself as a revolutionary when it came to representing sexuality: "that anti-sexual part of feminism is very antiquated and quite frankly was anti-revolutionary at the time," he is quoted as saying."[522] He claims to have been "a feminist before there was such a thing as feminism," and to have funded lower-court cases that led to the judgement of *Roe vs Wade* (1973).[523] Even Femlin has appeared alongside a NOW poster. And whilst the Playmate changed pin-up by changing her context with the inclusion of biographies, she remains a fantasy figure, possibly more damaging to the representation of female sexuality because of the way this photographic pin-up normalized such representations and made them seem real. The innocence of pin-up was fractured with the Playmate, and *Playboy* released the floodgates that would make pornographic representations of women the norm.[524] The professional

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[521] Beggan, Allison, p. 814.
[522] Hanson, pp. 227-228.
[523] *Roe vs Wade* (1973) is a statutory landmark US abortion case.
[524] Hefner is apparently dismayed by trashy reality shows in which mainly young women are encouraged to behave degradingly for the cameras. See Fraterrigo, pp. 213-214.

experiences of photographer Bunny Yeager are a testament to how pin-up changed after *Playboy* and its imitators came into competition with each other:

> I was finding it more difficult to sell my work in the late '70s than ever before. Editors were beginning to call me "old-fashioned." Glamour photography was more explicit then ever. One magazine even had the girls clip their pubic hair short and used a tiny, powerful spotlight just in that area to draw attention to the girl's vagina. I found it distasteful to compete any more to please this out-of-control market. Photos of women in men's magazines were no longer beautiful for me to look at. I didn't want to do that kind of photography. It was demeaning to women. The loveliness of a woman's body was gone and in its place was a type of cold clinical photography that only concentrated on the female sexual organs. I decided to put away my camera, at least for figure photography.[525]

By 1967 "men's magazines became pornography," with the ruling of the liberal Swedish parliament that ended obscenity laws and created a domino affect across Europe and the West.[526] The pin-up had become irrelevant in one fell swoop.

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[525] Yeager, p. 16.
[526] Dian Hanson, *Dian Hanson's History of Men's Magazines, Volume 5: 1970s At the Newsstand* (Köln: Taschen, 2005), p. 7.

Chapter 5.

Postwar Pin-Up II: Fetish Aesthetics, and the Challenge to Conservatism.

As the wholesome American pin-up image became ubiquitous, her impact was minimized. The pin-up's capacity to shock and her initial celebration of sexualized femininity were now significantly distanced from the imagery of *fin-de-siècle* Paris. Postwar American pin-up had become a full-blown generalized fad, no longer constrained to the work of a few talented artists within a limited number of media markets. The use of pin-up, or rather, the employment of pin-up aesthetics had turned into something of a media and advertising movement that could be used as a lazy attention-grabbing shortcut.[527] This deployment of pin-up aesthetics worked particularly well during the postwar period in the U.S. due to the prevailing political notion of conservatism.[528] Pin-up teased and toyed with conservative boundaries, which convinced the public of its waywardness and rebelliousness, resulting in many Americans buying into the image at the newsstands, at the cinema and department stores. "The 1940s and '50s were a time when sex was naughty, when there was something left to the imagination," writes Laura Mirsky in the 1990s, when the nostalgia for pin-up first emerged (see chapter 6). She goes on to say that it was a time when "sex was naughty but thrilling, when the girl next door still looked like one, when the *forbidden* world beckoned softly yet irresistibly [my italics]." [529] Pin-up imagery appears to have kept the postwar public on a hamster wheel of constant unsatiated sexual promise, significantly so in a political climate of conservatism.

It also gave the impression that pin-up, for women, was a will to power of sorts. Amateur photography took off in the postwar era and camera clubs "sprang up […] all over the country." [530] The exclusive glamour of the professional pin-up was thus made egalitarian with new and easy accessibility to photography. As Mirsky notes, amateur pin-up photographs at that time were

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[527] This is in contrast to Chéret's proto-pin-up attention-grabbing advertising technique, whereby his methods would prove to be pioneering as opposed to formulaic, as was the case with postwar advertising that employed erotic pin-up.
[528] See George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945* (Wilmington, Del: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1996).
[529] Laura Mirsky, *I Was A 1950's Pin-Up Model!: From the collection of Mark Rotenberg*, ed. Alan Betrock (Brooklyn, N.Y.: Shake Books, 1995), p. 4, p. 7.
[530] Mirsky, p. 6.

shot in people's houses, in offices or cheap motels, and the models themselves were, "housewives and mothers, nurses and waitresses, librarians and telephone operators, secretaries and dental hygienists […] engaging in the *forbidden fantasy* of showing off their charms for the camera [my italics]."[531] Whilst the idea of the "forbidden" appeared to propel this "homemade cheesecake" as Buszek labels it, it was also a major factor in the deterioration of the artistic quality, merits and overall standards of pin-up. An element of tawdriness and lewdness had crept into the aesthetics of pin-up, which had previously been underscored by demureness, modesty and, occasionally, sophistication. The "naughty but nice" tradition no longer held the capacity to shock and would be appropriated by the mainstream.

The mainstream saturation of the almost family-friendly pin-ups may have contributed significantly to the growing demand for more risqué imagery during the postwar period. Fetish pin-up photography had occasionally surfaced in the mainstream, such as in Robert Harrison's publications, or in comic book characters and on pulp fiction covers. Illustrated pin-up work by Eric Stanton, Gene Bilbrew and Bill Ward in particular, exemplified the increasing desire for the dirty, the dangerous and the domineering, or even – depending on one's perspective – the depraved. Most famously however, it was British artist John Coutts, aka John Willie, who set the standard for fetishistic pin-up aesthetics when his illustrations and photographs of restraint and bondage appeared in his magazine *Bizarre*. Additionally, New Yorkers Irving and Paula Klaw's custom-made fetish photographs elevated an underground pin-up star, one Bettie Page, to iconic status and forever changed the path of pin-up art.

Even before the sub-cultural movement however, fetishism was not completely alien to pin-up aesthetics. In fact, it almost defines pin-up in principle when considered in the context of the *ukiyo-e* attention to detail, the minutely and exquisitely drawn hands and feet of the Petty and Varga(s) Girls (mimicking the wonderment of the erotic Chinese tradition of the Golden Lotus), and the impossibly thin waists of all pin-ups denoting an "invisible corset" effect (evocative of the "perverse" Victorian tight-lacers) as a defining feature. It would be the *accoutrements* of the fetishistic style of pin-up – high-heeled boots and shoes, tight-lacing, rubber and leather outfits, uniforms, whips, chains, ropes and gags – that would make fetish more obvious in terms of pin-up imagery.

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[531] Ibid.

The fetish pin-up girl drew on the mystery and malevolence of the stereotype of the *femme fatale*. Her contemporaneous psychoanalytic interpretation was along the lines of the Freudian understanding of the Phallic Woman.[532] But above all she represented a challenge to conservative values about women in postwar America, imbuing pin-up imagery with traditional signifiers of (masculine) power. Fetishistic pin-up established the enduring image of the dominatrix (or domme) whose perceived power is debatable, but, set up an appealing alternative image to the passive wholesomeness of the mainstream pin-up. This perceived power of the dominatrix image is something that wasn't fully identified or acknowledged until the second-wave feminist and postfeminist eras when empowerment could be refigured and reinscribed in fetish images, including those of Bettie Page.[533]

Fetishism also raises the issue of race: the appearance (or lack) of black and ethnic women in pin-up, conjured up ideas of a "second skin" in fetish fashions through the representation of the actual skin of the Other. These types of images have led many observers to read fetish as the "dark side" of pin-up, but this would be inaccurate. In the genealogy of pin-up, fetishistic tendencies always existed and were faintly visible in mainstream imagery, the difference was that sometime in the 1930s, overtly fetishistic imagery appeared to splinter off, forming its own subgenre. One of the most significant characteristics of fetish pin-up – and this will be the main issue under discussion in this chapter – is the way it challenged traditional norms and conservative values.

Fetishism, Freud and the sexologists.

In Latin the word *facticium* means "artificial" and is the root of the Portuguese name *feitico* by which heretical talismans were known in the Middle Ages, associating the word with the worship of inanimate objects, as well as denoting bewitchment and mystical charms. It is the word from which *fetish* derives, the English language equivalent, which came into usage in the seventeenth century to describe the use of objects in West Africa for purposes of "enchantment."[534]

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[532] The Phallic Woman is a female, whom the male perceives to retain a phantasmagoric phallus, thus laying the ground for the formation of a fetish. See Sigmund Freud 'Fetishism', *Sigmund Freud: On Sexuality,* ed. by Angela Richards, trans. by James Strachey (London: Penguin Books, 1977, 1991), pp. 351-357.

[533] Camille Paglia would go on to critically appraise popstar Madonna's fetishistic and dominant "look" in the 1990s (see chapter 6).

[534] Lorraine Gammen, Merja Makinen, *Female Fetishism: A New Look* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1994), pp. 14-15.

According to cultural historians Lorraine Gamman and Merja Makinen, there are three main categories through which fetishism is understood: anthropological fetishism, commodity fetishism and sexual fetishism. Anthropological fetishism was the first instance in which Western Europe came to understand fetishism in terms of "idolatry and witchcraft," since this was how Portuguese travellers perceived traditional African rituals. Through this understanding, anthropological fetishism became aligned with religious relics and objects, or, in the same vein, fandom artifacts or lovers' mementos. The significant link between all these objects is that they serve as substitutes for something desired which is absent: the saint/god, the filmstar/popstar, the lover. The object takes on a kind of power or mystical/magical aspect that would not ordinarily be attributed to an inanimate object.

Commodity fetishism was most famously brought forward as a concept by Karl Marx in volume one of *Das Kapital* (1867), marrying the concept of eighteenth-century fetishism with his contemporary observations on the rise of the commodity form. "The fetishism of the commodity," claim Gamman and Makinen:

> is more than the attribution of magical powers to an inanimate object; it also involves what we would describe as a disavowel of human labour, a displacement of value from the people who produce things onto the things themselves. In the language of Marx, the commodity 'hides' the reality of human labour.[535]

They highlight Marx's observation that the concept of value in relation to the commodity "hides" its "real social relations" from which the commodity was borne. They also refer to Thorstein Veblen's theory of the signifying characteristics of consumer goods from *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) as deriving from this idea, as well as Georg Lukacs's concept of "reification" from *History and Class Consciousness* (1923). These studies all emphasize an important underlying characteristic of commodity fetishism: it is a term that captures "cultural processes of mystification and reification."[536]

Parallels can be drawn between this Marxist concept and the way fetish pin-up operates. This particular type of pin-up combines the fetishization of the consumer product alongside the eroticization and fetishization of the body.

[535] Gammen, Makinen, p. 28.
[536] Gammen, Makinen, p. 31.

Freud is also helpful here. Gammen and Makinen summarise his definition of sexual fetishism "as occurring when an inanimate object or part of the body becomes the focus of arousal in preference to a body."[537] The meaning, or more succinctly, the manner in which "fetish" would come to be understood in the latter half of the twentieth century would retain its relation to objects (commodities) and their mystical charm(s), but the essence of the word would become associated with the psychopathological and the sexual, especially in postwar American society. This would be unmistakably reflected in a range of cultural formats, from extreme examples in specialist magazines and under-the-counter (illegal) pin-ups, to watered-down, pop-cultural versions in comics, film, fashion and other visual paraphernalia. Fashion historian Valerie Steele describes the manner in which fetishism became absorbed into postwar style:

> After the Second World War, a climate of conservatism seems increasingly to have forced individual fetishists "underground." Yet the mainstream fashions of the 1950s contain a number of fetishistic elements. In particular, Christian Dior's New Look of 1947 brought modified corsetry back into fashion. In addition to foundation garments, such as the "waspy" and "merry widow," fashions such as the stiletto heel, the petticoat, and the pointed brassiere also flourished. Indeed, later generations of fetishists tend to look back on the 1950s as a sort of "silver age" of fetishism, inferior only to the golden age of the Victorians.[538]

Indeed, publishers of erotic magazines such as Robert Harrison and especially Leonard Burtman, built their entire aesthetic around the fetishistic underwear and lingerie of 1950s fashion (*fig.132*).

In the domain of the mainstream Robert Harrison's *Humorama* pin-up magazines were the first to visibly and playfully enact fetishistic tropes and stereotypes in its pages. This "discovery" of fetishism in the men's magazine trade was down to the personal reading interests of one of the editors at

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[537] Gammen, Makinen, p. 37. However as Robert A. Nye asserts, before the psychiatric profession seized upon categorizing fetishism it was during the degeneration crisis in France (see chapter 2) that initial concerns regarding fetishism were being raised, as linked to male impotence and, ostensibly, the drop in population figures: "the concept of fetishistic perversion first arose in French psychiatry and was only later integrated into psychiatric nosologies elsewhere, including that of Sigmund Freud." Robert A. Nye, 'The Medical Origins of Sexual Fetishism,' *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse,* ed. Emily Apter, William Pietz (Ithica; London: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 14.

[538] Valerie Steele, *Fetish: Fashion, Sex & Power* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996, 1997) p. 54.

Harrison's company, "an educated gal well-versed on Krafft-Ebing," according to journalist Tom Wolfe:

> It was she who sold Harrison on the idea of fetishism, such as the six-inch spiked-heel shoes, and the eroticism of backsides or of girls all chained up and helpless, or girls whipping the hides off men and all the rest of the esoterica of the Viennese psychologists that so thoroughly pervades the girlie magazines today.[539]

The Viennese sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing initially connected fetishism with criminal/sexual obsession in his *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886). Besides pathologizing fetishism, he is also thought to be the first to describe a perverse phenomenon: that of a woman making a man submit to her within a sexual scenario, Krafft-Ebing labelled "a woman who towered over [a man] sexually" a "Domina."[540] Similarly, in postwar American popular culture the sexually dominant shady lady – or *femme fatale* – became a staple of *film noir*, comic book characterizations, detective novels and pulp fiction. The *femme fatale* was informed by Krafft-Ebing's pathologizing of the Domina and his interpretations of terminology such as "masochism" and "sadism."

However, it was Alfred Binet who in 'Le Fetichisme dans l'amour' (1887), clearly outlined the difference between anthropological and sexual fetishism – and coined the term "sexual fetishism" – thus distancing the term "fetishism" from Freud's phallocentric outlining of extreme (orthodox) fetishism, whereby sexual stimulation from an object is preferred to that of a person.[541] Sexologist Paul H. Gebhard, co-author of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), attempted to refine Freud's idea that some degree of fetishism occurs in all human sexual responses. Gebhard outlined four stages of sexual fetishism, ranging from slight fetishistic preferences to outright fetishistic preference. Gamman and Makinen claim that this understanding of fetishism not only helps dissociate sexual fetishism from the pathological connotations Freud implicated it in, especially with regards to women, but also clarifies the difference between

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[539] Wolfe, p. 187.
[540] Edward Shorter, *Written in the Flesh: A History of Desire* (Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 2005), p. 214.
[541] Gammen, Makinen, pp. 38-39. Gammen and Makinen are in agreement with Freud's interpretation of fetishism in regards to his theory that some degree of fetishism occurs in all human sexual responses. However, they take exception to his definitions of what he terms "normal" love (as opposed to abnormal or perverse) and his pathologising of fetishism. They propose that researcher Paul Gebhard's "stages" more accurately reflect how sexual fetish responses actually occur.

the eroticization of parts of the body and actual sexual fetishism.[542] In effect, the varying stages of fetishism are represented throughout the genealogy of pin-up imagery, from the tiny waists of late-nineteenth-early-twentieth-century "pretty girl" art, to the full-blown second skin body suit renderings of John Coutts by the mid-twentieth century.

Nevertheless, Freud's works were increasingly available in the English. Freud's popularity among high-profile followers, such as Princess Marie Bonaparte, as well as a general audience, ensured that his basic tenets proliferated in wider culture. In the popular press and in instructional books, social commentators such as Philip Wylie in *A Generation of Vipers* (1942); Margaret Mead in *Male and Female* (1949); and Frederic Wertham in *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954) expanded on his key principles. In addition, his work heavily influenced art since the Surrealist movement; even postwar illustrators drew on superficial popularized notions of sexology, psychoanalysis and psychopathology when they contributed representational artwork for pulp cover art or comic book panels. Indeed, Freud's pathologizing of sexual fetishism came to characterize much of 1950s popular visual culture, especially the idea of the narcissism and masochistic tendencies of women. These supposed tendencies inform, for instance, certain renderings of the *femme fatale*.

Historian Mary P. Ryan observes how: "in the course of the '30s and '40s several of Freud's followers went to work transcribing the master's theories regarding women into an elaborate doctrine. Freud's hypothesis of the crippled sexuality of woman was taken as gospel truth."[543] She explains further:

> The elaboration and popularization of Freudian psychology had by the 1950s reduced female sexuality to passive compliance with the needs of her husband.
>
> Such passivity meshed nicely with other central feminine characteristics: narcissism and masochism. If woman's satisfaction came from submitting to a man's lust, she would crave his advances primarily as testimony to her own sexual desirability, a highly narcissistic mode of pleasure.[544]

As argued in the previous chapter, such renderings of female sexuality may appear consistently in the popular press and other forms of media, but it does

[542] Gamman, Makinen, p. 38.
[543] Mary P. Ryan, *Womanhood in America: From Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), p. 278.
[544] Ryan, p. 283.

not follow that the objects of such representation – women – did not question or challenge such representations. Still, these images of female sexuality and character circulated in visual culture, taking their cue from Freudian concepts. Perhaps one of the most classic examples of this type of dissemination is found in Alfred Hitchcock films. Specifically, in *Vertigo* (1958), the character of John (James Stewart) is a model of psychopathological fetishism when he becomes fixated on altering the appearance of his current lover Madeleine (Kim Novak) to resemble his past lover Judy (who, in the event, turns out to be the same person). Along with Tippi Hedren and Grace Kelly, Novak's character(s) is one of Hitchcock's "frigid" Freudian ice-maidens. This is just one example among many in Hitchcock's oeuvre. The point is that to the uninitiated, such popular culture depictions were superficially understood and they affected the way postwar society came to (mistakenly) conceive of psychopathology. In particular, during this era fetishists were generally stigmatized and considered abnormal. As Valerie Steele notes, this forced fetishists to pursue their pleasures in "underground" society for fear of being labelled.

