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Mors ab Alto: The Dangerous Power of Women’s Images in Second World War Nose Art

“The nude deity is [the warrior’s] protectress”¹

The curvaceous blonde in the cheesecake pose gracing the nose of an Air Force KC-135



Fig. 1. Dolly Parton by Wes Hope

Strato Tanker seems familiar at first glance (see figure 1).² She is pert, pretty, sexy. Across her shapely legs is the motto “For God and Country.” Behind her flies an American flag which mirrors her star-spangled costume. This playful image reminds us of a time in America’s history—the Second World War—when women’s images were painted on planes and movie stars were pin-up girls. But this particular piece of nose art is not from the Second World War; it was unveiled in 2004, and the star whose image was appropriated by

the troops is Dolly Parton, country music star and American icon.

As an art form, nose art is uniquely American, although images of women have certainly appeared on war machines from other countries. The depiction of women on planes became distinctively American during the Second World War when soldier-artists were informally commissioned to paint pictures on planes in order to personalise the machines. While most of these images were playful, obviously sexualised, and provided the airmen with reminders of home and “what they were fighting for,” there is another aspect of nose art that has been until recently overlooked, in particular by the feminist community. Nose art is an art form that has its roots in ancient history and which appropriates a specific form of female power during a predominantly masculine event—war.

Women’s Images in the First and Second World Wars

Women’s images have been linked with modern warfare in any number of ways. During the First World War, women’s images were used in the “most cynical way” as propaganda to drive men to war.³ For example, the wholesome sexuality of Howard Chandler Christy’s Christy Girl was uniquely linked with recruitment advertising in the First World War. One of his most famous images is a lovely, fresh-faced brunette wearing a Navy uniform stating: “Gee, I wish I were a man. I’d join the Navy.” The snug uniform fits her curves, and her smiling gaze encourages enlistment, but she is not allowed to join up because of her gender. These images of women were separate from the arena of combat, and, for the most part, women were confined to the home front, guardians of the home, adjured to keep the home fires burning. However, women became more politically powerful during and after the Great War and gained new-found freedoms

that were specifically linked with the event of war. During subsequent conflicts, both global wars and actions specifically linked with the United States, women have maintained a powerful presence both at home and abroad, in the civilian work force and the military, and now in this most recent conflict in Iraq, in the field and under fire. It is not surprising, therefore, that the highly sexualised portraiture of women most often exemplified by pin-up art during the Second World War has been castigated by the feminist community which has battled against the diminishment of female power and intellect through the objectification of the female form. However, pin-up art, particularly nose art, provides the physical manifestation of another form of female power—sexuality.

The Powerful Pin-up

Social critic Andrea Dworkin asserts that “hatred of women” was the trigger for the existence not only of the pin-up but nose art as well. Her article titled “Vargas’ Blonde Sambos” included in the Vargas website at the Spencer Museum of Art represents a highly negative perception of this particular art form. Vargas’s pin-ups, she notes, are

some lazy, fetishistic view of white women, pale women, usually blonde; the drawing itself delineates the boundaries of non-existence, a white female nonentity. The empty space has a shape, which is why the line is necessary; the shape is female, which is why the nothingness is taken to have meaning; the meaning is masturbatory....⁴

Despite her virulent aversion for Vargas’s pin-ups, she addresses important issues which continue to be problematic within the feminist community: the sexual objectification of the female form which can negate emotional and intellectual viability, and the racially biased depiction of the “white woman” which serves as an ideal. She notes that the

propagandised, stereotyped, and highly sexualised images are not representative of any “real” woman, asserting that Vargas “slimes women by trivialization or... creating invisibility.”⁵ However, we must take into consideration the cultural event of the Second World War in the analysis of this art form and its subsequent adaptation into nose art, and by doing so, we will be able to perceive that the highly popular, continually ubiquitous, and ever-evolving image of the pin-up girl is much more complex than Dworkin would have it.