Edward Shorter observes that the "concept of fetish was taking time to crystallize in the sexual imagination. But the underlying fetish impulse had been roused by the new *fin-de-siècle* sexuality."[545] The European sexologists at the turn-of-the-century increasingly noticed that shoe and boot fetishists were among the most common types. In England, pornographic material regularly featured images and stories of flagellation and dominating women, and by 1923 *London Life* magazine catered to such tastes in the mainstream by glamorizing high-heels and boots and tight-lacing (*fig.133*).[546] Most importantly, Berlin was at this time "fetish heaven": prostitutes were regularly seen to be wearing boots as a "sexual come-on" and were fully prepared with whips and restraints at their apartments.[547] In 1930s America the domme had "become a crisply delineated figure in the erotic imagination."[548] Leather and heeled boots played a major part in the signification of the dominating woman, who appeared in this way, according to Shorter, as "totally for the male pornographic imagination."[549]

This pornographic imaging carried through into the postwar period and the apotheosis of this dominating woman would be found in the Klaw

[545] Shorter, p. 221.
[546] Shorter, p. 223.
[547] Ibid.
[548] Shorter, p. 224.
[549] Ibid.

photographs featuring Bettie Page. Page's pin-up shots, especially the fetish images in which she overlays her coquettish facial expressions with irony, have retroactively come to be perceived as postfeminist iconography on the basis that they portray Bettie embracing her body and her sexuality, something that almost went unnoticed at the time. During the 1950s, the Klaws' fetish photographs were sold only to a few men who had specifically commissioned them, or to those who knew of their existence. Their lack of circulation would have ensured their status of pornography for men, had they not been the focus of critical evaluation. If the photos were considered a triumph of female empowerment at the time they were taken, it would have purely been a personal one for the subject/model. Yet, the images provide some evidence that the Klaws, their commissioners, as well as Bettie Page and perhaps some of the other models, saw this type of sexuality as a challenge to conservative norms and values. This sentiment would be disseminated in popular culture by a group of artists and photographers connected to this underground scene, who slipped fetishistic elements into the mainstream through comics and pulp fiction artwork.

Risqué illustration and the influence of John Coutts.

"Fetishes are mechanical contrivances that add to the enjoyment of sex. 'Mechanical' may be understood as a piece of clothing or a technique of restraint, something that nature itself does not originally bring to the sex scene".[550] This definition given by Shorter is how fetishism would mostly be understood – to those in the know – from the postwar period onwards. The person who best illustrated – literally – fetishist tastes was John Alexander Scott Coutts, the "Leonardo da Vinci of Fetish" according to fetish photographer Eric Kroll.[551] When the idea of sexual fetishism crystallized, the accompanying imagery of its pleasures also emerged, in the secret society of fetishists. Coutts's personal tastes were, according to Dian Hanson's overly Freudian interpretation, down to his coming-of-age at the turn-of-the-century when corsetry and hobble skirts were "in full flower during his sexually formative

[550] Shorter, p. 218.
[551] Eric Kroll, *John Willie's Best of Bizarre*, ed. Eric Kroll (Köln: Taschen, 2001), p. 6.

years" combined with his British public schooling whereby he was taught "the pleasures of the cane."[552]

Coutts was an exceedingly talented artist whose work embraced the traditional attention to realism and minute detail typical of the illustrations of the most accomplished of pin-up artists. He is thought to have been influenced by the illustration style of René Giffey (*fig.134&135*) whose work had been published in *Fantasio* and *Le Sourire* in the 1920s, and by Carlo, whose artwork for the cover of Alan Mac Clyde's novel *Le Cuir Triumphant* from the early 1930s is believed to depict the "earliest pornographic visualizations of the domme," standing in a doorway wielding a whip (*fig.136*).[553] Whilst Coutts's subject matter could justifiably be interpreted and dismissed as misogynist, upon close inspection of his illustrations, it seems apparent that the attention given to rendering such delicate femininity and eroticism betrays a man in thrall to women's bodies and their sexuality. Of course, this does not relieve such imagery from the (ir)responsibility of reinforcing the traditional gender norm that women are equated to their bodies in the symbolic order; still, there is something significant about the fact that there is no intention to humiliate but rather to revere the female (form). Reverence for the female form, within the capacity of fantasy, underlies all pin-up imagery throughout its genealogy. From a cultural historical perspective in which pin-up can never be "politically correct" and women's "embodiment" is *the* issue, Coutts's artwork magnifies the unstable threshold in pin-up where the awe of this fantasy begins to give way to obsession with/fetishization of the body.

Coutts was influenced by fairy stories that had inspired his drawings as a child and "developed an attraction for 'damsels in distress'," according to publisher J.B. Rund.[554] In this respect Coutts may have been inspired by the movie serials of his youth such as *The Perils of Pauline* (*fig.137*).[555] Produced by Theodore and Leopold Wharton, this serial is thought to be responsible for establishing the cliché of the damsel in distress (usually tied to a train track by a

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[552] Hanson, *Dian Hanson's: The History of Men's Magazines, Volume 2*, pp. 111-114.
[553] Shorter, p. 224.
[554] J.B. Rund, 'Introduction', *The Adventures of Sweet Gwendoline*, John Willie (New York: A Bélier Press Book, Second Edition, 1999), p. vi.
[555] Pilcher, p. 121. Coutts himself claims he was not aware of *The Perils of Pauline* until he moved to the U.S., see *The Adventures of Sweet Gwendoline,* p. 24.

thin-mustachioed villain) in the popular imagination.[556] By Coutts's own admission, in his interview given to the Kinsey Institute, he said:

> To me the sight of a woman tied up is always sexually intriguing. My own particular urge was to rescue her. I don't know why this made me sexually excited. I didn't want to go and rape her. I wanted to rescue her.[557]

That the image of a woman in peril inspired a heroic "masculine" response in Coutts is revealing: in this respect, he reacted to the defenceless woman image in the way First World War propagandists had hoped male viewers would respond to their posters.

Coutts had been a reader of *London Life* in the 1920s and he started publishing his own magazine, *Bizarre* (1946-1956), in a similar vein to that publication, catering to fetishistic fantasies and tastes, for the most part his own (*fig.138*). *Bizarre* was his "hobby" and he filled it with his own artwork and photography, initially using his wife Holly Anna Faram as general model and muse until their eventual separation. The work was a personal passion, and making money out of it was such a secondary issue that after two years Coutts could no longer afford to put it out. He subsequently suspended publishing until 1951 when he had gathered the funds to resume his hobby. Finances, however, were not even the biggest threat to pursuing his passion, more so was the risk of being found out. He created a pseudonym, "John Willie," under the protection of which he operated. The clandestine manner in which he sought models included setting himself up at a bar in New York that shared an entrance with the next-door drugstore, where he would deposit a stack of his magazines and observe any women who might pick one up out of interest.[558] The actual magazine had to get past beady-eyed censors, so Willie employed humourous comments to offset the severity of some of the bondage images, including the one of a blindfolded woman in a black leather straitjacket with the epithet: "for peace in the home" (*fig.139*).[559]

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[556] Mike Dash, *The First Family Terror, Extortion and the Birth of the American Mafia* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2009), p. 10.
[557] Willie, p. 23.
[558] Kroll, *Best of Bizarre,* p. 6.
[559] Geoffrey Wagner also observed about *Bizarre* that: "There is a photographic series, 'Don't Let This Happen To You – learn ju jitsu, the art of self-defence,' excusing pictures of girls tied up in various positions." Wagner, p. 142.

But Coutts became most well-known for his illustrated serialization in *Wink* magazine with the comic-caper creation *Sweet Gwendoline* (*fig.140*). This serialization encompassed all of Coutts's passions: the angelic and buxom damsel-in-distress (Gwendoline), who was unable to stay out of trouble, and thus often found herself tied up or restrained in a number of inventive ways by the *femme fatale*/domme figure U-69, or the malevolent mustachioed Sir d'Arcy. Within the witty and erotic *misé-en-scene* of this illustrated adventure story, wasp waists and leather high-heeled boots were a fixture, as were scenes of flagellation all set against a nostalgic 1920s backdrop, probably inspired by *London Life* and the movie serials of that time. In his interview for the Kinsey Institute Coutts explained:

> I know that a lot of people liked pictures of bondage as a result of reading *London Life*, and so the simplest way I thought I could produce these pictures, in keeping with the law of the land in regard to obscenity, etc, was producing an old fashioned cartoon and that was it […] The old fashioned melodrama has always amused me intensely and always delighted me […] *Gwendoline* is a perfectly clean, wholesome cartoon [.][560]

But Irving Klaw, who had also commissioned a serial from Coutts, disagreed with the latter's boundaries of acceptability, or more accurately, lawfulness. Klaw, always vigilant about erring on the side of the law, had a young artist named Eric Stanton paint over depictions of whip marks and nudity in Coutts's work, something Stanton was respectfully reluctant to do. Stanton was a "draw for hire" and had to adhere to Klaw's directives, but the experience exposed him to the masterfulness of Coutts's work.

Eventually, Coutts died in 1962, but was prolific until the end. His illustration style and bondage themes drew the admiration of many artists like Stanton, who came across his work through *Bizarre,* the Klaws' Movie Star News business, or through Harrison's titles. The essence of his depictions of BDSM and the domme/*femme fatale* figure trickled into the work of the next generation of illustrators whose main subject was the brazenly sexual woman, most evident in the work of Eric Stanton, Bill Ward, and Gene Bilbrew. Stanton started out at the Klaws' Movie Star News drawing "'fighting girls' and women in

[560] Willie, pp. 23-24.

bondage."[561] He shared an apartment with *The Amazing Spider-Man* creator Steve Ditko during the 1960s and the two influenced each other's work.[562] Not unusually, fetish imagery and comics had a symbiotic relationship, especially in depictions of pneumatic women in skin-tight revealing clothing and impossibly high heels. Stanton himself later published a parody of *Wonder Woman* (also originally heavily fetish-influenced) entitled *Blunder Broad and the Princkazons*. The "princks," as Stanton called them, were women with penises, which he was regularly commissioned to draw. They represented, Stanton said, "the true domination of man."[563] Stanton's pin-up type was "big-breasted, small-waisted, long legs in high heels, strong jaw line, high cheekbones, fiery eyes and cascading hair." His style was distinctive and the domineering woman with the ridiculously overblown curves was his specialist subject (*fig.141*). Eric Kroll suggests that he "illustrated peoples' fantasies (and a few of his own) […] working the outer edges of our collective sexual imagination."[564]

Such depictions of women fit in with the philosophy of publisher Leonard Burtman who produced *Exotique*, a magazine in the ilk of *Bizarre*. Burtman's mission statement claimed: "We shall break through the dull curtain of *convention* and travel into the realm of fancy and self-expression wherein so many men and women find refuge from drab *conventionalism*" [my italics].[565] This was clearly a rally call to fellow fetishists and a hint that dominant women were the way of the future. Burtman also published the work of Gene Bilbrew who, like Stanton, favoured depicting statuesque dominating women in his serials (*fig.142*). In his strip *Camper Capers* published from the late 1950s to early 1960s, Bilbrew featured "sissyfication" and "humiliation of male college boys blackmailed into being slaves to their domineering fellow female students."[566] Bill Ward meanwhile developed a distinctive style of illustration quite his own using Conté crayon with black ink, putting the Conté white to the unique task of highlighting and exaggerating even further the lustrous hair, oversized breasts and bulging thighs of his Amazonian women (*fig.143*). His were showgirls and mistresses, having held in his mind the real-life vision of an entertainer he saw whilst in the army. She made such an impression on him

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[561] Eric Kroll, *Eric Stanton: For The Man Who Knows His Place* (Köln: Taschen, 1997), p. 6.
[562] Kroll, *Stanton,* p. 7.
[563] Kroll, *Stanton,* p. 13.
[564] Kroll, *Stanton,* p. 6.
[565] Pilcher, p. 129.
[566] Ibid.

that he drew a version of her ever after.[567] However, there are clear parallels between his pin-ups and Eric Stanton's anatomies, whilst the apparel of seamed stockings, spiked high-heels, opera-length gloves and "second skin" clothing were fetishistic.

These types of renderings of women were not pin-ups in the strict sense of the Second World War centrefolds. However, as Coutts himself admitted, the context of serials and cartoons served more as a ruse to make available images of sexy women by way of getting them past the censors. Naturally the pin-up aesthetic in this way began to dissipate into various visual genres, which Coutts had refashioned for a whole new generation of pin-up. Buszek views the fetishist magazines such as *Bizarre, Fantastique* and *High Heels* as "counterculture" material in that they presented a model of femininity distinct from the wholesomeness idealized in *Playboy.* The fetish pin-up was "difficult" and "sexually aggressive," hinting at the representation of personal power evident in the pin-ups of the Second World War: "*Bizarre* countered Playmates' wholesomeness and accessibility by idealizing the commanding and sexually aggressive (read: "difficult") woman in its pin-ups."[568] The Difficult Woman in this sense is an exaggerated and outwardly more severe version of the subtle and sultry *femme fatale* figure. She is subcultural, and eventually became a pop-cultural, figuration of the psychopathological Domina. She can appear to present yet another "transgressive" female sexual image, associated with power and liberation, yet she also represents male sexual fantasies of domination. Ultimately then, it is her ambiguity – as with most pin-up images – that continues to fascinate, especially in contemporary kitsch and retro popular culture (see chapter 6).

The subcultural fetish pin-ups were unlikely to have been viewed by many women, particularly since they were certainly not mainstream, yet the fetish pin-up *aesthetics* would find their way into the mainstream via pulp covers and comic books. "Pin-up" would come to encompass all Sexual/Difficult Woman renderings in magazines and newspaper strips, comics, pulp covers, photographic pin-up and fetish imagery, where the attention was overtly given over to their erotic or sexual characterization. Furthermore, the imagery of such

[567] Hanson, *The History of Men's Magazines, Vol. 3*, p. 161.
[568] Buszek, p. 244.

excesses, coupled with the superficial psychobabble of the era, made such depictions susceptible to spilling into the realm of violent imagery.

Pulp art: women-in-peril and *femme fatales*.

When, in the early 1950s, television became culturally dominant, the print industry suffered a loss of revenue from advertisers who redirected their investments from magazines to TV. In turn, this change affected the employment of illustrators who were now forced to spread their talents across a spectrum of visual media jobs, creating artwork for annual reports, record covers, motion picture posters, books and paperback novels.[569] Artists Stanton, Ward and Bilbrew were among those who put in time as pulp cover illustrators – the lowest of illustration jobs. Pulp fiction was considered throwaway storytelling, and its artwork wasn't taken any more seriously. Most original paintings for pulp fiction covers were disposed of, with only a few by the most famous artists saved for auction. Some were inadvertently saved by publishing companies for the purpose of reusing the canvases.[570]

Part of the stigma attached to pulp art stemmed from its ultimate aim: to compete for and to catch potential buyers' attention at the newsstands.[571] These covers had to be sensational and eye-catching enough to stand out amongst dozens of rival covers, and that usually meant depicting scenes of vulgarity, licentiousness and violence:

> For the publisher the newsstands were a jungle out there, and he expected the cover artist to clear a path for his magazines [...] [the cover was] what grabbed the eye, made you buy the magazine, and stayed with you in your imagination as you read the story.[572]

The pressure to grab the eye would intensify from the 1930s until the mid-1950s, which explains why artists were not entirely proud of this type of work.

The genealogy of the pulps can be traced back to the "story papers" of the late 1800s in America. They were once-a-week newspapers, such as the *New York Fireside Companion*, that published family-friendly serialized fiction featuring characters such as Buffalo Bill or Nick Carter. At the turn-of-the-

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[569] Reed, *Illustrator in America*, p. 305.
[570] Frank M. Robinson, Lawrence Davidson, *Pulp Culture: The Art of Fiction Magazines* (Portland: Collectors Press, 2007), p. 13.
[571] Robinson, Davidson, pp. 9-10.
[572] Robinson, Davidson, pp. 10-13.

century the story papers were replaced by the dime novels, often aimed at a readership of young boys. Eventually they too would be replaced by the cheaply produced "all-fiction magazines" or "pulps," so-called because they were printed on rough wood-pulp paper. The pulps were published in clearly defined genres, such as detective stories in *Black Mask* – which published hardboiled fiction such as Dashiell Hammett's *The Maltese Falcon* – and adventure stories such as *Tarzan of the Apes* in *All-Story*. There were even semi-pornographic under-the-counter pulps sold to men that contained "rotogravure inserts of slightly overweight nudes […] and off-color jokes," the milder of which were titles such as *Parisienne* and *Saucy Stories.*[573] In this way the pulp publishers covered an enormous readership with something for everyone, a feat household magazines such as *Collier's* simply could not achieve through publishing a variety of short story genres in each issue:

> the "pulps," were all-fiction magazines that specialized in short stories and serials running the gamut from westerns and mysteries to love stories and science-fiction. Everybody read them, from young women entranced by romantic tales that invariably ended happily to teenage boys who smuggled the magazines into bed at night to read about the Wild West or the mountains of Mars.[574]

The first pulp is thought to be *Argosy* created by Frank A. Munsey in the early 1890s. Its success was staggering due mainly to its cheap production which encouraged many imitators and competitors, establishing a market which would reach its zenith in the 1930s, by which time story content and cover art had become increasingly sensationalized. This tipping point in sensationalist cover art is believed to have been initiated by publisher Henry Steeger of Popular Publications, when on a trip to Paris in the early 1930s he attended the Grand Guginol Theater, famed for its vivid depictions of torture and murder. Thereafter he was motivated to turn his magazine into a pulp – *Dime Mystery* – of gothic mystery stories of terror and sadism, with cover art to complement such ilk of tales. Its success instigated a trend amongst the entire pulp cover art industry:

> The new formula was to show a woman about to be butchered or in the process of being tortured or whipped […] The formula was unique, eyebrow-raising – and successful […] With time the girls

[573] Robinson, Davidson, p. 119.
[574] Robinson, Davidson, p. 16.

> on the front cover wore increasingly less, and the scenes of torture became more graphic. [575]

This free reign of misogynistic violence did not go unnoticed and by the 1940s – at which point such imagery reached its extreme heights – Mayor Fiorello La Guardia managed to restrict such content on the covers of magazines (*fig.144*). That this type of imagery went by uncensored for a short while speaks of the naivety with which it was executed and represents the insensitivity to, or rather the ignorance of, women's issues at the time. But crucially it also points to a society becoming increasingly impervious to violence in the era directly following the Second World War.

Pulp art thus pioneered a type of women-in-peril art in popular culture, whereby notions of violence and sex combined in a gothic or sinister setting for entertainment purposes (as opposed to the First World War damsel-in-distress theme that was utilized on propagandist posters as scare-mongering). Writer Robert Lesser describes these scenes as: "Story-telling art in motion, like a still photograph taken from the middle of a movie, stop-action at the crisis point," thus giving the viewer a sense of involvement in the scene.[576] The woman-in-peril was usually the focus of a contextual eroticized violent scene in mid-action and in immanent danger. Illustrator Margaret Brundage's work on *Weird Tales* perhaps best personifies this type of women-in-peril-art. She excelled at including subtle fetishistic flourishes in her paintings, such as scenes of restraint and flagellation.[577] Brundage just about got away with it in her depictions of women-in-peril as they conveyed something reminiscent of classical nude studies (*fig.145*). Women on the covers of pulps were increasingly depicted as sexualized and erotic, Robinson and Davidson remark on how by the 1930s they "looked like calendar pin-ups."[578] This was clearly the case with the various genres within the *Spicy* catalogue: *Spicy Detective, Spicy Mystery, Spicy Adventure, Spicy Western Stories*, which had extra illustrations inside the magazines – an unusual inclusion for pulps that operated on a low-cost/high-returns basis (*fig.146*). Obviously in this case, publishers Harry Donenfeld and Frank Armer must have been confident that they would make back the extra

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[575] Robinson, Davidson, pp. 100-103.
[576] Robert Lesser, *Pulp Art: Original Cover Paintings for the Great American Pulp Magazines* (New York: Gramercy Books, 1997), p. 17.
[577] Lesser, p. 110.
[578] Robinson, Davidson, p. 115.

costs. “They adopted the action formats of other pulps and combined them with heated sex. They paid the highest rates and attracted artists willing to paint sex and violence,” claims Lesser.[579] The ultimate selling point for the *Spicy* titles was less the fiction and more the depictions of “heaving bosoms,” “fleshy thighs” and “transparent wisps of clothing.”[580] The *Spicy* titles encapsulated titillation in its highest form (*fig.147*). Lesser expresses it best when he suggests that, “one word defines […] all of Spicy art: *no*. Each cover is a picture of female resistance; man, the hunter, is aroused by the chase.”[581]

Clearly then, as the term “no” suggests, the underlying sentiment in the images that combined violence with female eroticism implied the victimhood of women. These women were most unlike the *femme fatales*, who could be viewed as multi-faceted in both the stories of hardboiled detective fiction, and the cover art in which they could be seen brandishing guns – as signifiers of masculine power – or wearing their excessive erotic sexual demeanour as a type of protective armour. Yet writer Woody Haut claims that within the stories these women merely reflect male fantasy and obsession and ultimately women’s victimized position in society. Their beauty “indicated inner ugliness” and their displayed sexuality was a threat which in turn reflected a wider anxiety about independent women in the real world. The pulp culture of “private dicks” during the Cold War reflected a society immersed in an “egoistic voyeurism” that “permutated into something more onanistic but no less misogynistic.”[582]

More recently however, critics have challenged this rather tired view. Helen Hanson and Catherine O’Rawe, for instance, recognize in the figure of the *femme fatale*, “a perennial site of uncertainty” who is “always beyond definition.”[583] It isn’t that Haut’s claims are unfounded but, there are subtle signs of female eroticism associated with the *femme fatale* figure that do quite different things. Hanson and O’Rawe have focused attention on the “terminal ambiguity” of the *femme fatale*’s “active sexuality, her narrative agency, her ‘visual centrality’ […] and, conversely, the problematic nature of this sexual ‘power’.” They have also rightly pointed out that “critics have decried her role as

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[579] Lesser, p. 97.
[580] Robinson, Davidson, p. 122.
[581] Lesser, p. 103.
[582] Woody Haut, *Pulp Culture: Hardboiled Fiction and the Cold War* (London; New York: Serpent’s Tail, 1995), pp. 106-109.
[583] Helen Hanson, Catherine O’Rawe, ed., *The Femme Fatale: Images, Histories, Contexts* (Palgrave Macmilla, 2010), p. 1.

textual fantasy, and interrogated the enduring stereotype of the sexually powerful woman as a 'symptom of male fears about feminism'."[584]

The *femme fatale* of the 1940s was more successfully able than her late-nineteenth-century predecessor to demonstrate a controversial anti-authoritarian sentiment with her obvious and brazen exhibition of sexualized femininity, thus flouting conservative values. The same interpretation could be applied to the more fetishistically inclined Difficult Woman figure, who vied with the *femme fatale* at the time for attention on pulp covers.

To exclusively link sexualized femininity with male fantasy is to neglect the fantasy lives of women, both heterosexual and homosexual. In an age in which women's sexual desires were largely repressed – or at the very least brought to the point of brinkmanship, to use Elaine Tyler May's terminology – outside the institution of marriage, the *femme fatale* and Difficult Woman figures potentially provided avatars upon which dissatisfied women could project their curbed longings. Not only that but, if these figures did indeed serve as avatars, then they also reflected the oppressive nature of postwar American conservatism and revealed a willingness to defy it. Film historian Elizabeth Cowie observes that: "The fantasy of the woman's dangerous sexuality is a feminine as well as masculine fantasy, and its pleasures lie precisely in its forbiddenness."[585] Later on in the 1950s and 1960s, the pulps provided an alternative voice in terms of representations of women's sexuality. Both the standard pulps and the non-fiction pulps depicted lesbian love trysts in stories and on their covers. Although their aims were sensationalist, and even though lesbian sexuality was often portrayed as "forbidden" or "unnatural" or at worst perverse, the fact is that in this era of apparent conservatism lesbianism was being acknowledged openly in the pulps (*fig.148*). As cultural historian Kaye Mitchell observes:

> In the 1950s, non-fiction pulps allowed current and contentious discourses about sexuality (particularly 'taboo' sexualities such as lesbianism) to be disseminated in a highly marketable, highly accessible format. Reading these texts now offers insights into an era that was less conservative and censorious – or at least more conflicted – than it is usually represented as being, as evidenced by its appetite for the new, the scandalous and the shocking […]

[584] Hanson, O'Rawe, p. 2.
[585] Elizabeth Cowie, '*Film Noir* and Women', in *Shades of Noir: A Reader*, ed. Joan Copjec (London; New York: Verso, 1993), p. 136.

> the existence of pulps suggests 'that the 1950s was also a decade of dissident desires and alternative value systems'. Reading non-fiction pulps also reveals the significance of sexuality as a major focus of epistemological enquiry, alarmist fantasy and political paranoia in this period, and the significance of the 1950s as a crucial decade in the development of sexual knowledge and forms of sexual regulation.[586]

Pulp covers invariably got away with far more radical imagery than the cinema could from the 1930s to the 1950s, where depictions of sex and violence were curbed by the Production Code.[587] Pulp covers subsequently garnered a reputation for operating outside of normative codes of conduct, with this the "tricky" depictions of female sexuality in all its forms got past the censors.

At face-value however the steamy and violent pulps were shocking and ultimately hypocritical, considering that women being brutalized on covers remained uncensored yet bare breasts did not. In 1942 the mayor of New York Fiorello LaGuardia put a stop to excessive torture scenes and erotic content on pulp covers. As a result of such vocal campaigning the pulps cleaned up significantly, however by that time they were increasingly in decline and finally replaced by paperback novels in the 1950s. Still, their aesthetics were absorbed by other pin-up related genres. The pin-up artist Peter Driben, for example, took his cue from the pulps and created a signature type of pin-up girl for which he became admired: a "bad," "naughty" or even "dirty" type of pin-up girl that would become more in-vogue throughout the 1950s (*fig.149*). Driben was the perfect cover artist for Harrison's *Whisper* magazine. But ultimately the greatest legacy of the pulps bore their influence over the comics. The comics absorbed the illustration themes, styles and political connotations from the men's magazine pin-ups, fetish imagery, cartoons and pulp art. Once the demise of the controversial original pulps was complete, the comics became the agents provocateurs of illustration and became an outlet for the sexual subculture in mainstream popular culture.

The comics and cartoon fetish girls.

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[586] Kaye Mitchell, ''Who Is She?' Identities, Intertextuality and Authority in Non-Fiction Lesbian Pulp of the 1950s', *Queer 1950s: Rethinking Sexuality in the Postwar Years*, ed. Heike Bauer, Matt Cook (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 150.

[587] Lesser, p. 100. Ironically the *film noir* genre cleared a path for "themes of sexuality" to be gradually reintroduced into Hollywood movies within Production Code limits. Cowie, p. 132.

One of the main reasons that comics adopted the erotic pin-up types in its storylines was due to the fact that comic books were sent out to G.I.s during the Second World War. Alongside the proud display of Betty Grable and Varga Girls in army barracks were also torn out pages from comics featuring heroines Sheena and Jane amongst others. As John Coutts himself had noted, the format was pretty much what got the erotic pin-ups seen. Interestingly, in the context of the comics world however, the sexual objectification of the female characters was usually coupled with their active roles in the storylines. Women in comics were damsels in distress but also spies, detectives, superheroes and criminals. "Throughout the 1950s, men's magazines suffered from a schizophrenic relationship with women, and the comics and cartoons reflected this," claims comics historian Tim Pilcher.[588] In the early days, the imagery from the sexual subculture informed material in the comics in ways that eroticized female characters, by habitually having characters cavort across jungles, cityscapes, the Wild West and other locations in skimpy outfits – or "cheesecake clothing," as Nicky Wright labels it – that clung to their contours and kept the censorious parts of their anatomy just about covered.[589] Such a trait was originally evident in the British wartime comic *Jane* (see chapter 3) who first appeared in 1932 in the *Daily Mirror*'s *Jane's Journal, the Diary of a Bright Young Thing*. Jane became involved in farcical perilous adventures that usually involved her "losing items of attire."[590] As the war raged on from 1939-1945, Jane would more often be caught out unawares, minus clothing. Jane's penchant for appearing scantily clad, and occasionally nude, spurred on a host of imitators in the UK but in America comics publishers were slightly more wary of what they could get away with. When *Jane* was syndicated to American Forces' newspaper *Stars and Stripes*, some of the lewder episodes were censored.[591] However, realizing the sales potential in sexualized comics heroines, American publishers found methods through which to titillate without being too obvious.[592]

Sheena was originally another British comic strip produced, like *Jane*, by the risqué illustration that was more acceptable in Britain. Her creators Will

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[588] Pilcher, p. 55.
[589] Nicky Wright, *The Classic Era of American Comics* (London: Prion, 2000), p. 92.
[590] Pilcher, p. 44.
[591] Ibid.
[592] Comic *G.I. Jane* appeared in 1953, obviously keeping the sexy spirit of the war alive, but reflected the more openly bawdy "girl gag" humour of the postwar era.

Eisner and S.M. Iger saw her potential for the American market and approached publisher Thurman T. Scott of Jungle Comics to commission the comic with an American makeover in 1938. *Sheena* was a runaway success and by early 1942 she became the first female comic character to have her own spin-off title: *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle*, which ran until 1952 (*fig.150*).[593] Sheena was distinctive for her sexy leopard-skin ensemble, gold bangles on her ankles and long flowing blonde hair.[594] So much so was her popularity that she was given her own television series in 1955 in which the Amazonian Vargas model, Irish McCalla, was given the lead part.

Before her however, the original Amazon Princess was Dr. William Moulton Marston's *Wonder Woman*, who appeared in *All Star Comics* in December 1941, just as the USA entered the Second World War (*fig.69*). Marston was a Harvard educated psychology graduate with a reputation for unconventional methods and practices, yet he was canny about self-promotion in the business and entertainment industries.[595] *Wonder Woman*, for the bohemian Marston, originated from a belief that the power of women's femininity (also translated as sexual prowess) would eventually lead to a feminist movement whereby women would one day dominate the country on a political and economic scale.[596] In a letter to comics historian Coulton Waugh, Marston wrote of the philosophy behind his *Wonder Woman* creation:

> Frankly, Wonder Woman is psychological propaganda for the new type of woman who should, I believe, rule the world. There isn't love enough in the male organism to run this planet peacefully. Woman's body contains twice as many love generating organs and endocrine mechanisms as the male. What woman lacks is the dominance or self assertive power to put over and enforce her love desires. I have given Wonder Woman this dominant force but have kept her loving, tender, maternal and feminine in every other way. Her bracelets, with which she repels bullets and other murderous weapons represent the Amazon Princess' submission to Aphrodite, Goddess of Love and Beauty. Her magic lasso, which compels anyone bound by it to obey Wonder Woman and which was given to her by Aphrodite herself, represents women's love charm and allure by which she compels men and women to do her bidding.[597]

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[593] Sheena's name was inspired by H. Rider Haggard's novel *She*.
[594] Wright, p. 93.
[595] Les Daniels, *Wonder Woman: The Complete History* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2004), p. 11.
[596] Daniels, p. 19.
[597] Quoted in Daniels, pp. 22-23.

In other words, Wonder Woman represented something of a dominatrix with her "dominant force" and magic lasso subduing both men and women into doing her bidding (*fig.151*). While Marston's sexual fetish inclinations may have not been made explicit to Waugh, comic script editor Sheldon Mayer was all too aware of those overtones to Marston's work. He had to cut out much of Marston's "enthusiastic excesses" due to the fact that children would have read the comics.[598] "Marston's penchant for bondage, whips, and chains comes across all too strongly in the earlier *Wonder Woman* comics," claims Nicky Wright:

> There are at least a dozen incidents with women handcuffed in their underwear, one blindfolded woman chained to a bed, another bound and gagged to a chair, and Wonder Woman chained in the classic position of hands above head, manacled to a wall.[599]

Bondage themes were pronounced throughout the female comics canon, going as far back as the 1930s *Sally the Sleuth* from *Spicy Detective Stories*, in which Sally was often whipped and tied-up somewhere along the trail of her adventures.[600] Apart from Wonder Woman, Ka'a'nga's companion, Anne, in leopard skin two-piece often found herself rescued from natives who would tie her up.

The talented comics artist Matt Baker was particularly gifted at drawing dominant girls such as Jungle Comics' Camilla (*fig.152*), and the leggy Sky Girl (*fig.153*) who was often found bending over in short dress and seamed stockings. Baker's most audacious illustration however came with the re-issuing of *Phantom Lady* in 1947 who he turned into "one of the most controversial queens of comic book sleaze ever seen."[601] Baker transformed her from a demure society girl into an anatomically over-endowed sexpot reminiscent of Bill Ward's wartime comic character *Torchy* (*fig.154*), a sexy comic character he created before moving into the men's magazine genre. Baker's Phantom Lady costume was barely-there in a provocatively fetish manner; a cape reminiscent of the early Carlo domme, slashed to the navel top and riding high on the thighs shorts, as opposed to the more (but barely) modest jungle outfits of other

[598] Wright, p. 98.
[599] Wright, p. 100.
[600] Pilcher, p. 48.
[601] Wright, p. 96.

comics heroines. The cover of no.17 of *Phantom Lady* in which the heroine is featured with breasts jutting out and ropes snaking around her torso, is featured in Frederic Wertham's book *Seduction of the Innocent* (*fig.155*). When in 1954 Wertham published his book in disapproval of the imagery of comics and their effects on the young, he commented on the *Phantom Lady* cover as depicting "sexual stimulation by combining 'headlights' with the sadist's dream of tying up a woman." [602] Additionally he was highly critical of Wonder Woman's assertiveness and dominating behaviour and had a keen eye for all the bondage scenarios found in all comics. He was also critical of the romance comics that superficially seemed to be pretty harmless. The distributer of *Young Romance* was a former soft-pornography magazine publisher, Harry Donenfeld, who denied that his comic was anything akin to what he had previously put out, but the intention was undoubtedly there, with the provocative "Adults Only" warning on the cover for a comic aimed at teens (*fig.156*). It was Joe Simon and Jack Kirby who had come up with the romance comic idea in 1947 and the subject-matter of *Young Romance* provided a good enough pretence to regularly show young women in "states of undress," and "pulling stockings on."[603]

Cartoonist Jack Cole came under fire from Wertham also. Originally a comics artist, Cole had illustrated the infamous cover of *True Crime Comics #2* in which Wertham took particular offence to as it featured a close-up face of a terrified woman about to be attacked in the eye with a syringe. After such an example had been made of his work Cole left the comics, or "sequential" art scene, behind and moved on to illustration for men's magazines at the *Humorama*/Harrison titles and later at *Playboy* (*fig.157*).[604] Along with Dan DeCarlo, Bill Wenzel, Don Flowers and originally Bill Ward, they were the best of the cartoonists of the postwar era, also known as "girl gag" artists.[605] Their "girl" cartoons were simpler line-drawing illustrations, as in the comics, with the same overly pronounced curves, but in the case of the girl gags, more extreme and yet softer. Their flesh gave the impression of being bouncier, their

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[602] Frederic Wertham MD, *Seduction of the Innocent* (London: Museum Press Limited, 1955), unnumbered page between pp. 212-213. The most "sexy" comics, Wertham states, "specializ[e] in highly accentuated and protruding breasts in practically every illustration. Adolescent boys call these 'headlight comics'." Wertham, p. 39.
[603] Nicky Wright, p. 168.
[604] Pilcher, p. 56.
[605] Ibid.

anatomies more inflated, their facial features more innocent yet their sexual demeanour was certainly borrowed from pulp *femme fatales* and subcultural fetish. Being cartoons, they were caricatures of women, fit with typical gags aimed at their bodies and intelligence.

DeCarlo was most well-known for his work in comics *Sherry the Showgirl* and *Archie*, in which the character Veronica looked suspiciously like Bettie Page, before he applied his talents to girl gag art (*fig.158&159*). Describing DeCarlo's female characters Tim Pilcher writes that they: "looked like they could suck the chrome off a bumper, yet butter wouldn't melt in their mouths. He managed to draw completely naked strippers bumping and grinding, and they still looked like you could take them home to meet mom."[606] In contrast, Wenzel's women were "Rubenesque ladies" with rounded figures, which Pilcher rationalizes as making them "more real somehow" (*fig.160*).[607] Don Flowers was well-loved for his strips *Modest Maidens* and *Glamor Girls*, for which the proportions of the women were certainly more realistic, the gags witty, and the treatment of women somewhat more respectful (*fig.161*).

However, Bill Ward's female characters are a clear indication of the direction pin-up art was heading towards (*fig.143*). After his disillusionment with the short-lived success of the comic *Torchy*, Ward switched allegiances to the *Humorama* titles and developed his distinctive artistic style. There his women gradually became more fetishistic: Pilcher claims that this was due to simply following the market.[608] In the 1950s he would work for *Bizarre*, and later his work would include explicit sex, BDSM scenes, and "powerful dominatrices."[609] It would be an indication of things to come, the direct influences of which were entwined with the underground New York fetish scene of the 1950s, led by Irving and Paula Klaw, and their unlikely muse from Tennessee, Bettie Page.

Movie Star News.