Although it is not within the scope of this essay to explore fully the complex issues surrounding the representation of the female form especially as it is linked with wartime, it is necessary to touch on issues which support my assertions about nose art. The images of women used for recruitment purposes during the Second World War were propagandised as they were during the First World War. In his essay “I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James: American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in WWII,” Robert Westbrook notes that the appeal of the pin-up is intricately bound up in the sense of obligation to fight promoted by the government. As in the First World War, women’s images were used to represent the “problematic” obligation of the “protector” to the “protected.”⁶ Men went to war to protect the ideal of home (the protected) represented in various ways by female images found not only in recruiting advertisements, but also the highly popular pin-up. These images, specifically the pin-up, served a dual function: to promote mobilization of troops abroad and to promote the mobilization of women on the home front. Westbrook as well as other scholars note that the American government sanctioned the pin-up in its various forms, thus helping to place this “borderline material” into the mainstream.⁷ Part of the impetus to fight was to

protect the American ideal represented by the ‘all-American girl’, the physical representation of the nationalistic ideal of country, traditionally gendered as feminine. The modern evocation of the national identity in the Second World War can be seen in the pin-up—a contemporary revision of the Goddess of Liberty, Columbia. Part of this ideal however, concerned racial bias. An indicator of American culture of the 1940s, pin-ups consistently depicted white women. The military, at this time, was segregated to a large extent, and African-Americans were socially marginalised, and Westbrook reminds us that America was fighting a “racial enemy” in the Pacific.⁸ Thus, the “whiteness” of the pin-up reflects America’s wartime agenda—the protection of the American ideal. To illustrate the relationship between the soldiers and the pin-up, Westbrook uses the most famous pin-up girl of the war—Betty Grable. Her well-known bathing suit pin-up poster was the most desired by the troops—“twenty-thousand requests per week”—for Grable represented a “superior image of American womanhood;” she was the movie star model of their wives and girlfriends at home, the women they were fighting for.⁹ Grable was also popular with women, who saw in her the “model of American virtue;” she was an extremely successful, energetic woman who was beautiful, accessible, and sexual, someone with whom American women could identify just as they identified with that other American icon of the Second World War, Rosie the Riveter.¹⁰ Women went to work for the war effort in vast numbers both on the home front and in the various branches of the military created for women. In *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, and Popular Culture*, Maria Elena Buszek notes that both the plethora of professional choices accessible to women during wartime, and the vehicle chosen to recruit these women—“bold and glamorous types”—affirmed and indeed encouraged political and “sexual self-

expression.”¹¹ Through these images, women saw the liberation of previously confined potential. Women built ships, planes, and munitions for the war effort, and, playfully enacting Grable’s example (as well as those illustrated examples from Alberto Vargas, Gil Elvgren, and George Petty), women sent photos of themselves in cheesecake poses to their husbands and boyfriends who served in the war. In great part, they delighted in the overt sexuality of the pin-ups, and the almost universal appeal of these photos and illustrations is proven through this photographic phenomena. Buszek cites several instances of soldiers who “did in fact identify the surreal Varga Girl with the very real women in their lives” often re-naming the pin-up painted on the aircraft with the name of their sweethearts.¹² The pin-up had the effect of empowering women on the home front in their appropriation of and engagement with the power of their own sexuality.

Buszek’s analysis of the history of pin-up art in her article “Of Varga Girls and Riot Grrrls: The Varga Girl and WWII in the Pin-up’s Feminist History” reveals that Dworkin’s “white female non-entity” is rather the physical representation of an emerging sense of sexual power within the female community which occurred in direct conjunction with the advent of the Second World War. She affirms that “[t]he Varga Girl’s legacy would be in her assertion that the pin-up could be everywoman; and that every woman could similarly exude a sense of her confidence, capability, and sexual power.”¹³ Similarly, in “Women, Cheesecake, and Borderline Material: Responses to Girlie Pictures in the Mid-Twentieth Century,” Joanne Meyerowitz notes that a “pro-erotica stance appeared by mid-[twentieth] century” evinced by women’s appreciation of the depiction of the female body in a “positive way” represented most clearly by the pin-up girl.¹⁴ In pin-up art, women saw the beauty of the female form as well as “much of the

energy of the time—its vitality, patriotism, family values and ideals.”¹⁵ Like Betty Grable’s photo pin-up, Vargas’s illustrations, published in *Esquire* magazine, were meant to represent the American patriotic ideal and a “modern female sexuality.”¹⁶ Nose art, in particular the nose art based on pin-up art became encoded images representing “the patriotic ideal of womanhood... sexualized, but pointedly active women usurping and clothed in the accoutrements of male power.”¹⁷ Rather than debasing women, pin-up nose art depicted women who were self-assured, direct, successful, sexual, and powerful. Soldiers revered and coveted the aura of power which emerged from the candidly sexual gaze of the pin-up.