Siblings Irving and Paula Klaw's business Movie Star News on 14th Street in the district of the Bowery could be perceived as the fulcrum around which the activities of illustration and photography in fetish pin-up centred in postwar culture, from the late 1940s through to the mid-1950s. Their initial trade was in

[606] Pilcher, p. 65.
[607] Pilcher, p. 68.
[608] Pilcher, p. 61.
[609] Ibid.

buying movie star publicity pin-up photos direct from the Hollywood studios. Eventually customers would begin to ask for "more" and they set up a photo studio of their own above the shop to create the imagery customers wanted, which they then sold in their store and through mail-order catalogues.[610] Apart from their general notoriety, they are most well-known for commissioning *Sweet Gwendoline* from "John Willie," for employing Eric Stanton as illustrator, for hiring Bettie Page to model for them, and for satisfying the photographic needs of fetishists. They are also remembered for their ultimate downfall, after two years (1955-1957) of persecution by Senator Estes Kefauver.

With the illustrated serials, the Klaws were able to almost flout censorship laws. As Geoffrey Wagner noted when he visited the store in the early 1950s, the artists "have more scope for the exercise of perversion under the cloak of some 'adventure' yarn […] These serials are really something, as they say."[611] According to Wagner's first-hand accounts – and despite the fact that he was so obviously scandalized by what he saw upon his visit to Movie Star News, it is clear that these illustrations are not far off from the imagery of pulp covers and comics:

> In these fantasias [sic.] hapless heroines […] are tied up, strapped down, gagged, masked, thrown to animals, used as ponies, stretched by pullies, squeezed under weights, rubbed on sandpaper, given electric shocks (the last two in intimate portions of the anatomy), seated on spokes, slid down chutes, fried over fires, slapped in stocks, choked, curry-combed, wrestled with, throttled, sat on, bent double, suspended over boiling cauldrons, tied astride hot steam pipes, whirled centrifugally, hung up by the hair, used as clappers for a giant bell [.][612]

Wagner describes Movie Star News as "a magnificently seedy office," and compares it to a library filled with stacks of photographs and movies, as well as a drugstore in which customers nonchalantly ask for spanking albums as they would a packet of laxatives.[613] Movie Star News was a hive of activity for people with fetishistic predilections and those who wanted bespoke, so to speak, pin-up. Their original client in this respect was a man known as "Little John," who was said to have had a high-profile federal job. Much like Coutts, "Little John"

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[610] Karen Essex, James L. Swanson, *Bettie Page: The Life of a Pin-Up Legend* (Los Angeles: General Publishing Group, 1996), p. 143.
[611] Wagner, p. 150.
[612] Ibid.
[613] Wagner, p. 149.

was excited by bondage and damsel-in-distress imagery. He collaborated with Paula Klaw to bring to life his fantasies which required the inclusion of rubber and leather bondage gear and expensive lingerie and ropes, all of which he paid for, along with the models' fees.[614] Paula Klaw, who would eventually become photographer, was the only person allowed to touch the models and "Little John" taught her how to tie knots. Eventually the Klaws garnered a reputation for such bespoke photography and attracted fetishists of every kind, as Paula Klaw recounts:

> A leather enthusiast would bring in leather outfits, and someone who liked chains would bring in a chain outfit. Then the rubber people would bring in something custom-made in Italy. Then there were the guys who brought me the shoes with the extremely high heels they had made by an Italian bootmaker. We had the spanking fanatics, and those who liked to see girls fighting. We had the garter-belt customers, the bare-feet customers – all the fetishists.[615]

In effect the Klaws legitimized a type of pin-up that had been floating around in secret societies (such as those John Coutts was a member of), had been hinted at on pulp covers, in *film noir* and subtly put across in the comics (*fig.162*). A type of sexually aggressive woman, as both victim and victor, an almost Sadeian Woman ("annihilation of the self and the resurrection of the body"), as Angela Carter would have it, emerged from the Bowery of New York in direct contrast to the wholesomeness of the billboard Coca-Cola girls of Times Square.[616] The contrast between these two types was obvious: Wagner doubted whether the fetishistic kind could be "dignified" by the term pin-up, and typically of his time, characterized them as "a phantasmagoria of Freudiana all legitimised by the fact that the models have on Macy's bras and panties."[617]

The fact that men, such as "Little John," were paying for women to do their bidding, reinforced the sense of women as submissive, even if they were playing at being dominants with whips in scary spiked boots. In her work on pornography and gender politics, Angela Carter writes that "Miss Stern" (the dominatrix) is but a male fantasy: "A male-dominated society produces a

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[614] Essex, Swanson, pp. 143-144.
[615] Essex, Swanson, pp. 144-145.
[616] Angela Carter, *The Sadeian Woman: An Exercise in Cultural History* (London: Virago, 2009), p. 176.
[617] Wagner, p. 149.

pornography of universal female acquiescence. Or, most delicious titillation, of compensatory but spurious female dominance […] Miss Stern's dominance exists only in the bedroom."[618] Yet the extremities played out in fetish pin-up forces us, from a latter-day perspective, to look at all pin-up, – since an element of fetish is present in all pin-up – and identify its relation to the economic and social status of women historically.

The re-evaluation of pin-up imagery (see chapter 6) is comparable to the way in which the Marquis de Sade's novels have been received by some writers and critics in the twentieth- to twenty-first centuries. For instance, in *The Sadeian Woman* Angela Carter writes:

> Sade is unusual amongst both satirists and pornographers, not only because he goes further than most satirists and pornographers, but because he is capable of believing, even if only intermittently, that it is possible to radically transform society and, with it, human nature, so that the Old Adam, exemplified in God, the King and the Law, the trifold masculine symbolism of authority, will take his final departure from amongst us. Only then will freedom be possible; until then, the freedom of one class, or sex, or individual necessitates the unfreedom of others.[619]

Like other contemporary theorists of Sade's work, Carter finds that he addresses revolution and libertinage through sexual metaphors.

Yet for others, and for his contemporaries, Sade was mostly considered a pornographer and a madman; similarly, the extremities of fetish imagery in the 1950s was shocking, and motivated some to eradicate or censor licentious material. Regardless, such material began to circulate more widely in the 1960s and 1970s and, when critically re-examined, its dis-ordering potential became more obvious. For the few men who enjoyed this imagery in the immediate postwar years it *did* reinforce women's subjugated position, but it also undeniably aligned the viewer of such material with an anarchic, anti-authoritarian, anti-conservative stance that rebelled against the postwar status quo. In this way fetishistic pin-up of the 1950s is comparable to Sade's work since both semi/pornographic bodies of work utilized the sexual content to satirize the restrictive codes of conduct of their respective eras. For both, the issue of female liberation through sex is palpable, providing incisive social commentary in an attempt to bring down restrictions and barriers. This is why

[618] Carter, p. 23.
[619] Carter, p. 27.

the figure of Bettie Page has, since the 1990s, been lauded as an icon of sexual liberation.

Bettie Page in context, and the Camera Club scene.

Bettie Page was not a figurehead for women of her time; if any women had heard of her in the 1950s it was probably as another hopeful pin-up starlet alongside Diane Webber, Marian Stafford or Eve Meyer. But throughout the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s, Page's reputation as an icon of female sexual liberation grew. The fact that a 1950s pin-up of erotic men's magazines should become a fashionable icon of female sexual liberation for late-twentieth and early-twenty-first century women, is highly ironic. The irony may in fact be the crux of the phenomenon. Page's capacity to put across to the camera a changeable sexual persona – from cute pin-up to fetish vixen – seemed both natural and enjoyable to her and her sexy pouting was something she never appeared to be taking seriously. In other words, she imposed irony on the stereotype of the pin-up.

Pin-up artist Olivia De Berardinis, who discovered pictures of Page through publisher J.B. Rund in the 1970s claims that, for her, Page's irony-tinged on-camera personality represented a crossover from one traditional era into the next, a revolutionary stage in the history of Western society:

> Bettie's pictures formed a bridge from the 1950s image of pinups – smiling women holding muffins fresh from the oven. This passivity morphed into a dominating whip wielding icon. I was seeking sexual images of strong dominant ladies to fight this stereotype […] a new type of pinup for a newly refashioned image of the modern sexually liberated woman.[620]

Buszek meditates on what she recognizes as the "performativity" evident in Page's pin-up photos. This she regards as an example of how Page turned pin-up imagery on its head by highlighting its femininity as fantasy (via the fetish costumes as well as her attitude that came across), and presented a self-assured image of sexualized femininity:

> Her brazen, over-the-top and pointedly light-hearted approach to performing as a pin-up served to expose the very construction of

[620] Olivia De Berardinis, *Malibu Cheesecake: The Pinup Art of Olivia* (Malibu: Ozone Productions Ltd, 2011), p. 28.

> the genre, revealing both its artificiality and performative nature, as well as its potential as an expressive medium for the woman so represented.[621]

One of the most striking aspects of Page's pin-up presence is the ironic humour she affects in her poses, as if to say she knows that this is for men but she's not about to let them reap all the fun. Naomi Schor examines the potential links between fetishism, irony, and feminism in her article 'Fetishism and its Ironies,' suggesting that, "just as the fetish enables the fetishist simultaneously to recognize and to deny woman's castration, irony allows the ironist both to reject and to reappropriate the discourse of reference."[622] Whether she was posing completely naked by the beach or tied up in bondage ropes, Bettie Page always seemed in control of the situation with a mere wink, the raising of an eyebrow, a faint knowing smirk or a look of exaggerated mock-horror to the camera (*fig.163&166*).[623]

Page "reappropriated" her own objectification via a type of comical performance of femininity, similar to Monroe's dumb blonde persona. Page's mercurial demeanour in front of the camera was steeped in a history of American pin-ups; as a child at play she would imitate Betty Grable poses.[624] Some of the emotions and expressions Page gave to the camera certainly had precedence in damsel-in-distress imagery and the caught-unawares looks of the Elvgren pin-ups. Parallels can be drawn between what she projected on-camera with what could be found in mainstream pin-up, comics, cartoons and pulp covers in the postwar period. Photographer Bunny Yeager said of her: "Bettie was like a comic strip come to life: unreal, but real."[625] With this possibly in mind at the time, Yeager took some of the most well-known shots of Bettie in a leopard-print jungle outfit, which was extremely similar to that seen on Sheena from *Sheena, Queen of the Jungle* (*fig.164*). Similarly, the Klaws may as well have had comics informing the poses of Page and their other models in

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[621] Buszek, p. 244.
[622] Naomi Schor, 'Fetishism and Its Ironies', *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, p. 92.
[623] It should be noted however that Page had admitted to one instance in which she felt "frightened" during a shoot, in which she was tied around the waist, and her legs and arms pulled up by a pulley, whereby she feared her limbs would be pulled out of their sockets. See Essex, Swanson, p.153.
[624] I.S. Levine, 'Bettie Talks: Recollections of a Pin-Up Icon', *Bettie Page by Olivia*, Olivia De Berardinis (Malibu: Ozone Productions Ltd, 2006), p. 64. Grable was also a point of reference for Marilyn Monroe.
[625] Essex, Swanson, p. 190.

some of their shots, with one striking parallel occurring with a spanking scene from *Wonder Woman* (*fig.165&166*). Additionally Little John's damsel-in-distress pictures lent Page her helpless look, which she infused with ironic humour. Page also appeared alongside burlesque dancers Lili St. Cyr and Tempest Storm respectively in the *Striporama* (1953) and *Teaserama* (1955) burlesque films. Page's humourous treatment of her body and femininity is reminiscent of the kind of parody Marilyn Monroe extracted from the example of burlesque dancers of the era, and whilst Page was not a burlesque dancer, her appearances in these films make sense because of a similar approach to her creative sexual expression. Later, these characteristics would make her an ideal subject for future pin-up, comic and photorealist artists (see chapter 6).

Page's biographers suggest that her longevity and fame are, for the most part, down to her extraordinary participation in fetish pin-up: "she did something that transcended her time and made her a legend. She transformed herself from all-American girl into a dark angel of hidden desire."[626] But fetish photography was not a sexual innovation of the 1950s; primarily it had been around since the 1930s (*fig.167*). The 1950s pin-up genre increased the visibility of fetish signifiers/aesthetics and eventually fetish imagery, and contributed to introducing it to the mainstream. Page's seemingly "empowering" and ironic humour eventually turned her into a fashionable erotic icon for the 1990s. However, when fetish imagery came to light at that time, its idiosyncrasy was seen as perturbing rather than revolutionary. There was much confusion during the Senate subcommittee hearings led by Senator Estes Kefauver as to whether Klaw's photos were pornographic. Klaw didn't feature any nudity and was not, in the end, charged with obscenity, but as might be expected, the bondage images were cause for concern.

Kefauver admitted that Klaw's images existed in "a twilight zone of obscene material," and he was forced to fall back on an argument of "perversion" instead in his accusations. Even the FBI couldn't conclude that they were *de facto* pornography.[627] Edward Shorter suggests that Page "never managed to look truly severe" in her fetish photographs, suggesting that perhaps Bettie's effect on future generations actually did not lie in the "dark" matter of her fetish persona, but simply the fact that she participated in fetish

[626] Essex, Swanson, p. 143.
[627] Richard Foster, *The Real Bettie Page: The Truth About the Queen of the Pinups* (New York: Cidatel Press, 1997), p. 81.

shoots and the camera club scene.[628] This coming at a time when women were being idealized as homemakers, thus flouting conservatism and proving herself ahead of her time in relation to her liberal attitude about her body and her proud display of it. It would not be for a few more decades however that this underlying sentiment of Page's images would reach a wider female audience: "I get so many letters now," Page recalled in 2006, "many of them from young girls who love my pictures and give me credit for their not being ashamed of their bodies."[629] As Harald Hellmann claims, Bettie did exceptionally well to make a name for herself as a pin-up in amongst the droves of strippers, showgirls and models who featured in the same magazines as she did.[630] Hence, Page gave something more to the camera, she enjoyed what she participated in and was happy to experiment. Her involvement in the camera clubs is a perfect example of that.

Bettie Page accidentally embarked on her pin-up career when she moved to New York to pursue her career as an actress after her first marriage had failed. Amateur pin-up photographer and police officer Jerry Tibbs encountered Page on Coney Island beach and approached her to pose for him, she agreed and they subsequently struck up a friendship. Tibbs thereafter contributed two factors to Bettie's legend: he convinced her to cut bangs into her hair to conceal a high forehead, and he introduced her to Jamaican jazz musician and bandleader Cass Carr, who ran a camera club as a lucrative side project.

Camera clubs had begun to flourish in the postwar era as a direct result of the accessibility of personal cameras and the increased familiarity of erotica in mainstream culture. The clubs were not the educational hobbyist get-togethers they superficially appeared to be. Camera clubs were organized around the proviso that amateur photographers paid a fee for group visits to a studio or outdoor location where "figure models" – possibly, mostly, prostitutes – would be made available to be photographed, either nude or in lingerie. According to *Vintage Sleaze* blogger Jim Linderman, some photographs from these sessions were sold on to the many girlie magazine titles, or sold under

[628] Shorter, p. 226.
[629] Levine, p. 66.
[630] Hellmann, p. 10.

the counter.[631] The odd professional photographer such as famed journalistic photographer Weegee (Arthur Fellig) turned up, whilst hobbyist Art Amsie (who was considered to be close to professional status), took some of the best shots of Bettie. Amsie noticed that there would occasionally be photographers, or "shutter-bugs," who turned up without any film in their cameras.[632] Voyeuristic though the practice was for the most part, since most of these photographs were taken for private stashes, there has been no evidence of coercion or abuse in the available material, according to Linderman.[633] Page biographers Karen Essex and James Swanson concur, and Bettie Page herself admitted to the "homely" atmosphere at the clubs, where photographers, some of them women, gathered in semi-circles around each model, snapping away, often ending up in each others' shots (*fig.168*).

Bettie Page eventually became the biggest draw at Carr's Lens Art Camera Club (later the Concord Camera Club), and she was subsequently paid much more than the other models to work the clubs.[634] Page stood out for her brunette hair, at a time when bottle blondes were most fashionable. And she also had an athletic figure, which she toned at the gym, as opposed to possessing the corporeal excesses of stripper and burlesque body-types that dominated men's pornography/erotica. But more so, it was Page's open-mindedness and honesty with her involvement in both the fetish and camera club scenes that led to her success:

> She was a freethinker in an era of conformity. Unlike other bohemian women, she didn't attach herself to well-known male artists or writers to seek fame or to become their personal muse. She didn't consider herself a pioneer, a feminist or a trendsetter. She had no agenda; she simply followed her own liberated instincts. 'I wasn't trying to be anything,' she insists. 'I was just myself.'[635]

Page's involvement in camera club modelling defined her unique libertarian personality, the main reason for which her legend has survived. "The camera

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[631] Jim Linderman, *Camera Club Girls, Bettie Page and her Friends: The Work of Rudolph Rossi* (San Francisco: Blurb Inc., 2010), pp. 7-10. Apple e-book.
[632] Essex, Swanson, p. 75.
[633] Linderman, p. 20.
[634] It appears that the actress Allyson Hayes (*Attack of the 50-ft Woman*) may have also participated in the camera club scene before her rise to fame, according to identification in the collection of photographs by Rudolph Rossi. See Linderman, pp. 30-31.
[635] Essex, Swanson, p. 158.

clubs challenged the conservative social mores of the 1950s," state Essex and Swanson.

Camera club organisers challenged the norms by brazenly arranging excursions to open-air locations to shoot nudes, something that, on one occasion, got Page arrested along with everyone else involved in a shoot at the South Salem Dairy in Westchester County.[636] Page partook in some of her most explicit shoots during these sessions and, apart from one occasion when a photographer was jailed for selling some of those photographs, they were never circulated at that time beyond the camera club circles for fear of arrest or of being labelled a pervert.[637] Yet it is important, as Linderman has stated, to remember that this was a tawdry business run by men for men, no matter how respectfully the models appear to have been treated. "One thing we learn," he says, "is the 'glamorous' life of a working woman model […] had very little glamour indeed. Fifty years later, the once taboo photographs of Bettie Page have taken on a beautiful but incorrect sheen of innocent nostalgia."[638] Certainly, whilst the distance of time gives scope to the critic to address formerly unacknowledged political and social connotations in the images, it simultaneously distances the viewer from the reality of the context and subsequently lets in the capability to alter history. One avenue through which to question the "incorrect sheen" however is through the relevant issue of race, and by examining the African-American or black pin-up, throwing the "incorrectness" of nostalgia into stark relief.

The Black Pin-Up as erotic fetish.