In their appropriation of Vargas’s (as well as other artists’) images for nose art, soldiers adapted the sexualised image as a visual evocation of power and desire. Some pieces were customised with a girlfriend’s name, or the clothing (or lack of it) was changed to suit personal taste or military regulations, but it is the idealised form of the all-American girl which emerges in Vargas’s pictures and which earlier feminists revile that is captured most famously on a large percentage of aircraft during the Second World War and after. Gary Valant’s fine collection of photos in *Vintage Aircraft Nose Art* attests to the myriad possibilities of the art form.¹⁸ Not only were pin-ups appropriated for use, but also cartoons, popular songs, names and images of girlfriends, and animals. However, the nude female is the image recalled to mind as by far the most famous element of nose art of the Second World War. We can look at the ways in which the airmen of the Second World War appropriated the highly popular pin-up and recreated these images on their planes for a specific purpose which, rather than diminishing female power, invoked female sexuality in war as a mythical symbol of power and danger. By studying this

fascinating cultural phenomena, we may see that by ritualising these women's images in various ways, airmen recreated the talismanic power of a pre-Olympian goddess whose nudity and sexuality was linked specifically with the initiatory rites of young warriors and the event of war.

The Ancient History of the War Goddess

Contrary to Westbrook's assertion, the appropriation of these images as talismans on bombers during the Second World War can be seen to reflect a cultural resurgence of an ancient tradition specifically linked with warfare which "symbolically reverse[s] the traditional roles of male/protector, female/protected" and indeed fosters the idea that the female image in nose art was interpreted by soldiers as a "modern war goddess."¹⁹ In *The Goddess and the Warrior*, Nannó Marinatos provides archaeological evidence which suggests that "[i]t is the sexuality which empowers the nude female" as a figure of both protection and danger.²⁰ The iconic figures of a naked female deity appear on Babylonian military seals as early as the second millennium BC and suggest that female nudity was not linked solely with fertility, but more specifically with power and menace. Marinatos further suggests that rather than figures associated with female patronage, these naked goddesses are linked more explicitly with men and the warrior tradition. She notes:

Our investigation of female nudity shows that the naked goddess is not only powerful in terms of controlling the natural world, but she is apotropaic as well. She brings good luck to him who wears the [heraldic] seal, wards off evil and thereby protects the seal-owner. Further, she is dangerous.²¹

Tracing the image of the naked goddess on axes, swords, and horse ornaments, Marinatos offers evidence evocative of the early significance of powerful female sexuality

connected to the event of war. This truncated version of Marinatos' pioneering work provides a good base from which to view the modern evocation of this powerful naked goddess in the nose art of the Second World War and the subsequent pattern of its censorship and resurgence in current American conflicts.

The Modern War Goddess

Aircraft nose art, beginning with the Second World War, appropriated the ancient designation of female sexuality as powerful and dangerous. We can see this in the overwhelming use of the nude (or partially nude) female form in nose art and its enormous appeal with the troops. Aside from the quite obvious facts that the female form is at the opposite end of the spectrum from metal war machines, and that certainly the visual beauty of a scantily clad woman has its own sexual appeal to men who, in the midst of war, had little chance to see beauty, the women depicted on these planes were imbued with elemental, dangerous power: the female body as a weapon of war.

In 1944, late in the war, Army Air Force Regulation 35-22 officially sanctioned nose art as a means of "increasing morale"; however, the regulation was meant to curb the suggestiveness of the nose art particularly in the field.²² Nudity on the planes was censored at times as were more suggestive names on the planes, but the soldiers got around regulations by painting bathing suits on their nose art pin-ups in water-based paints so that when they flew through a storm, the original status of the nose art would be restored. Or by way of protest, Captain Washburn reports, soldiers painted a large red streak across "the offending word or phrase [or body part]. The thus offended [the airman] invariably prints 'censored by' beneath the deletion and notes the name of

the officer guilty of the order to censor their ship.”²³ It is well known that the level of nudity or suggestiveness in the nose art was in direct proportion to the proximity of an aircraft to general headquarters. The farther afield a plane was stationed, the less restraint was shown in artistic endeavour. The importance of the nude female image to the soldier is unquestionable, and its inclusion on a machine specifically manufactured for destruction pushes us to see this sexual display not only as a playful and indeed joyful celebration of the female body as American ideal, but also to recognise the power inherent in female sexuality.

The American Airpower Heritage Museum (AAHM) in Midland, Texas, houses the world’s largest collection of Second World War aircraft nose art. We can use this collection as a springboard for analysis of women’s images at war and to further the thesis that this art form is not purely a sexual objectification of women, but rather a deification that has historic precedents in artefacts from ancient warfare. Rescued from the scrap heap by Minott Pratt, Jr., the pieces are invaluable artefacts of a modern culture at war. Each of the thirty-three pieces was hacked from the fuselage of B-17 and B-24 bombers with a fire axe, the ragged edges of each panel highlighting the subtly curved aluminium canvas of the fuselage and augmenting the not-so-subtle curves of the women depicted on them. Most of the art is taken from Vargas’s pin-ups, although other pin-up artists, in particular Art Frahm, Gil Elvgren, and George Petty are represented as well. Other sources of inspiration of the nose art in Midland include Milton Caniff’s cartoon strip *Terry and the Pirates*, popular songs, and, of course those live pin-up girls Betty Grable and Rita Hayworth. As a spectator in the museum, one becomes immediately aware of the size of these images—all larger than life. Most of the women depicted are

looking out at the viewer with frankly humorous and playful gazes; however, there is no question about the sense of power which radiates from them. Hal Olsen, one of the artists whose work is featured at AAHM, describes the intimate relationship between the crew and its aircraft and the importance of the art to the men: “Nose art for the crew was a personalized reference to a piece of military hardware You are trusting your life to the plane to get you back to safety. [...] Nose art brought the crew together.”²⁴ Vernon Drake, an amateur cartoonist, notes in addition that because of his talent for painting on planes, he was assigned fewer “hump flights” (lengthy missions over the Himalayas), and says that “I often think that these girls I painted saved my life.”²⁵ Olsen and Drake here reveal the talismanic relationship that the crews had with their own particular piece of art on the plane. Ritualistically, they named the planes after women, befitting the gendered quality of the planes, thus transforming the planes into womb-like entities which embodied the men and in whose care the men entrusted themselves. The physical act of painting the curves of a woman’s body to conform to the curves of the aircraft became a ritual act which tied the men to their machine. To add to this quality, men often touched the image before they entered the plane in ritual fashion, to ward off ill luck during a mission.

Ritualised Placement and Incorporation of Nose Art

Women’s images have been used as mastheads on Viking warships, as images of destruction on shields (Gorgo and Medusa), and as images of piety and righteousness (the Virgin Mary on the shields of crusaders). In each, the image is proximate to the warrior to ensure the transfer of power. Similarly, bomber nose art is most often placed near the

pilot's window on the fuselage and is larger than life signifying the power of the image for the airmen. In addition, the image was large enough for enemy pilots to see during "dog fights," and had the potential to distract the enemy, allowing the American crew to achieve a superior position.²⁶ In addition, ships, planes, and vehicles are traditionally gendered as female; thus the military plane becomes a ritualised, feminised agent of destruction. Nose art also mimics the ancient mastheads in that it conforms to the shape of the craft, and the curve of the fuselage complements the curves of the female form. Two pieces at the AAHM which are reminiscent of the ancient Viking tradition depict only the woman's head. "Mystery Woman" is a portrait of the head and shoulders of a woman who wears a military uniform. She is a brunette and her face, which is in profile, reveals a quiet intensity as she gazes forward, ostensibly toward the nose of the plane from which the panel was cut. She is beautiful, but in no other way does she resemble the other pin-up girls of the more playful pieces housed in the collection. Her military uniform echoes the uniforms of the men who fly the plane; she is the female embodiment of military pride and authority both overseas and on the home front. The other piece, "Mutz," presents the same visual depiction of poise and quiet, but dangerous, power. Despite the fact that she is not in military garb, her lovely but serious countenance nevertheless promises strength in time of battle. Her gaze, like the gaze of "Mystery Woman," looks toward the nose of the plane as if to channel energy to the pilot. A piece which recalls the image of the Virgin Mary on the shields of crusaders can be found in Gary Valant's collection. Titled "Ave Maria," this B-24B-25, which flew 103 successful missions during the Second World War, has a large image of the Virgin Mary under the pilot's window. Next to her veiled head are the emblems of bombs signifying the number