As we have seen, camera clubs could be afforded a status of questionable trailblazing for making a remarkable stand against the prudery of the Atomic Age, even though pornographic and erotic practices were by no means innovations of the twentieth century, let alone the postwar period. Perhaps what is most interesting about the emergence of the camera clubs, apart from producing the legend of Bettie Page, is that they consisted of inter-racial participants, both behind and in front of the camera, at a time when racial integration was in its infancy. Cass Carr hired Black, Latino and Caucasian

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[636] Foster, p. 45.
[637] See Linderman, p. 18. Essex, Swanson, p. 76.
[638] Jim Linderman, *Secret History of the Black Pin Up: Women of Color from Pin Up to Porn* (San Francisco: Blurb Inc., 2011), p. 6. Apple e-book.

models, the combination of nudity and race making for a highly taboo melting pot (*fig.169&170*). Primarily, this was a crude and smutty business venture but in retrospect, it was an unintentional exercise in anti-establishment rebellion:

> Cass Carr, in effect, started a revolution. From dingy studios in Harlem, Hell's Kitchen and rented farmland, he arranged naked photography for the first time in the modern era, and in the process provided the beauty of women in all races to be seen, shot and appreciated for the first time in the 20th century.[639]

In the pin-up industry African-Americans had, for the most part, been sidelined at best, and completely overlooked at worst. As pin-up artists they were occasionally acknowledged: E. Simms Campbell led the way at *Esquire* in the 1930s; Gene Bilbrew was a talented fetish pin-up artist of the postwar; Matt Baker was one of the most revered comics artist of the 1960s. Howard Morehead was a talented glamour photographer for *Ebony* and organizer of the first beauty contest for black contestants, the 'Miss Los Angeles Bronze Beauty Contest' of 1958.[640] John H. Johnson – regarded by some as the black Hugh Hefner – was the publisher of *Jet* magazine (founded in 1951), which introduced wholesome pin-up imagery of black women. As we have already seen, Cass Carr set up the Len's Art Camera Club, and Jerry Tibbs, though an amateur photographer, is responsible for recognizing the pin-up potential of an unknown Bettie Page.

Yet in the genealogy of pin-ups, there was a noticeable and almost entire absence of actual black pin-ups, as reflected the racism endemic in the United States. As Linderman has argued, the phrase "Black Is Beautiful" had to be created to convince black women of their beauty, which at least partially served as a deflection against the media's elevation of white beauty as the standard – something that largely remained unchallenged right through the 1950s. Wini Breines describes the predominance of whiteness in the media:

> The image was impossible to escape […] It helped to be fair in all ways: skin, hair, eyes, and disposition. It was a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant version of beauty that millions of girls of immigrant background, to say nothing of women of color, could never hope

[639] Linderman, *Secret History*, p. 28.
[640] Linderman, *Secret History*, p. 70.

> to emulate. The lighter the skin and hair, the straighter the hair, the more attractive one was considered.[641]

For all its faults, *Playboy* would be one of the first mass-market publications to reinforce the Black Is Beautiful maxim by featuring occasional glamorized black pin-ups. The first black pin-up to appear in *Playboy* occurred as illustration in the 1964 issue, drawn by Alberto Vargas (*fig.171*); she is rendered sensual, sophisticated and ethereal, in Vargas's usual style. The first black Playmate of the Month, Jennifer Jackson, was featured in 1965; in 1969 the first black centrefold was published; in 1971, Darine Stern appeared as the first black covergirl, with backlit Afro hair accentuating the symbolic enormity of the issue of race and Black as Beautiful (*fig.172*).

Previous to these pin-ups, black women who gained mass-media pin-up status did so through their work in cinema, music and the general entertainment industry. Mark Gabor claims that the first erotic black pin-up was singer/actress Lena Horne, who came to prominence during the 1940s (*fig.173*). Similarly the 1950s actress Dorothy Dandridge also became a sultry pin-up as a consequence of her acclaimed acting career (*fig.174*). In the 1930s the actress Nina Mae McKinney came to be known as the "Black Garbo."[642] Before them all, the entertainer Josephine Baker gained notoriety in the U.S. and Europe, but her pin-up status remains questionable: feminist critic bell hooks suggests that fascination with Baker stemmed more from a fascination with black bodies and sexuality that called to mind the "Hottentot Venus" (Sarah Baartman) of the nineteenth century.[643] In short, up until the 1950s the black pin-up was practically non-existent.

Horne and Dandridge became pin-ups on account of their Hollywood careers, which from a contemporary vantage point would be a positive achievement. However, put into context it ironically exposes racist conventions that suggest black women could not compete with white women based on looks – as pure pin-ups – alone. Significantly, their skin colour was light and their

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[641] Breines, p. 95.
[642] Stephen Bourne, *Black in the British Frame: The Black Experience in British Film and Television* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005), p. 142.
[643] bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (Boston MA: South End Press, 1992), pp. 62-63. Baartman was a slave who was exhibited in Europe as a "freak show" exhibit for her large buttocks and elongated labia minora (which she never permitted to reveal). When she died in 1815 her skeleton, genitalia and brain were exhibited in Paris until 1974. See *Sara Baartman and the Hottentot Venus: A Ghost Story and a Biography*, Clifton Crais & Pamela Scully (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

features delicate enough to comply with the principles of the "Anglo-Saxon Protestant version of beauty." bell hooks states: "When black actresses like Lena Horne appeared in mainstream cinema most white viewers were not aware that they were looking at black females unless the film was specifically coded as being about blacks."[644] Historian Richard Dyer suggests that lighting equipment and techniques, which were developed from the very early days of photography and the cinema were devised in such a way that the camera would always favour whiteness and light, over darkness. This is a practice, he claims, that had been inherited from established Western traditions in fine art.[645] In this way visual culture in the West set up one of the biggest barriers to glamorizing African-Americans for the camera and subsequently to the general public, thus exposing an underlying racism at the core of the industry.

The genealogy of the black pin-up within the wider genealogy of pin-up emerges from the fetishization of black and ethnic bodies as evident in the nineteenth-century photographs of nude African tribal women (considered pornography at the time), the exhibiting of Sarah Baartman, and similarly the eroticization of the "exotic" such as the "Little Egypt" performances of the late nineteenth-century. In the early 1960s Leonard Burtman and Ruben Sturman became the first publishers to cement the fetishized eroticization of black bodies to white viewers, capitalizing on this connection with their use of African-American pin-ups in their magazines.[646] For Burtman it appeared to be logical to tie-in the fetishization of black bodies to the already "kinky" material he published in magazines such as *Exotique*:

> for many these were among the first nude images of women of color published and seen, even if they were sold in bookstores few dared enter. The audience was certainly mostly Caucasian and slightly deviant […] deviance being defined as "different" not wrong. The 6-inch heels, obsessive attention to lingerie and strong, dominant women often in leather came from a fetishistic underground which had been brewing in major cities. The material was not at all widely distributed initially, being printed in only a few thousand copies and kept under store counters but the consumers who did favor the material were voracious and loyal buyers.[647]

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[644] hooks, p. 119.
[645] See Richard Dyer, *White* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997).
[646] Linderman, *Secret History,* pp. 10-11.
[647] Linderman, *Secret History,* p. 11.

In the case of Sturman, he dedicated an entire magazine to black pin-ups, the short-lived *Tan N' Terrific* (circa 1965-1970). The images could not compare to those found in magazines such as *Playboy* or *Jet* in which glamour dictated the art direction (*fig.175&176*). Sturman's publications were unsophisticated in their execution. The casual settings and unflattering lighting of the photographic imagery did nothing to elevate and compliment the femininity of the models. Quite simply, they were not glamorized. Linderman states: "Appearing on the cusp between soft-core and hard-core, they have little charm, little beauty and no class. And yet," he concludes, "they broke some racial ground."[648]

Any possible racial victories, much like any possible liberating achievements Page's work may have achieved, could only be realized with the passage of time and changing attitudes. For the most part, the tawdriness and lack of glamour in these images appear to reinforce negative racial prejudices, and if, as has been suggested, many of these models were prostitutes then the images, lacking in glamorization, were a reflection of their oppressed status.[649] Furthermore, as bell hooks observed in 1981, depictions of black women in American society often recalled the history of slavery and the institutionalized rape of black women, which perpetuates the stereotype of the black woman as "fallen," as whore, as slut.[650] It is not that women are being raped in the pin-up images or appear to be victims; in fact it is quite the opposite: their presentation as Amazonian or dominant figures points to "the designation of all black women as sexually depraved, immoral, and loose [which] had its roots in the slave system." hooks goes on:

> White women and men justified the sexual exploitation of enslaved black women by arguing that they were the initiators of sexual relationships with men. From such thinking emerged the stereotype of black women as sexual savages, and in sexist terms a sexual savage, a non-human, an animal cannot be raped.[651]

The combination of tawdriness and domme-like figures in the fetishistic black pin-up material appears to reinforce this element of slave history (*fig.177&178*).

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[648] Linderman, *Secret History,* p. 12.
[649] The lack of stylized glamour in the *Humourama* titles escapes criticism because of the application of humour in its place.
[650] bell hooks, *Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (London: Pluto Press, 1981), p. 52.
[651] Ibid.

The perspectives however were complex, multiple and varied. For instance, the African-American intelligentsia at the time was openly hostile about depictions of "smut" featuring black women, and John H. Johnson in turn expressed criticism of Cass Carr's apparent degradation of black women modelling at his camera club.[652] For Johnson, the black pin-ups had to uphold standards of decency, a weight of responsibility he took on at *Jet* to "uplift" and "inform" its readership.[653] Johnson's pin-ups, on the other hand, are criticized by Geoffrey Wagner (a Caucasian Englishman, it should be added), who laments the apparent emulation of white standards of beauty in *Jet* and other African-American magazines:

> The ideal posited in all these periodicals is to be as white as possible […] For those of us who believe that the American Negro proper has an indigenous culture that can enrich the white, all this is very sad […] [the pin-up imagery of these periodicals] contribute directly to this collapse of values and organization of individual differences into the common norm.[654]

And empirically, once second-wave feminism took hold of the pin-up/pornography issue by the 1970s, the standard view assumed by such imagery was that it reinforced the subjugation and metaphorical enslavement of *all* women. hooks states that, "whites condone inter-racial relationships between black women and white men only in the context of degrading sex." A parallel could be drawn with the viewer/viewed relationship between white male viewer and fetishised black pin-up.

Where Wagner – and to some extent Breines – falters in his critique is in failing to recognize that the "white" standards of glamour were also highly unachievable for white women, as the effect was an artificial contrivance created by the camera for the most part. The pin-ups of *Jet* as opposed to those of *Tan N' Terrific*, afforded black women access to the same *promise* of liberation offered white women. However, glamour and fantasy, as noted in previous chapters, was by no means a fail-safe passage to liberation. Gundle observes that, apart from reflecting consumerism and marketing, glamour (in the abstract sense) was also "driven" by personalities, both real and fictional, by those who were unconventional, the famous or wealthy, but critically also by the

[652] Linderman, *Secret History,* p. 10.
[653] Linderman, *Secret History,* pp. 42-44.
[654] Wagner, p. 132.

"beautiful" (which is ultimately a reflection of what is fashionable). Beauty, especially in women "has historically been prized," claims Gundle, "in commercial society, beauty became an accepted channel of social mobility for women and the selection and presentation of beauty soon became a business."[655] Certainly in the light of the history of slavery and sexual inequality, African-American women have a uniquely problematic and challenging legacy to negotiate. Representing black women as glamorous pin-ups did not necessarily indicate a need to emulate white beauty standards. Instead, it may have provided an avenue through which to partake in the opportunity for social mobility and the validation of a different kind of beauty. The imagery of the pin-up had afforded white women a chance to stake a claim in the American Dream – now it offered the same to black women.

Second Skin.

In her comparison of pin-ups and cyborgs in science fiction fantasy, Despina Kakoudaki observes that it is the element of the skin that serves as the final frontier, as it were, between what is alien, machine-like and cold, with what is familiar, comforting and above all, human:

> The idea that we can have partially realized fantasies about sexually active cyborgs proves to me that the skin is the organ that really distinguishes cyborgs from all other kinds of intelligent machines. We, therefore, have to accept the skin as the final carrier of "human" status.[656]

The quote calls to mind how Raymond Loewy thought of his designs in terms of desirable shields, and the subsequent analysis of the metallurgic quality of Petty's 1930s pin-ups that recalled the sleekness of machines such as the locomotive (see chapter 3). Black modernist, and gleaming glamorized bodies were similarly perceived, most notably that of the sensational dancer Josephine Baker: "Josephine's appeal was associated with her wonderful body […] It was a high performance body," observes Andrea Stuart, "as streamlined as the new Bugatti, with the efficiency of a beautiful machine."[657] Throughout this thesis I have repeatedly pointed out that industrial products and surfaces have

[655] Gundle, p. 11.
[656] Kakoudaki, 'Pinup and Cyborg', p. 170.
[657] Stuart, p. 91.

influenced the modes of sexual allure afforded to the pin-up throughout the Industrial Age. Like the coveted objects of this Age the pin-up herself is similarly an object of eroticism created through glamour and given human quality through the animation of her superficiality, her surface, her skin.

The fetish pin-up, appearing in the 1930s, clarified the significance of sensuous surfaces and the theoretical possibility of viewing the whole body as one entire erogenous zone. Leather costumes and body suits, furs, silks and satins – and by the 1960s and 1970s, PVC – would denote the tactile erotic pleasure of the skin and visually give the effect of a "second skin," as it is referred to within fetish culture. Fetish sex culture enhanced what was, essentially, the defining feature of the glamorized pin-up, whether illustrated or photographic: the elevation of flawless skin. Bunny Yeager recalls upon first working with Bettie Page that, "when she took off her clothes, she never seemed naked. Her tan was all over – it seemed almost like it was airbrushed on. Her skin was perfect – no blemishes."[658] Similarly cultural historian Anne Anlin Cheng, when considering specific images of Josephine Baker, refers to her as "[a woman who] wears her nakedness like a sheath."[659]

Baker's Hollywood glamour treatment by photographers such as George Hurrell and Ruth Harriet Louise, says Cheng, confound Richard Dyer's theory of the favouritism of whiteness and light inherent in camera technology and technique (*fig.179*).[660] These specific photographs utilize the surface of the skin to enhance its sensuousness, its humanness and haptic quality, making it almost hyperreal:

> Baker's black, airbrushed, and seemingly flawless skin – greased and polished to a shiny, laminated gloss – finds an echo in her sleek, metallicized hair that, in turn, recovers itself in the lamé cloth pouring out of her body. In these images, the spill and shimmer of light across the surface minimalize the three-dimensional materiality of the body. Indeed, light becomes a kind of prosthetic skin for Baker, rendering the idea of skin itself as costume, prop, and surrogate […] What is so sexy about these images is not so much Baker's naked body as its surfaceness and that quality's ability to express and facilitate fluidity.[661]

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[658] Essex, Swanson, p. 190.
[659] Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 1.
[660] Cheng, p. 110.
[661] Cheng, pp. 110-111.

“Surfaceness” is the purpose of all pin-up. The process of glamorization – when done competently, no matter the ethnicity of the model – makes the skin the object of desire, as it appears to become more immediate and more tactile in a photograph or a magazine than it would in person. Its reality becomes confused with its unreality. This effect in itself creates a second skin, with or without the fetishistic accoutrements. And the question of race clarifies and puts this chief aesthetic of pin-up into perspective by bringing to the fore the issue of the enhancement of surfaces, to hyperreal and fantastical heights.

Chapter 6.

Postmodern Pin-Up and Alternative "Looks": Retro Revival, Refusal, and the Return to Glamour.

In the iconoclastic era of the 1960s, pin-up's "innocence" quickly became seen as quaint. For one thing, the ubiquitous image of lone erotic females used to sell all manner of products turned into a tired cliché which appeared to reflect a lack of inspiration on the part of artists and photographers. Furthermore, as the women's movement increased awareness of the gender inequalities associated with such images, pin-ups were being more closely scrutinized and criticized for their potential to objectify women. Burgeoning second-wave feminism pointed out how the mass media seemed to portray women as merely available, smiling and vacant sex objects. By the 1970s feminist dialogue necessarily ignored the ostensible roots of glamour in sexual agency for the benefit of highlighting concerns about objectification and marginalization.

However at the time a few feminist artists, as Buszek observes, experimented with pin-up tropes in their work, most famously Cindy Sherman and Annie Sprinkle. Additionally, Pop Art artists such as Andy Warhol, and Photorealists such as John Kacere and Mel Ramos, appropriated the genre to more acutely draw attention to the commercialism, voyeurism and glamour of the pin-ups, intensifying in such a way their immediacy and sexual allure, as well as making audiences aware of the relationship between capitalism and sexual representation (*fig.180&181*). Still, for pin-up purists such as Louis Meisel, the pin-up era definitively came to an end by the turn of the 1970s. For him, anything that evolved out of illustrated pin-up was merely "derivative": "the sexual revolution, photography, illustration and art worlds, not to mention feminism, all changed how we looked at sex and women."[662] Effectively, the "wholesomeness" of the image could not carry through into a future that was becoming more candid and somewhat less naïve about sex and sexuality.

The word "glamour" began to be applied to more pornographic representations of women in men's magazines, as pin-up modelling and photography became increasingly accessible to more women, fuelled by the permissive culture of the sexual revolution. In mid-1960s Hollywood, young women who were not necessarily strippers, burlesque dancers or starlets were

[662] From an interview conducted with Louis Meisel via e-mail, 16/06/2013.

eager to pose for men's magazines. "Most held office jobs […] and did nude modeling on the side for extra money and for fun. By the liberal 60s there were more of these women seeking modeling work than the industry could accommodate," claims Dian Hanson.[663] As the work became more socially acceptable the models got younger, edging out the middle-aged burlesque/strippers; thus dropping the average model age to twenty-five by 1967 and even lower by the late 1960s with the influx of hippie models.[664] At the same time, the "free love" sentiment of the hippies guided the tendency towards increasingly pornographic pin-up content in the men's magazines. Also in the 1960s, the pin-ups' more pornographic derivative took flight featuring full frontal nudes and pubic hair, which *Penthouse* magazine dared to instigate by late 1970. Gradually, such (soft) pornography would eventually contribute to enabling the rise of hardcore pornography over subsequent decades.

Over the course of approximately 100 years pornography had come full-circle, from nineteenth-century contraband photographs available only to the wealthy, to sophisticated and elaborately themed photo-spreads in legitimate, affordable magazines. Pin-up had inadvertently served as a conduit in coaxing pornographic imagery out from the underground, modifying it for public consumption (in the form of pin-up), in order to revert back to its pornographic origins once the economic means and the moral climate for it had adjusted. In other words, underground pornography begat the proliferation of the semi-nude pin-up in print culture, which eventually begat mass-media pornography.

Pure pin-up, according to Louis Meisel, lasted from the late 1930s up until the late 1960s. Although the feminist movement significantly contributed to the disrepute of pin-up imagery alongside hardcore pornography from the late-1960s and throughout the 1970s and 1980s (and whilst pin-up art was never really *fashionable* and generally always regarded as kitsch[665]), it was also down to second-wave feminism that this current generation of women could return to pin-up imagery from a point of power and take on the aesthetic signs of these artworks and photographs. They could then use them *performatively*, exploiting those signs for their own personal use. In such a way, pin-up imagery and pin-up aesthetics have come to be reappropriated and refashioned amongst a

[663] Hanson, *Volume 3*, p. 39.
[664] Ibid.
[665] Meisel interview.

generation exposed to a feminist consciousness and aware of the socio-political deficiencies in pin-up's original underlying message.