of missions flown. This image perhaps best reflects the relationship of the image to the men. It is talismanic and it renders strength and power to those whom she protects. The image of the Virgin Mary here closely resembles Jane Russell, another pin-up “bomb-shell” and interestingly reflects the dichotomous nature of the female during the Second World War.

To augment the notion that the sexualised female body is a weapon of war, we can see that several of the pieces of nose art at the AAHM, strategically incorporate certain parts of the plane into the woman’s body. For example, artist Eddy Saville uses rivets to emphasise the women’s nipples in his playful “Target for Tonight” which was inspired by the popular song “Wine, Women and Song.” Four women (a blonde, a brunette, a redhead, and a dark-haired beauty), decked out in pearls and swimsuits, lounge in and around the rim of an enormous cocktail glass which bubbles over not only with champagne but also with the promise of delight at the destruction of a target. Behind the champagne glass runs a line of multi-coloured musical notes which perhaps depict the first few notes of the song. The women are languorous: the dark-haired beauty peeps over the side of the glass in essence to check on the progress of the mission; the blonde gazes towards the rear of the plane as if to watch for enemy patrols; the redhead plays with her pearls and gazes upward as if daydreaming about her role as one of the “targets” of the night’s mission; and the brunette reclines, the froth of the champagne slipping over her lap as her direct gaze promises the successful completion of the mission. In an ironic augmentation of the use of plane parts to enhance the woman’s image, “Double Trouble” makes the woman’s body the bomber itself. The piece depicts nude twins in tight dive formation. From their breasts spring the propellers for their “bomber” bodies. Their black

hair streams behind them from the force of their descent towards the target, and their arms form aerodynamic wings to speed them on their journey of annihilation. In essence, these particular bombshells are the agents of destruction.

Again, to amplify the dangerous sexuality depicted on these planes, the phraseology on a number of the planes often links, in *double entendre*, sexuality and destructive power. For example, “Just Once More” inspired by Vargas’s 1943 calendar girl, displays a brunette in a tight blue body suit arched out on her back with one arm draped across her face and the other flung back over her head. The sexual innuendo is obvious; however, if we look at the catchphrase through the lens of war, it suggests her desire to run another mission. The same idea is present on the B-24 entitled “Night Mission,” inspired by Vargas’s pin-up “Military Secrets.” She sits atop a cloud bank which looks very much like a bed in front of a full bomber’s moon, and as she gazes outward, both her manicured forefinger and her dainty foot point down toward the objectives of that night’s mission: the bed and the enemy target respectively. One of the most beautifully restored pieces of nose art at the AAHM is entitled “Hump Time,” inspired by a Caldwell Higgins pin-up piece. “Hump,” was not only a crude euphemism for sexual intercourse, but also the slang term for the notoriously difficult and dangerous route over the Himalayas, and this particular B-24 was guided by the gorgeous blonde who smiles engagingly as she undresses, promising the reward for the completion of a successful mission. Depicted on a yellow background that is fashioned to look like a pin-up poster (tacks included), this wonderfully leggy nude slips off a pair of sheer black lingerie panties. A jaunty blue military style cap, a black ribbon around her neck, and a

pair of stylish black pumps are the only other accessories that adorn her. Her sexuality radiates power and control, for her gaze is direct and her demeanour confident.

The soldier-artist's rendition of the pin-up art fashions it in such a way as to align the beauty with the dangers of war. The nose art skews the sexuality of the image and underscores both its talismanic properties and its menace to the enemy. But the women depicted on these planes are not at all intimidated by war. Quite the contrary, they seem to control the missions and the men who fly them. Depiction of the number of missions flown or numbers of "kills" is seen on many combat aircraft, but on the bombers, the placement of these icons in close proximity to the women suggests that the success rate is attributed to the presence of the female. For example "Sloppy But Safe," inspired by Vargas's "French Dressing," depicts two swastikas along with ninety-one bomb emblems next to a partially-clad woman doing her laundry. Her playful grin and straightforward gaze suggests that she has "cleaned up" the enemy. Similarly, "Miss Yourlovin'" presents forty bomb emblems next to a coquettish young woman who wears a red kerchief both atop her head and another as a bikini bottom. The proximity of the bomb emblems to Miss Yourlovin' links the two as the primary desires of the airmen who fly the plane.

The two pieces of nose art in the museum's collection which best encompass the complexity of the dangerous sexuality associated with what Marinatos terms the "naked deity" are "Mama Foo Foo" (see figure 2) and the astonishing "*Mors ab Alto*" (Death from Above) (see figure 3).²⁷ Indeed, these two pieces radiate menace in their representation of female



Fig. 2. "Mama Foo Foo" by Fred Hardy.

sexuality. Mama Foo Foo was inspired by Milton Caniff's highly popular cartoon strip *Terry and the Pirates* (refashioned by Caniff into the publication *Male Call* available specifically for the troops) and its sexy Oriental bad girl the "Dragon Lady." One of the largest panels at the museum, and a study in the use of black, red, and yellow paint (often all that was available), Mama Foo Foo showcases the image of a woman who wears a batwing cape and a low-slung slit skirt bound with a girdle bearing a death's head which matches the image on her head band. As she stands on a billowing black cloud, her arms are outspread and her direct gaze is uncompromising. She does not smile engagingly, nor is she coquettish, as are some of her contemporaries. Her name—Mama—hints at her connection to the men she protects within the body of the plane, and next to her are the emblems of the tributes paid to her by her disciples: three sinking ships and twenty-four bombs (perhaps more as the cut of the fire axe is right above). Her dangerous presence is enhanced by the familiar shark's teeth painted on the nose of the plane. This particular piece was taken from a B-24 which flew missions in the China, Burma and India theatre, and as such the orientalist image on the plane only serves to heighten the idea of control over the enemy. Mama Foo Foo is menacingly elegant in her presence as a dangerous,



Fig. 3. "Mors ab Alto" by George Olesen.

sexual goddess of war.

"*Mors ab Alto*" was fashioned by the co-pilot of the B-24, George Olesen, later the cartoonist of *The Phantom* comic book. *Mors ab Alto*, the motto of the 7th Bombardment Group adopted in 1933, is traditionally represented by a blue shield through which runs a diagonal yellow bar with three black crosses. During the

Second World War, however, the enhanced representation of the motto includes a female figure who rides atop the shield. Once again, there is nothing soft or inviting about this figure though she is beautiful. Breasts bared, reddish-blond hair flying like flames, and a look of rage on her face, she is reminiscent of one of the Furies of Greek mythology, and her winged arms as well as her winged feet imply the swiftness of her relentless vengeance upon the enemy. Behind her, a bomb floats, ready to drop at her command. She is an astonishing image, one which evokes the leading principle of nose art—that of powerful talisman.

After the war, and during the period of repatriation, these images were censored or repainted to mute the overtly sexual aspects of the illustrations. Many, many pieces were scrapped, and much of Second World War nose art must be recalled through photographic records. Despite the sharp decline in the appearance of nose art during the Korean and the Vietnam conflicts due to a variety of reasons, not the least of which was military censorship, Jeffrey L. Ethell and Clarence Simonsen note that “[w]hen the USAF started to ease the regulations on nose art in the mid 1980s the initial reasons centered around recalling the heritage of the Second World War, resulting in the rebirth of classic nose art.”²⁸ Their book, *Aircraft Nose Art from World War I to Today*, provides historical commentary which enhances the extensive pictorial review of nose art. Still seen as a morale booster, current nose art on aircraft recalls the varieties of sources which airmen of the Second World War tapped into for their inspiration. References to cartoons, movies, rock songs, and certainly revisions of Vargas’s pin-up art are currently gracing USAF aircraft. The 2004 nose art of Dolly Parton recalls Vargas’s pin-up art and the spirit in which airmen appropriated these images for use on their war machines. Her

buxom good looks enhance the patriotic force of her smiling image. She is the Twenty-first Century image of Columbia, the American representation of country and Goddess of Liberty.