From the mid-1970s, an emerging socio-political subculture – which from the outset did not seem to be connected to pin-up – provided a cultural climate that would eventually allow for the retro revival of pin-up: the subculture of punk (*fig.182*). The initial fermentation of punk ideology, style and aestheticism, alongside feminist ideology, later provided an atmosphere which enabled some women to adopt and adapt the stylings, femininity and sexual allure of pin-ups from a certain standpoint of rebellion, or as Dick Hebdige describes it, as "a form of Refusal."[666] Since the 1980s, the pin-up aesthetic has been combined with body modification and adornments such as tattooing and piercing, derived from punk style to create a uniquely postmodern look. This subcultural pin-up punk fashion, which has become more apparent in the twenty-first century, suggests a reclaiming of women's bodies from the hegemony of mass media and from the extreme of hardcore pornographic imagery (*fig.183*).

This subculture of women can be seen to be expressing a Refusal to be characterized in pornographic terms, by utilizing the signs of the original, modest but erotic pin-up to exert some control in the arena of sex, over the representational standards that suggest what it means to be feminine and Woman.[667] They utilize a postmodern pin-up style to revive a seemingly forgotten erotic, rather than hardcore, value to their bodies. All subcultures, as Hebdige argues, operate from the level of outward signs:

> The challenge to hegemony which subcultures represent is not issued directly by them. Rather it is expressed obliquely, in style. The objections are lodged, the contradictions displayed […] at the profoundly superficial level of appearances: that is, at the level of signs […] Style in subculture is, then, pregnant with significance. Its transformations […] are gestures, movements towards a speech which offends the 'silent majority', which challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus.[668]

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[666] Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London; New York: Routledge, 1979, 1999), p. 2.

[667] The "signs" of the pin-up alludes to an eroticism bound up with women's style and dress codes of the mid-twentieth century, generally considered to be demure, classic and flattering yet suggestive, as opposed to latter-day fashions that tend to favour exposure. General "signs," as intimated in previous chapters, would suggest enlarged breasts, hips and small waists, all in concealed/tasteful rather than revealing/tawdry clothes and underwear.

[668] Hebdige, pp. 17-18.

Subcultures do not, therefore, have a coherent ideology or belief system but rather draw attention to protest and the right to Refusal through dress and style. Interpreted in this way, the anti-establishment sentiments expressed through tattooing and a hard-edged style from punk culture have provided one dimension of the style of the postmodern pin-up. Furthermore, applying 1940s/1950s hairstyles, bright red lipstick, cat-eye eyeliner, and vintage/retro clothing, for instance, – pin-up signs of "when women were women" so to speak – is not necessarily an indicator of a wish to return to pre-second-wave feminist feminine norms. Rather, these signs should be read as a challenge to the "silent majority" by moving away from the current hegemonic, gym-toned, cosmetically enhanced style dictated by contemporary porn stars, and endorsed by the male gaze.

On the other hand, celebrated pin-up artist Olivia De Berardinis, who has closely observed the revival of pin-up over the last four decades, suggests that pin-up style is used and interpreted differently today, since women who follow that style "have no idea what the political climate was really like when women wore these fashions," thus suggesting that it was a style that reinforced gender norms.[669] However, she also acknowledges that the exaggerated femininity of that style can be reinterpreted as a source of power, to some extent, since it is removed from the context of its originating political climate. This is a socio-political luxury that only this Western generation could afford:

> There is some evolution since the 50s in women's desires to please themselves instead of solely pleasing your man or partner. The pin-up style exaggerates the body form and hyper feminizes the women who dress in it. The power of it is used differently in this generation. Forms of pin-up are a mainstay of popular culture, it never goes away, it just evolves to reflect the times.[670]

Retro Revivalism.

It is not especially surprising that just at the highpoint of punk in the mid-1970s, the then unknown artist Olivia De Berardinis took up erotic pin-up painting and began working from photographs of the then-forgotten Bettie Page. De Berardinis refers to Page as the "action hero of pinup."[671] This summation of Page explains her appeal to contemporary fans: the representation of combined

[669] From an interview conducted with Olivia De Berardinis via e-mail, 30/06/2013.
[670] Ibid.
[671] Olivia De Berardinis, *Bettie Page by Olivia* (Malibu: Ozone Productions, 2006), p. 69.

eroticism and apparent sexual agency in her images. This formerly underground, action/active pin-up thus spoke to a generation of women who were becoming more aware of reclaiming their rights and their bodies, set against an urban backdrop of the gritty, anarchic ethos of the punk movement. Page biographers Essex and Swanson observe that:

> Bettie's star rose in conjunction with the looser, post-sexual revolution mores, and with the punk movement, which resurrected outsider imagery and dark iconography: skulls, gothic crosses and demons invoking sacrilege, and leather, spikes and chains invoking sexual deviance. Bettie Page, an underground fetish goddess, emerged as the perfect sex icon.[672]

When De Berardinis discovered photos of Page in a collection shown to her by J.B. Rund, she unearthed a muse. This muse appeared to fit the ethic behind the type of woman De Berardinis was eager to paint, someone who ironically reflected her own environment: 1970s New York. De Berardinis explains her choice:

> When I started illustrating, I decided that I would paint a very direct, sexually knowledgeable women. When I began in the mid 70's, the 50's pin-ups from the time that I was growing up were everywhere: cloyingly sweet and politically incorrect, just as I was. The feminist movement was in full roar, and sweetness was not in vogue. A sexually aggressive and curious woman had emerged and that was who I wanted to paint.[673]

De Berardinis was the first commercial artist to use Page's image in advertising, in a painting entitled *Bettie's Shoes* for the Italian clothing company Fiorucci Jeans (*fig.184*).[674] In the late 1970s, artist Robert Blue had worked independently on Bettie Page airbrushed paintings (*fig.185*), but it would be the publication of Dave Stevens's adventure comic *The Rocketeer* in 1982 that would finally mark Bettie Page's return as retro muse and eventually trigger a widespread Page-inspired pin-up revival.[675] *The Rocketeer* is a masterwork of

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[672] Swanson, Essex, p. 238.
[673] Homa Nasab, 'Interview with *Playboy*'s Artist in Residence – Olivia De Berardinis', Museum Views, ARTINFO.com, at http://blogs.artinfo.com/museumviews/2010/09/16/playboys-artist-in-resident-in-conversation-with-olivia-de-berardinis/, accessed 06/06/2013.
[674] De Berardinis, p. 77.
[675] It is interesting to note that abstract expressionist Franz Kline worked with Bettie Page as his muse between 1951-1956. The painter lived in the same building as the Klaw's studio and used

retro enthusiasm, as comic book artist Adam Hughes puts it, "it was brand-new, yet familiar, like a favourite meal."[676] Set in late 1930s California, it follows the travails of pilot Cliff Secord who, armed with retro-futuristic helmet and flying jetpack, becomes the intrepid hero as he engages in government agent intrigue alongside his headstrong pin-up model girlfriend Betty (based on Bettie Page) (*fig.186*). The comic is a vivid and lusciously illustrated postmodern bricolage that gathers together a nostalgia for 1930s era pulps and comics, B-movie adventure capers and mid-twentieth-century pin-up.

Consequently Bettie Page was "rediscovered" by the cult comics and collectors fans, thus linking her to a contemporary subcultural identification with all things nostalgic and retro. Through the character of Betty, the real Bettie Page found fame once more, with a fanbase that would grow throughout subsequent decades to the present day.[677] Stevens identified in Page physical characteristics that would obviously appeal to a comics readership, but essentially he recognized in the model an ostensibly transgressive woman, ahead of her time, who only by the 1980s could truly be appreciated for her own personal sexual revolution undertaken three decades earlier. *The Rocketeer*'s Betty became one of the most popular comics characters ever. Stevens comments:

> She is embraced by both sexes, and she's become a role model for young women – a maverick who did as she pleased without concern for the social restrictions of the time. Bettie was bold and independent when women just weren't allowed to be that.[678]

For a contemporary 1980s viewership inclined to think of the 1950s woman as stereotypically submissive and domesticated, the riotous kinky imagery of Bettie Page was anathema to the suffering "happy housewives" with "the problem that has no name" brought to attention by Betty Friedan in the postwar years.[679] The rediscovery of Page's subversive imagery challenged preconceived notions about women's history and their assumed domestic entrapment.

Page as an artists' model to create art for non-commercial purposes. See Richard Prince, *Bettie Kline*, (New York: Gagosian Gallery, 2009).

[676] *Dave Stevens: Covers and Stories*, introduction by Adam Hughes (San Diego: IDW Publishing, 2012), p. 5.

[677] Page's popularity lives on as evident with the release of the 2005 film version of Page's life, *The Notorious Bettie Page*. Whilst at the time of writing, the documentary *Bettie Page Reveals All*, is due to be released in November 2013.

[678] Swanson, Essex, p. 249.

[679] See Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (London: Penguin Books, 1963, 1992).

Bettie Page revivalism and the aesthetic of the postmodern pin-up it inspired were to become dominant and persistent themes amongst retro enthusiasts for decades to come. Contemporary nods to pin-up, whether through commercial products, fashion, or as subcultural style are considered to be "retro." Retro can also be considered an "outlook on life."[680] In the definitive source on the subject, *Retro: A Culture of Revival*, Elizabeth E. Guffey argues that more often than not, retro points to mid-twentieth-century design, fashion and culture and "champions […] the artistic and popular culture of the industrial age."[681] Pin-up imagery, especially the illustrated genre, would thus fall under the broad theme of retro Americana from that period, which continues to fascinate within youth and popular culture, even beyond the United States. Retro, as Guffey explains it, is "unsentimental" and a "deviant form of revivalism."[682] It is defined by its detachment, cynicism and ironic stance, its "non-seriousness" is "distinguished from frivolity" however, and unlike nostalgia it does not recollect in a manner that mixes melancholia with romanticism.[683]

These traits of the unsentimental and of deviant revivalism are apparent in all of retro and, relevantly, in retro pin-up-related merchandise such as those greetings cards, mugs, key-rings and all other trinkets sold in gift stores. Pin-up art is often in such cases subverted with ironic humour. For instance, a gift-store mug decorated with an Elvgren pin-up gazing directly at the viewer whilst applying lipstick features a contemporary caption which reads: "Both of us can't look good at the same time…it's me or the house." This is characteristic of retro's application of the mechanism of humour, usually satire, cynicism and/or irony, to re-view history. In this case, the (conventional) second-wave interpretation of the Elvgren Girl as a kept and pampered 1950s housewife is subverted to reflect a more "acceptable" contemporary response to the image, which is to imply that she refuses to be domesticated.

This possibly explains the Bettie Page retro revival and subsequent fascination with retro pin-up. Those who worked with and photographed Page, have observed how she would gaily posed for the camera with a light-hearted approach, appearing not take the nature of her work very seriously. As a consequence of which, she seemingly destabilizes the authoritative effect of the

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[680] Elizabeth E. Guffey, *Retro: The Culture of Revival* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), p. 10.
[681] Guffey, p. 13.
[682] Guffey, pp. 11-13.
[683] Gufey, p. 14.

male gaze directed at her. Page's tongue-in-cheek expressions – most effectively when bound and gagged during the Klaw sessions – lend themselves effortlessly to retro's "most enduring quality," that is, "its ironic stance."[684] Unlike the fey Elvgren paintings and those of similar ilk that appear to contemporary eyes as quaint, kitsch or even camp, Page's larger-than-life knowing expressions have little need for biting satirical taglines. Irony exudes from her.

Furthermore, retro revivalism signals what Guffey explains as a "[coming] to terms with the modern past."[685] It does so by "imply[ing] rupture" through its pick-and-choose approach to recalling history, a method that transforms "the 'Ugly' into the 'Great'," and enables "view[ing] the past with trendy detachment."[686] Fashion photographer Ellen von Unwerth, for example, much like De Berardinis before her, admires Bettie Page from a chronological distance, stating that she is "the kind of girl I like [to photograph]," without necessarily taking into account the fact of the crudeness of Page's job during that time.[687] Unwerth's photographic style, as evident in her photographic book *Fraülein*, recalls the rawness of Page's on-camera attitude through her own admiration for erotic depictions of women (*fig.187*). But Unwerth's style is slick and sensual and classy in a way that Page's photographs never were – at least until they acquired a ("incorrect", as Jim Linderman points out) nostalgic retro sheen. Bettie's sometime vocation therefore, may have been "Ugly" in its voyeuristic capacity, but retro revival focuses on the elements that make her, via that vocation, "Great."

With regard to the question of how we come to terms with the recent past, it appears that postmodern pin-up rejects the naivety associated with the stereotypical view of the repressed, oppressed and domesticated mid-twentieth-century woman. This is accomplished by incorporating tattoos and piercings into the pin-up look, as a way of taking control over images that lack irony (*fig.183*).[688] The postmodern pin-up's retro ruptures are a mode of Refusal, as Hebdige describes it. Bettie's life and the nature of her modelling work were by no means "liberating" to all women. But through retro's propensity for instigating

[684] Guffey, p. 20.
[685] Guffey, p. 9.
[686] Guffey, pp. 161-162.
[687] Essex, Swanson, p. 270.
[688] Nonetheless, competent pin-up artists such as Petty, Elvgren, Ballantyne, Frush, Moran, Mozert, Runci, to name a few, always painted with subtlety and a hint of irony.

rupture, by selecting certain traits from her image – raven hair cut into heavy bangs, high heels, seamed stockings, leather outfits, a confident attitude that appears to imply sexual agency – Bettie's mythology is exacting in its creation. As De Berardinis has observed:

> At my first art shows, during the 80's, I started to see women come in, with the Bettie bangs, heavily tattooed, and dressed in black. I've been watching over the decades many *variations* of her walk up to me. This army of Betties continues to grow [my italics].[689]

Page's exhibitionism – a defiant approval of her body in an age in which conservatism and demureness were expected of women – and her apparent humorous enjoyment of the absurdity of her work made an icon out of her for later generations, who interpreted the manner in which she apparently dealt with her sexualisation, not as a victim, but with humour and thus from a point of power.

Page, therefore, ostensibly becomes a sexually empowered role model for a current generation who must exist within a culture saturated with sexual imagery, and who need to relate to a female figure within the sexual arena. Stemming from Page's imagery of resistance (to the postwar female social norm) therefore, the subcultural postmodern pin-up aesthetic, via retro revival, stands for a Refusal. Subsequently Page's "Ugly" pin-up origins are transformed into the mythological "Great." This reading of Page is supported by cultural historian Ryan Moore, who observes that "young women who began to model their style after Bettie Page and retro pin-ups […] did so because they were dissatisfied with the hegemonic standards of beauty and sexuality in the mainstream media and commercial culture."[690] Unwerth makes a similar claim, according to her: "Pin-ups are not vulgar. I'm against vulgarity. I like what is charming and humorous. That's why Bettie Page is so strong and that's what is coming through. She loves what she's doing, and she does it with fun. That's why she's not a victim."[691] Thus, Page's look and attitude are perceived as being almost modern.

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[689] De Berardinis, *Malibu Cheesecake*, p. 33.
[690] Moore, p. 193.
[691] Swanson, Essex, p. 270.

Through the Bettie Page retro revival, mid-twentieth-century pin-up aesthetics were thus reappropriated to suggest late-twentieth/early-twenty-first-century agency. This revival was related to the budding retro music scene emerging from San Diego in the early 1990s. According to Moore, the band *Rocket From the Crypt* helped establish the contemporary retro "standard" of vintage clothing and tattooing. They, along with three other significant bands – *Uncle Tupelo*, *The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion* and *The Supersuckers* – contributed to a postmodern hotchpotch image and sound that drew on country/folk ("roots") music and a vague 1950s greaser style which they experimentally combined with electric rock, and tattoos and piercings respectively. Interestingly, Moore surmises that this male-dominated subcultural retro revival was a response to an increasingly prevalent crisis of masculinity set-off by uncertain localized economic changes: "The retro greaser look accompanied by a return to various forms of roots music can be seen as symbolic work on the part of young men to anchor their identity in an image of white working-class masculinity." Moore also claims that for the women who were attached to "the scene" the retro look was adopted with much less significance attached to the "social-historical values embodied in the styles and fashions they recycled," ultimately because women's political, social and economic status has radically improved since the mid-twentieth century.[692] Be that as it may, Moore has perhaps elided or failed to recognize that the social-historical perspective on women's sex lives is an area that continues to be queried. Consequently, it would make sense that women have adopted the hyper-feminine style and representational eroticism of Page from the 1950s to respond to, and to challenge this perennially grey area. It is a look which women also combined with tattoos and piercings: "A style that employed vintage fashions and the pin-up look mixed the punk and goth subculture of tattoos and piercing became increasingly evident among youth women in various alternative music scenes during the 1990s."[693]

The history of women's tattooing is a centuries long tradition as Margot Mifflin outlines in her authoritative book *Bodies of Subversion*. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries women have increasingly gone under the needle, "as

[692] Moore, p. 193. Moore does however concede to women also being affected by changes in the job market and the rise of single (female) parent families, burdening women with increased financial pressure.
[693] Moore, p. 193.

an expression of personal growth," as Mifflin sees it. [694] The woman who tends to get tattooed is aged between 23-55 and is somebody, states Mifflin, who is "discovering or rediscovering herself." Arguably what Mifflin may have meant by this is that women use tattooing as a method of *performance*, since the "self" is not "discovered" but rather, is created and constructed. The beginning of the upsurge in women's tattooing slightly preceded the establishment of the San Diego retro music scene. During the Reagan era, Mifflin observes, anxieties about the body, and especially women's bodies, were at the forefront of daily social politics, specifically issues surrounding AIDS, surrogacy, the anti-porn lobby, cosmetic surgery and even female body-building. "Tattoo art both refracted and relieved such anxieties," claims Mifflin.[695] Most interestingly during this time, women began to adopt the traditionally male tattoo emblem of the pin-up girl as "hallmarks of feminine power and eros, and for […] their 'feminine excess'" (fig.).[696] Mifflin, in agreement with De Berardinis and Moore, saw how within "tattoo culture" at this time women began to embrace Bettie Page's signature look, viewing her as a "single towering icon of sexual assertiveness."[697] "Pin-up revival," as Mifflin sees it, in tattoo culture, pointed to explorations and experimentations in representational gendered identities and femininity in the commercial and art worlds. Pin-ups, she claims, took off in the 1990s mostly because of the nostalgic eroticism attached to them (*fig.188*), but have since "assumed an edge of postmodern irreverence," by rupturing their traditional significations via popular depictions of "fat pinups, zombie pinups, and 'ripper' pinups that appear to step out of torn flesh."[698]

However, Mifflin appears critical of what, in the twenty-first century, has morphed into an over-reliance on expression through the body. There is, she observes, a "relentless conflation of femininity and sexuality in pop culture," which has become entwined with tattooing.[699] As a result, tattooing has now become appropriated by the mainstream and has had its subcultural roots sanitized. This Mifflin observes is a negative socio-cultural transformation, which she finds reflected in the phenomenon of the SuicideGirls (*fig.189*) who

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[694] Margot Mifflin, *Bodies of Subversion: A Secret History of Women and Tattoo* (New York: Powerhouse Books, 2013), p. 74.
[695] Mifflin, p. 72.
[696] Mifflin, p. 85.
[697] Ibid.
[698] Ibid.
[699] Mifflin, p. 34.