The AAHM continues its mission to restore and to preserve these astonishing artefacts of a nation at war. The pieces rescued from the scrap-heap hint at the many which were destroyed after the Second World War and which are now only preserved in photographs. Second World War nose art predicted, in a fashion, the commanding presence of women in modern military combat forces as active participants in war. Instead of diminishing the power of the feminine, nose art represents the overwhelming importance of the numerous roles women held during wartime both at home and abroad, and as current nose art suggests, women's images continue to function as reminders of the dangerous power of female sexuality.

Notes

- ¹ Nanna Marinatos, *The Goddess and the Warrior: The Naked Goddess and Mistress of Animals in Early Greek Religion* (London: Routledge, 2000), 21.
- ² Dolly Parton by Wes Hope, *The Daily Times*, Maryville, TN. 2004.
- ³ Peter Parker, *The Old Lie: The Great War and the Public School Ethos* (London: Constable, 1987), 179.
- ⁴ Andrea Dworkin, "Vargas' Blonde Sambos," in *Alberto Vargas: The Esquire Pin-ups*, Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, <http://www.ku.edu/~sma/vargas/vargas.htm>, 2001 (accessed 12 Aug. 2002).
- ⁵ Dworkin, "Vargas' Blonde Sambos".
- ⁶ Robert B. Westbrook, "I Want A Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James": American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II" (*American Quarterly* 42, December 1990), 597.
- ⁷ Joanne Meyerowitz, "Women, Cheesecake, and Borderline Material: Responses to Girlie Pictures in the Mid-Twentieth Century U. S." (*Journal of Women's History* 8.3, 1996), 9-35.
- ⁸ Westbrook, "I Want a Girl," 599.
- ⁹ Ibid, 599, 600.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, 605.
- ¹¹ Maria Elena Buszek, *Pin-Up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, and Popular Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), 227.
- ¹² Ibid, 229.

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- ¹³ Maria Elena Buszek, "Of Varga Girls and Riot Grrrls: The Varga Girl and WWII in the Pin-up's Feminist History," in *Alberto Vargas: The Esquire Pin-ups*, Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, <http://www.ku.edu/~sma/vargas/vargas.htm>, 2001 (accessed 12 Aug. 2002).
- ¹⁴ Meyerowitz, "Women, Cheesecake and Borderline Material," 14, 16.
- ¹⁵ Despina Kakoudaki, "Pin-up: the American Secret Weapon in World War II" in Linda Williams, ed., *Porn Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 335-369.
- ¹⁶ Maria Elena Buszek, "War Goddess: The Varga Girls, WWII, and Feminism" (*N. Paradoxa* 6, 1998), <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/n.paradoxa/buszek.htm> (accessed 12 Aug. 2002).
- ¹⁷ Buszek, "Of Varga Girls."
- ¹⁸ Gary Valant, *Vintage Aircraft Nose Art* (St. Paul, Minn.: Motorbooks International, 2001).
- ¹⁹ Buszek, "Of Varga Girls;" Buszek, "War Goddess."
- ²⁰ Marinatos, *The Goddess and the Warrior*, 18-19.
- ²¹ *Ibid*, 21.
- ²² Jeffrey Ethell and Clarence Simonsen, *Aircraft Nose Art from World War I to Today* (St. Paul, Minn.: Motorbooks International, 2003), 25.
- ²³ Ethell and Simonsen, *Aircraft Nose Art*, 30.
- ²⁴ Hal Olesen, Audio recording, American Airpower Heritage Museum.
- ²⁵ Vernon Drake, Audio recording, American Airpower Heritage Museum.
- ²⁶ Buszek, "Of Varga Girls."
- ²⁷ Both figures are photographs by the author, American Airpower Heritage Museum, Midland, Texas, October 2004.
- ²⁸ Ethell and Simonsen, *Aircraft Nose Art*, 174.