"had a moment" with the tattoo aesthetic – adopted from the Riot Grrrls[700] – but eventually "lost their "alternative" status."[701]

Established in 2001, the SuicideGirls are a web-based community providing a space for women to apply for their own page dedicated to pin-up shots of themselves. All participants are required to maintain their own personal blog and profile. The site declares its purpose is to promote individuality and alternative ideals of beauty, which usually translates as tattoos, piercings and colourful hair with a somewhat, though not always, retro styling. SuicideGirls was set up by "Missy Suicide," a Vargas pin-ups- and Bettie Page-inspired photographer.[702] After taking pin-up photos of her friends Missy came up with the idea of a community website to "showcase the awesomeness of my friends; the pierced and tattooed girls who I thought were the most beautiful girls." This at a time, she claims, when tattoos were still taboo and social networking sites non-existent.[703] Over the years, the site has attracted a lot of attention, both praise but also criticism directed at its "feminist" stance, something that has always been propagated by its creator.[704] Furthermore, it is an attempt by its creator to showcase an "alternative" route to enacting femininity: "SuicideGirls is an alternative to the mainstream media's obsession with the silicone enhanced Barbie Dolls and the incredible shrinking starlets. I wanted to show the world that beauty and intelligence were not mutually exclusive."[705] It attempts to include women of "different shapes and sizes, abilities and afflictions," but struggles to maintain a high proportion of non-white women. In relation to pin-up's genealogy however, SuicideGirls represents how, since the turn of the twenty-first century, pornography has become absorbed into mainstream imagery: "retro/pin-up and the punk/goth look came together with developing 'alt porn' media (made possible by the Internet) in the creation of Suicide Girls," claims Moore.[706] The controversial aspect of SuicideGirls has subsided in

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[700] Riot Grrrls is a (third-wave) feminist subculture and underground music genre originating in the early 1990s from Washington, DC, USA.
[701] Mifflin, p. 114.
[702] Moore, p. 194.
[703] Mitchell Sunderland, 'Boobies for Feminism: An Interview with Suicide Girls Founder Missy Suicide', *The Phoenix*, Sarah Lawrence College, Vol. 2, No. 4, February 17th 2013, p. 7.
[704] For further analysis of SuicideGirls see Shoshana Magnet, 'Feminist sexualities, race and the internet: an investigation of suicidegirls.com', *New Media & Society*, Vol. 9, No. 4, August 2007, pp. 577-602, and Eric Chamberlin, ''Pin-up punks': The reality of a virtual community', *Youth Cultures: Scenes, Subcultures and Tribes*, ed. Paul Hodkinson, Wolfgang Deicke (New York; London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 187-199.
[705] Sunderland, p. 7.
[706] Moore, p. 193.

recent years, which reflects how unremarkable pornography's invasion of mainstream imagery has become. The SuicideGirls' "alt-porn" status, combined with its insistence that it operates alongside feminist ideology, is the reason it occasionally continues to fire debate.

Pastiche and Dita von Teese.

At the turn-of-the-millennium Dita Von Teese emerged from what could be termed an "alt-porn" subculture, to become an internationally celebrated fetish pin-up/burlesque dancer.[707] Her pin-up and burlesque aesthetics, as well as her "alternative" status, were formulated in the LA retro and rave scenes she had participated in, first as a dancer and later as a stripper. Her retro look is typical of the mingled subcultures of that area in the early 1990s:

> the 40s/50s 'look' feeds into the contemporary burlesque 'retro' style. In fact one of the obvious differences between the new burlesque movement and 1860s/70s and 1920s/30s burlesque is that this current phenomenon came out of and continues to feed into 'alternative' groups such as the psychobillies, rockabillies, punks and those interested in Moulin Rouge-style Victoriana such as the goths and the gothic lolitas as well as subcultural groups where, for example, tattoos and piercing are on the whole acceptable.[708]

One of those Page variations who walked up to Olivia De Berardinis in the early 1990s was a then unknown model who would later become renowned New Burlesque striptease artist Dita Von Teese: "I had Bettie Page bangs and I was re-creating Bettie's images," says Von Teese, "I was very interested in bringing back the whole spirit of Bettie Page. I looked a lot like Bettie Page then, in regards to my style."[709] Von Teese's early retro fascination with Golden Era Hollywood movies and glamour, and mid-twentieth-century burlesque imagery had led her straight to all things Bettie Page, via an interest for vintage lingerie and corsetry. Her retro enthusiasm for Page propelled her to carve out a niche for herself as a fetish model – something that, by the 1990s, had long disappeared in the men's magazine/pornographic arena – whilst simultaneously working on her burlesque acts in strip-joints. Von Teese's image, burlesque acts

[707] In *The Fetish Factbook*, Paul Scott speaks of the originality of sites such as Dita's (in 2004) and of representing "an emergent kind of cyber-pulp, part-art, part-porn, that will last as long as there is a market." Scott, p. 96.
[708] Willson, p. 33.
[709] De Berardinis, p. 45.

and media presence have strongly influenced the modern revival of pin-up aesthetics, and have contributed vastly to the contemporary proliferation of a postmodern pin-up figure.

Von Teese claims to want to "inspire women to embrace their own unique beauty and create their own glamour."[710] On her website she declares herself a "modern-day feminist," thereby implying that she champions female empowerment through her own methods of propagating manufactured glamour, but that she is probably not a feminist in a strictly academic sense, nor is she a take-it-to-the-streets activist.[711] Yet her feminist "credentials" are regularly contested in media interviews as she is questioned about how her willing "objectification" can ever be considered feminist.[712] Von Teese's standard retort is that most of her fans are women, a fact that requires, she claims, further attention. Indeed, the fact she has a mainly female fanbase is a significant factor in the rise of postmodern pin-up.

"Every man wants to be *with* the American pin-up. I want to *be* her," claims Von Teese.[713] Rather problematically, she may have missed the irony of her statement, that she wants to be a pin-up suggests that she wants to do so *because* every man wants to be with the pin-up, thus to *be* desired is to *feel* desirable. However, this should not automatically translate as patriarchal submission. There is enough evidence in Von Teese's career to suggest she is aware of her objectification and actively participates in it in order to pursue her own personal artistic goals:

> Some people may not consider modeled photos a form of entertainment, but I like to think that each of my pictures tells a story, and that all of my performances are also pin-ups […] For me, it's important to be the model *and* the artist.[714]

Whilst Von Teese is probably best known for her burlesque revival fame, her acts and her persona are informed by her personal affection for pin-ups, as

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[710] Sarah Maber, 'Dita Von Teese on the Couch', *Psychologies* magazine, UK edition, June 2007, pp. 20-25.
[711] 'Dita Von Teese, Biography', http://www.dita.net/glamour-girl/about-dita/, accessed 26/07/2013.
[712] See Safraz Manzoor and Alex Healey, 'You can't dictate to a woman what should make her feel sexy', *theguardian.com,* 24th November 2011, 6.58mins., http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/video/2011/nov/24/dita-von-teese-interview-video?INTCMP=SRCH, accessed 26/07/2013.
[713] Dita Von Teese with Bronwyn Garrity, *Burlesque and the Art of the Teese/Fetish and the Art of the Teese* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), p. 95.
[714] Ibid.

demonstrated in the above quote. Moreover, the fact that Von Teese appears to use herself as a canvas upon which to perform glamour and femininity – "to be the model *and* the artist" – and the fact that she is reputed to always insist upon complete control over her image (something she has done since the very early days of her career), suggest a woman in control of her sexualized persona. Fetish photographer Peter W. Czernich who worked closely with Von Teese in her early days recalls that:

> Dita always had a clear idea of what she wanted to be, and has remained faithful to that right from the start. As a result, she has created a clear and unmistakable image. Her poses are natural and provocative in spite of their perfection, and never seem artificial, stiff or twisted.[715]

That she employs pastiche in her pin-up pictures and burlesque acts illustrates a keen knowledge of pin-up's history and is further evidence of her control over the creation of her image, particularly considering how original it was at a time when the media was dominated by the 1970s-1990s vacuous, unsophisticated Californian-type blondes.

With Dita Von Teese's imagery and performances, the genealogy of pin-up comes full circle. Over her twenty-year career Von Teese has paid homage to *fin-de-siécle* illustrations (*fig.190&191*), the Ziegfeld Follies (*fig.192&193*), John Willie illustration (*fig.194&195*), Bettie Page bondage shoots, classic mainstream 1950s pin-up, and *Playboy*'s Femlin (*fig.196*) amongst many other genres in the pin-up genealogy. Similarly she has performed her own burlesque take on Marilyn Monroe's number *Lazy* and Mae West's *A Guy What Takes His Time* at the Crazy Horse in Paris.

Pastiche differs from retro in that it is carried out in earnest, in homage to the original as a mark of respect, thus irony can be somewhat lacking. For Von Teese there is more than an incidental dash of nostalgia in her personal pin-up revival quest. In fact, she appears to mourn for a "lost" femininity above all. It seems that for her the exaggerated sexy females she channels through pastiche is an attempt to bring back a type of "womanliness" associated with the mid-twentieth century and achieved through the "creation of glamour."[716] By

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[715] Peter W. Czernich, *Vintage Dita* (Zurich: Edition Skylight, 2008, 2010), p. 5.
[716] Sasha Levine, 'Who is Dita Von Teese?', Lifestyle Mirror, 28th May 2013, 3.04 mins., http://www.lifestylemirror.com/cover/who-is-dita-von-teese/, accessed 29/07/2013.

today's standards it is considered an extraordinary look because it is high-maintenance and very obviously artificial, something that Von Teese gladly admits to and describes as a "different point of view of sexy" (by proxy of its having previously gone out of fashion). The end goal of this look is "personal empowerment."[717] Von Teese has commented on how as a child she felt "ordinary, and […] wanted to be extraordinary" and that as an avid fan of old movies she found that she "wanted to be the women […] in those movies. I wanted that glamour in my life. I remember thinking, why can't I dress like that every day? […] look at the power [they have]."[718] Von Teese therefore associates a self-consciously manufactured femininity with a representational sexual agency, which she communicates via the artifice of heightened femininity.

Furthermore, Von Teese's faithfulness to pastiche extends to her personal life, evidence perhaps of a deeply held loyalty to maintaining her original alternative and subversive way of life. She claims that for her there is no difference between her public persona, expressed via vintage clothes and styling, and her personal lifestyle. She collects classic cars and resides in a house filled with authentic vintage furnishings, original pin-up art, and burlesque and fetish memorabilia. "I don't have to turn it on and off," she says, "I accept myself and the things that I love and the aesthetics I love and I'm not trying to please anyone else."[719] It could thus be assumed that Von Teese is perhaps enamoured more with the aestheticism of pin-up and less with the visual sexualization.

Growing up in the 1980s and 1990s Von Teese (née Heather Renee Sweet) was inspired by popstar Madonna – who, during that era, was a ground-breaking sex icon – but at the same time found that she could not relate to the relentless sexualized iconography of the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit issue covergirls at that time.[720] Madonna's influence over the sexual mores of young women at the time was a revelation for many, and one of her most eager champions was Camille Paglia who, in an article in *The New York Times* in 1990, demonstrated the effect her brand of femininity was having on American and Western youth at the time:

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[717] Ibid.
[718] Maber, p. 22.
[719] Levine, http://www.lifestylemirror.com/cover/who-is-dita-von-teese/, accessed 29/07/2013
[720] Ibid.

> Madonna is the true feminist. She exposes the puritanism and suffocating ideology of American feminism, which is stuck in an adolescent whining mode. Madonna has taught young women to be fully female and sexual while still exercising total control over their lives. She shows girls how to be attractive, sensual, energetic, ambitious, aggressive and funny – all at the same time.[721]

Paglia's comments, whilst valid, elucidates an interpretation of Madonna's contribution to postfeminism which in reality probably escaped many of her young and impressionable fans. Madonna was, for the most part – and particularly during the early 1990s – generally considered to be a deeply controversial figure for expressing her brand of feminism in an outlandish and unabashed sexualized manner.

Heather Sweet came-of-age when Madonna was reworking vintage corsets with Jean-Paul Gaultier, and name-checking and emulating, respectively, 1930s and 1940s Hollywood stars in her lyrics and video for the song *Vogue* (*fig.197*). Starting out as a teenage fetish/erotic model during this period, "Dita"[722] pursued in her work and her personal/professional image an iconography of sensuality of a retro sensibility, conveyed with an assertive and "ambitious" attitude, which some observers like Paglia, may interpret as a type of *feminism*, that Madonna had made acceptable. Von Teese's foray into fetish from the beginning of her career recalls the subversive mentality associated with the 1950s fetish imagery of New York's Bowery, when the Klaw pin-ups were everything that ubiquitous mainstream pin-ups were not. Von Teese consistently asserts: "I'm…an *alternative* role model, I don't claim to be naturally beautiful [my italics]," indicating that she is proud to have emerged, professionally, from an underground scene that is fully aware of adopting superficial artifice as a form of expression, in her case a sexualized representational creative mode.[723]

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[721] Camille Paglia, 'Madonna I: Animality and Artifice', *Sex, Art, and American Culture: Essays* (London: Viking, 1992), p. 4.

[722] Madonna wrote her book *Sex* (1992) from the point of view of "Mistress Dita" a name that she took from1930s German movie actress Dita Parlo. It is probable that Heather Sweet was alerted to the name/actress from this book and subsequently adopted it as her professional name. She added a surname – "Von Teese" – following a requirement from *Playboy* magazine special issue *Lingerie,* when they were due to feature her in it.

[723] Levine, http://www.lifestylemirror.com/cover/who-is-dita-von-teese/, accessed 29/07/2013.

Von Teese's retro eroticism, while having lost its original sense of taboo, is resurrected here as an alternative to the banality and plethora of imagery of contemporary pornified femininity. As Jacki Willson observes:

> This image [pursued by Von Teese] stands out from all the bland images of 'sexy' girls that the media relentlessly churn out every day […] There is a hyper-visual sensual appeal about Von Teese's images; she seems to take slightly too much pleasure from the sexualized display.[724]

Bouncing back and forth between her pin-up girl and showgirl/burlesque status, the key to Von Teese's success appears to come down to timing. In the pursuit of "bringing back" a retro femininity her efforts eventually coincided with the emergent retro music scene and a cultural media ready to re-embrace an exaggerated femininity after a period of minimalist and grunge fashion. By the mid-1990s the Neo or New Burlesque scene was emerging on opposite sides of the United States. In Hollywood the Velvet Hammer event at the El Ray nightclub and Moulin Rouge Nights at Jumbo's Clown Room paid witness to the first rumblings of burlesque's return. While in New York the Blue Angel and the Va Va Vroom Room at the Fez club did the same for east-coast retro devotees.[725] Perhaps Von Teese's taking of "slightly too much pleasure" from her imagery and her acts, suggests a genuine admiration for a retro erotic femininity, evident in her "grass-roots" involvement in a subculture that she promotes and carves a career and business out of.

The return of the burlesque striptease is, in comparison to the deluge of available hardcore pornography, a tame expression of desire by today's standards. Rachel Shteir observes that "we live in an age in which tease is irrelevant and stripping is all." Shteir argues that this is a reflection of both the changes in social freedoms undergone over the last century, and the nurturing of a culture of "instant gratification over anticipation." [726] The irrelevance of tease in the face of the monolithic rise of stripping and hardcore pornography suggests that what remains of the husk of burlesque is a void that can and has been filled with nostalgic semi-fiction by retro enthusiasts. In strict terms, it is neither a feminist venture nor a revolution in any way, but by reviving an erotic

[724] Willson, p. 35.
[725] Shteir, p. 3.
[726] Shteir, p. 338.

expression now irrelevant in the male-oriented heterosexual arena, it becomes a safer experimental ground through which to explore female sexualization and eroticism on women's terms. It draws attention to the fact that burlesque strip-teasing, in the same vein as pin-up, leaves something to the imagination, as the old adage goes, and in that space the "mystique" of a woman – which is an erotic fiction[727] – is left intact as a mark of respect to the woman. Or, as Roland Barthes interprets it (referring specifically to the G-string that covers the stripper's genitalia, and thus her *modesty*): the "censoring" of the genitalia reifies women through the route of femininity by elevating them above their flesh-and-bone existence:

> This ultimate triangle, by its pure and geometrical shape, by its hard and shiny material, bars the way to the sexual parts like a sword of purity, and definitively drives the woman back into a mineral world, the (precious) stone being here the irrefutable symbol of the absolute object, that which serves no purpose.[728]

Paradoxically then, it becomes almost like a return to the elevated impenetrable Victorian beauty standard and the pedestal-raising glorification of Woman.

Whilst a fetish model, Von Teese's imagery did cater to, at least in some respects, the conventional pornified male gaze. Her earlier work includes shots of her with exposed genitalia, and soft-core pornographic films mostly involving other women, something that can be viewed for a charge on her website, where she describes it as "full artistic nudity." Commercialism is never far from these types of endeavours, or from the glorification of femininity, glamour or pin-up aestheticism. Perhaps because Von Teese is historically aware of commercialism always being bound up in the legacy of pin-up, it is the reason that her fanbase has shifted from mostly male to mostly female over the last decade. Conversely, even in her forays into pornography, Von Teese still managed to retain a modicum of her own individuality and personality expressed through her (then original) fetish outlook. She sells her "look" and her borderline fetish/semi-pornographic aesthetic through her business ventures, including vintage-inspired clothing, lingerie and perfumes that all bare the

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[727] "The end of the striptease is then no longer to drag into the light a hidden depth, but to signify, through the shedding of an incongruous and artificial clothing, nakedness as a *natural* vesture of woman, which amounts in the end to regaining a perfectly chaste state of the flesh." See Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (London: Vintage, 1957, 1972, 1993), pp. 84-85.
[728] Barthes, p. 85.

signature of her distinctive self-starter retro personality: "What I've been trying to preach and create is do-it-yourself glamour because that's what my entire career is based on […] I've always enjoyed the art of self-creation and that's what I'm really selling with my perfumes and lingerie."[729] Additionally, she reaps financial benefits from her somewhat dubious past involvement in semi-pornographic shoots and films, none of which wholly redeems her from having partaken in an authoritatively male perspective on pornography.

Still, Von Teese's obvious devotion to her fetishistic individuality, evident in all of her work, suggests that, as in her appropriated name, "teasing" is the quality she is adamantly pursuing in the name of retro enthusiasm and everything that that entails. By promoting an eroticization of femininity that leaves something unsaid in not revealing everything (for the most part), the glorification of character and personality through an expression of erotic femininity "glorifies" the woman instead of reducing her to the sum of her parts, while expressing a Refusal of a hegemonic standard of eroticism and femininity. As Shteir argues, burlesque tends to surface at times of economic boom when the economic climate is best suited to burlesque's underlying purposes, hence, she observes, Neoburlesque "recalls in its origins a mix of protest and commercialism." Whilst the "real radicalism" of stripping in general, if it actually exists as such, "arises from the fact that it glorifies women, even when a commercial impulse drives that glorification."[730] Dita Von Teese's alternative pin-up status subsequently tells of the salvaging and renewal of glamour, like a vintage piece lovingly restored and returned to an admiring twenty-first-century audience.

Contemporary pin-up art.

Ultimately, pin-up remains an art form. And it is perhaps more than fair to state that the art and publishing worlds had a large part to play in making it fashionable once again by reviewing the value of pin-up art and illustration, specifically, with the 1996 publication of Taschen's *The Great American Pin-Up*, which showcased and made public for the first time the prized combined collections of Louis K. Meisel and Charles Martignette. For twenty years Meisel and Martignette were alone in their venture of collecting, not just pin-up art, but

[729] Levine, http://www.lifestylemirror.com/cover/who-is-dita-von-teese/, accessed 29/07/2013.
[730] Shteir, p. 339.

American illustration art in general. Together they amassed over 1000 vintage works between them, and were the first to ever be given access to, and granted permission to use images from, the Brown & Bigelow archives in Minnesota. "What I think is truthful about what really happened," Meisel says, "I can absolutely state, that Charles and I were the absolute impetus for the resurgence [of interest in pin-up art]."[731] He continues:

> when we finally got that book out (which has sold over 300,000 copies) it totally awakened the interest of the entire world to, and informed, all of this almost lost and forgotten art genre. Publishers, fashion designers, art schools, TV and radio and all sorts of manufacturers took note. We got hundreds of calls, enquiries and requests a month for years (still on-going). The Pin-up was reborn.[732]

Today, original pin-up art can go for hundreds of thousands of dollars at auction, when only a few years previously the Meisel Gallery was the only fine art gallery to dare to exhibit and promote the genre, "in spite of the art world frowning and denigrating what I was doing."[733] Non-derivative pin-up art, dating from approximately the 1930s-1960s, does not necessarily inspire due to the erotic content alone, ultimately, it is because of the nostalgia that this kind of art evokes. Its oft-derided representational style reflects, for those amongst the retro-appreciative crowd, a dream of innocence and ease, an escapist form of art that returns the art form to an antebellum state. "Sexy, erotic, and even pornographic art will always be in demand," claims Meisel, "but the true pin-up art evokes a longing for a "nicer" time."[734]

There is however a plethora of mostly commercial artists calling themselves pin-up artists working in illustration, fine art and photography today. In the twenty-first century original pin-up art reflects the many phases of its genealogy in a postmodern language. Andrew Bawidamann, for example specializes in "military pin-up," thus merging the nostalgic context of Second World War pin-up with a latter-day illustrative graphic design style (*fig.198*). Maly Siri evokes traditional Hollywood glamour in delicate line-drawings and watercolours reminiscent of Kirchner and Earl Macpherson, but has kept her

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[731] Meisel interview.
[732] Ibid.
[733] Meisel claims that he has sold original Gil Elvgren pin-up paintings for $400,000.
[734] Meisel interview.

work relevant enough to win work for Vivienne Westwood advertising campaigns (*fig.199*).

Hajime Sorayama on the other hand has enjoyed much renowned for his accomplished fine art technique. He is best known for his “Gynoids” – literally translating as “in the image of woman” – a pin-up that is part robot and part woman (what he terms a “sexy robot”) (*fig.200*). It is a genre of pin-up unto itself, relating anxieties concerning technology and women’s bodies as manifested in science-fiction heroines on film, resembling hybrids of Maria from *Metropolis* (1927) and Rachael from *Blade Runner* (1982). More recently he has delved back in time to merge the tradition of the *ukiyo-e* Shunga erotic prints of Japan with contemporary, no-holds barred, hardcore pornographic imagery (*fig.201*).

In the popular media, classic pin-up imagery is often and consistently conjured in sophisticated photospreads, something that is most dexterously done in *Vanity Fair* magazine on a regular basis. The pin-up is postmodernized in such a way when burgeoning movie starlets are photographed imitating classic pin-up poses and aesthetics so that they may borrow and convey the pin-up’s golden-haloed nostalgic desirability (*fig.202,203,204&205*). Additionally, luxury lingerie brand Agent Provocateur cleverly utilizes John Willie-type illustrations reminiscent of his *Diary of A House Maid* series, as a branding ploy, to suggest that their merchandise is for the naughty, slightly kinky yet discerning client (*fig.206&207*).

Perhaps the most traditionally faithful to the genre in the contemporary pin-up art-world is artist Greg Hildebrandt, as confirmed by his being chosen as the first exhibited artist at the Meisel Gallery in 2002. Hildebrandt and twin brother Tim were well-established illustrators prior to Greg Hildebrandt’s venture into pin-up art at the age of sixty-two. Amongst their back catalogue of works, their most memorable pieces are the 1977 movie poster for *Star Wars* and the 1981 poster for *Clash of the Titans*, as well as that for the 1979 re-release of *Barbarella*. Their approach to illustration, especially relating to the art of anatomy, appears to be guided by popular culture examples they grew up with such as comic book art, in addition to Walt Disney wholesomeness and the time-honoured representational American Frontier mode of illustration executed

by N.C. Wyeth and Maxfield Parrish.[735] As a pin-up artist Greg Hildebrandt has obviously channelled those influences and allowed them to intensify in the most respectful deference to the original genre than any other pin-up artist in the twenty-first century. Hildebrandt's deference is sensed in the way in which he categorizes his art, as American Beauties, thus returning the genre to the American one-hundred-year-plus historical span of glorifying femininity. His work is purposeful in its esteem for the genre. He admires the art of Elvgren, Petty and Sundblom but does not imitate them, rather, he gives his paintings a vague or specific 1940s and 1950s aura (*fig.208*). He focuses mainly on *noir* themes that are part reminiscent of old movies and Edward Hopper works. Yet he implements the *misé-en-scene* form of the pulps to accomplish his own postmodern retro distinctiveness. As if to cement his status as a pin-up artist in the traditional mould, he has also painted his pin-ups onto Second World War American military aircraft.[736] Yet even with such respect shown for the classic pin-up, the work remains postmodern and a reflection of contemporaneous times.

Consolidating the alternative status of twenty-first-century pin-up is American east-coast photographer Viva Van Story, who stands at the forefront of the pin-up photography revival. On her website Van Story again reiterates the common theme amongst the postmodern pin-up generation of projecting imagery that is distanced from the fast-food variety of sexually explicit imagery pervading mainstream culture. With her photographs she aims to "eschew […] the modern-day trend of in-your-face sexual explicitness, instead harkening back to an era where tease and suggestion reigned supreme."[737] Van Story, as the name suggests, likes to create photographs according to a fictional narrative, usually *noir*-ish concepts of betrayal, suicide, murder and madness.[738] Van Story's artistic aesthetic highlights postmodern pin-up's roots in punk and the Bettie Page retro revival (*fig.209*). Her muse and model Andrea Grant describes her as "one part punk, one part pin-up with several shades of

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[735] 'Greg Hildebrandt Biography', http://www.americanbeautiesart.com/bio01.html, accessed 04/08/2013.
[736] See 'Greg Hildebrandt's *La Patrona* nose cone pinup painting, part 1', 13.25 mins., http://www.spiderwebart.com/videos/lapatrona.html, and 'Greg Hildebrandt's *Russian Ta Get Ya*', nose cone pinup painting, part 1', 10.04 mins., http://www.spiderwebart.com/videos/russiantagetya.html, accessed 04/08/2013.
[737] 'About Viva', http://www.vivaspinups.com/newcms/about-viva, accessed 01/08/2013.
[738] *Viva's Pinups: Bullet Bras and Backseat Betties, the Photographic Art of Viva Van Story*, Viva Van Story, forward Tyson Mcadoo, introduction Andrea Grant (London: Korero, 2010), p. 9.

grey in between," as reflected in her work and retro enthusiasm.[739] Pin-up artist Tyson Mcadoo also recognizes a "kick-ass attitude, dirty mind, punk rock approach to lighting" but most insightfully describes her work as "light-years past your typical 'cheesecake' pin-up aesthetic […] fearlessly creating new levels of erotic photography […] Viva's work would make Bettie Page blush."[740] The message here is that pin-up has moved beyond "cheesecake," the stereotypical glorification of femininity has evolved, not beyond recognition, but has been updated, as De Berardinis suggests, to reflect the times.

Arguably, the most renowned artist of the contemporary genre is Olivia De Berardinis, *Playboy* magazine's resident pin-up artist, applying the Petty/Vargas airbrushed touch to the reality-TV generation of Hefner's bunnies (*fig.210*). More recently she has taken greater inspiration from Petty, utilizing his red figure-drawing outlines and light, sensual airbrushed flesh tones. This, Hefner claims, makes a "retro connection" with "what *Playboy* has always been about […] an appreciation of things past […] all part and parcel of the same romantic dream."[741] De Berardinis continues the tradition in the genealogy of pin-up of the occasional gifted female pin-up artist, whose inimitable style becomes instantly recognizable. Her association with *Playboy* has no doubt propelled her into the limelight and she has collaborated over the years with celebrities such as Pamela Anderson, Courtney Love and Dita Von Teese. For De Berardinis, the sense of collaboration is strong, not only with her husband and creative business partner Joel Beren, but most importantly with the women who model for her. "I am in artistic collaboration with these women," she says:

> And I am hoping to create fantasies that are archetypal. When men paint women, they are painting what they desire. This is valid. I'm painting from an owner-friendly point of view. I know the equipment, I know the territory, and I know how it works. I call this *sexual portraiture*.[742]

It is often the case in debates on issues of erotic/pornographic imagery that the opinions of women involved in the process get discredited or discarded.

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[739] Van Story, Mcadoo, Grant, p. 7.
[740] Van Story, Mcadoo, Grant, p. 5.
[741] De Berardinis, *Malibu Cheesecake*, p. 9.
[742] Olivia De Berardinis, *Second Slice: The Art of Olivia* (Malibu: Ozone Productions, Ltd, 1997), p. xxix.

But if this revived space of eroticism is to be used as an experimental ground upon which women can explore the creative pathways and limitations, of sexualized femininity as power-play, then we should trust in the validity of their opinions and experiences. If there has been one commonality about the cultural effects of the permanence and permeance of pin-up imagery, it is not a false promise of liberation, but rather its honest visualization of fantasy. In answer to why she paints erotic pin-ups, De Berardinis explains:

> I used to be mesmerized by the old movie queens when I was growing up. I fantasized through them, these were super women, and the movies made it seem anything was possible. I still enjoy escaping into this world of seduction and glamour, where it seems you can only play those games and live those fantasies if you live on film or paper […] There is a fine line between vulgarity and the sublime. I teeter on it, and when I am successful, I have an image that, like the movie queens, lives and loves forever. When I fail it becomes all too real.[743]

Similarly, photographer Viva Van Story appears to derive a certain personal sensual pleasure from creating her signature imagery, by transposing her desires onto the persona of the pin-up in her photographs. She conveys, in her photography, women "acting out their fantasies in hotels with aging patterned wallpapers."[744] The retro-nostalgic-romantic self ("aging patterned wallpapers") becomes interwoven with the erotic and sexual-fantasy self (the pin-up) of the id. Her muse Andrea Grant observes:

> it's important to understand that the real woman is separate from her work. Her fetish images represent her secret desires, certainly, but Viva has explained to me that the turn-on is not during the actual shoot – it's when the images are finalized, and she imagines herself in place of the model.[745]

Hildebrandt also acknowledges that his American Beauties fulfil a need for fantasy, stating on his website: "I hope my American Beauties art has the ability to transform and inspire you. I hope that it stirs passions within you. And I hope that it fulfils your fantasies and dreams." Yet he does view his art from the point of his own desire, as both De Berardinis and Von Teese have observed of

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[743] Ibid.
[744] Van Story, Mcadoo, Grant, p. 7.
[745] Van Story, Mcadoo, Grant, p. 8.

(heterosexual) men in general. "What are my American Beauties?" he asks, "The things that dreams are made of I guess. At least my dreams I should say."[746] The question that remains however, is: does the last word on women and their desires have to be the stuff of men's *own* desires and fantasies.

Conclusion: the deconstructed pin-up.

In closing, I would like to briefly deconstruct two pin-up images, by Petty and Vargas, with the aim of delineating pin-up's relevance to viewers and retro enthusiasts today.

In 1973, two years before his death, George Petty painted his last editorial Petty Girl for the February issue of *Esquire* magazine entitled *The Petty Girl at Forty* (*fig.211*). The image is suggestive of retirement for both the artist and the fantasy pin-up girl. The Petty Girl is pictured with silvery-grey hair, wearing glasses we assume due to diminished eyesight, she is also wearing her comfortable homebody slippers and is seen to be finally hanging up her iconic telephone. From a latter-day perspective we might be inclined to interpret the image as rather ominous. A closer look at Petty's image reveals that the Petty Girl is depicted just as youthful as she ever was, her nude body is trim and agile, her waist as ever extraordinarily small, her skin glows, and her girlish smile radiates as it always did. For contemporary viewers therefore, this image could be interpreted as a comment on the prevalence of a youth-oriented society and the challenge that women of a certain age (usually forty, if not earlier) face in staying and looking forever young.

Moreover, not only does the image speak of retirement but possibly, and more profoundly, it signals the end of "innocence," the sun going down on the nostalgic "long fifties" of American history. Jean Baudrillard observes how "the fifties were the real high spot for the US […] and you can feel the nostalgia for those years, for the ecstasy of power," but "in the seventies," he continues, "the spell was broken."[747] *The Petty Girl at Forty* bows out with a smile on her face and remains eternally – as Baudrillard suggests, about a powerful world-domineering America in the 1950s – as a screen memory, of femininity in the

[746] 'What is an American Beauty?', http://www.americanbeautiesart.com/whatis01.html, accessed, 04/08/2013.
[747] Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London; New York: Verso, 1988, 1996), p. 107.

"long fifties".[748] Petty, in this image therefore, salutes the passing of an imagined simpler, "nicer" (as Meisel puts it), or more innocent, femininity and era.

If Petty's deconstructed pin-up image is a screen memory of a past femininity, then the deconstructed pin-up image that Alberto Vargas painted in the 1950s serves as an ominous warning of the future of femininity (*fig.212*). When Vargas was consumed with legal battles against *Esquire* magazine, he painted an apocalyptic vision of the Varga Girl, whose "postatomic paranoia," as his biographer Reid Stewart Austin puts it, seemed to reflect Vargas's anxieties at the time. In this image the Varga Girl is depicted as deformed from the effects of an imagined nuclear war. Her hair has fallen out, her eyes are blinded, her ribs and skeleton protrude from her gaunt frame, and her breasts – the generic signifiers of biological womanhood and femininity – have turned into alien protuberances jutting out from either side of her chest, noticeably without nipples and therefore useless. Significantly, in her left hand is visible the atomic planetary structure, whilst in her right hand is a withered miniature tree. And a large question mark is positioned on her body with an arrow at its base pointing to her reproductive sacrum.

The image does indeed speak of Vargas's internal turmoil, which he obviously connected to contemporaneous concerns about nuclear power that dominated politics during the 1950s. But to look at the image from another angle, it also speaks of Vargas's concerns about the end of "femininity." Even more so, the image, quite plainly speaks of death: the prospect of losing his career, of possible atomic annihilation and the end of "femininity," which he has linked to Nature (the dead tree) and to fertility (the signalling to the womb, and the biologically defunct breasts), ultimately makes an essentialist comment on Womanhood. The question mark recalls Charles Dana Gibson's illustration entitled *Woman: The Eternal Question* (1901), a profile portrait of the Gibson Girl, in which her characteristic hair resembles a question mark (*fig.20*). The question mark in Gibson's case operates on the same line of questioning that Freud employed when he famously asked "what do women want?" – a question that both suggests a monolithic definition of woman and also sets women up as

[748] A "screen memory" is a term and theory put forward by Sigmund Freud to denote any distorted memory, more often than not from childhood, that tends to only recall the most important or pleasant aspects from the past as related to the recollection. See Sigmund Freud, 'Screen Memories', *The Uncanny*, ed. by Adam Phillips, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin Books, 1941, 2003), pp. 1-22.

a species alien to men. The woman in Vargas's image appears literally as an alien species, and in light of his legal problems (he had lost the rights to – and possession of – his Varga Girl), the question is posited somewhat differently. In asking, "what will become of Mother Earth?" it is also asks, "what will become of femininity/women?" Whilst Petty salutes the passing of this type of femininity, Vargas, one senses, feels it slipping away. He fears the annihilation of Beauty (Nature and Woman) and like Petty he ponders the supposed loss of "innocence."

In both respects therefore, both Petty and Vargas have aligned "femininity" with Woman. And while this is typical, nostalgic and sweet in its anachronistic sentiment, it was necessary for the Women's Movement in the 1970s (The Fall of "innocence," so to speak) to point out that femininity was distinct – in fact was a socio-cultural creation – from biological womanhood, whereby "femininity" could eventually be "owned" and used creatively by women instead of being imposed upon women by men. Over the course of the genealogy of pin-up the mostly male artists of the genre have grappled with the Woman Issue. It is no mere coincidence that from the onset of the Industrial Age, when women gradually became more "visible" in society and in professions, that they became a favourite subject of visual culture also.

This thesis has attempted to show that in a Western culture ever-increasingly mired in the "frenzy of the visible," obsessed with sexualized portrayals of women, and in which pornographic representations have become commonplace and mainstream, the re-evaluation and reappropriation of pin-up femininity appears to be a response to the permeation of hardcore visual culture. I have demonstrated how pin-up imagery was not primarily about sexual objectification and that when it was, it was also able to be reappropriated via the redeeming quality of its original modesty. And whilst pin-up does not provide wholly "active" representations of femininity, and have never truly been "transgressive," it does nonetheless appeal to contemporary viewers with more positive connotations about women's sexuality, in opposition to that presented by hardcore visual imagery.

Illustrations.

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