

VISUAL RHETORIC REPRESENTING ROSIE THE RIVETER: MYTH AND MISCONCEPTION IN J. HOWARD MILLER'S "WE CAN DO IT!" POSTER

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This essay examines the World War II poster "We Can Do It!," commonly known as "Rosie the Riveter." Today, J. Howard Miller's print is a feminist icon. However, archival evidence demonstrates that during World War II the empowering rhetorical appeal of this Westinghouse image was circumscribed by the conditions of its use and by several other posters in its series. The essay concludes that, when considered in its original context, the "We Can Do It!" poster was not nearly as empowering of home-front women as it might seem to more recent viewers. The poster has become a modern-day myth.

Posters are the paper evidence of the way we were and the way we are.

Christopher Trump¹

We reinterpret relics and records to make them more comprehensible, to justify present attitudes and actions, to underscore changes of faith. The unadulterated past is seldom sufficiently ancient or glorious; most heritages need ageing and augmenting.

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Rosie the Riveter has become a modern American legend. According to this legend, during World War II women in the United States turned manpower into woman power as housewives across the nation took manufacturing jobs building bombers, ships, tanks, and the munitions they would fire. These women did so bravely and patriotically, the legend tells us. They were instrumental in helping to win an overwhelming victory against the forces of evil. They even managed to remain attractive and womanly while on the assembly line. When it was all over, they found that their selfless contributions to the war had changed the lives of American women forever. Historian William Henry Chafe, author of *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920–1970*, asserted the truth of the legend's broad outlines when he wrote, "the war represented a turning point for women workers." He summarized that wartime "statistics told a remarkable story of change, and justified the National Manpower Council's conclusion that the war had prompted a 'revolution' in the lives of women in America."³

The continuing power of this Rosie legend has not been lost on feminist scholars. Writing ironically, revisionist Paddy Quick affirmed the existence of this legend as it pertained to Rosie the Riveter. "Once upon a time," she intoned, "the government appealed to women to help out their country and work in the factories, and since Rosie was very patriotic, she left her home and took a job as a riveter." Quick added, "At first Rosie was afraid that she wouldn't be able to do the work because it was 'men's work,' and she was also afraid that people would think she was unfeminine." Fortunately, Quick continued, "the work turned out to be quite easy, and she found that she could be sexy even in work clothes. So despite the war, she was very happy."⁴

The idealistic nature of this characterization is, of course, a sign of its fancifulness. Several researchers, among them Karen Anderson, Susan M. Hartmann, and Maureen Honey, have disputed Rosie's status as an empowering legend for women.⁵ Their revisionist work portrays a not-so-rosy view of Rosie. Women on the factory assembly line faced prejudice, sometimes from men, sometimes from other women of different races.⁶ They were almost always paid less than men for equal work and, near the end of the war, they experienced tremendous pressure to return their jobs to war veterans. Most of these women were not married housewives. Instead, they were single women who were already working at lower-paying jobs and who entered the factories primarily to increase their salaries. Profits may have been as important to them—or more so—than patriotism.⁷ While these working-class women's efforts were remarkable, they do not lend much support to the Rosie legend. In fact, certain depictions of women's presence in the factories may have actually reinforced stereotypes concerning women.

D'Ann Campbell summarized a revisionist view of this legend when she confirmed that "the general consensus" among historians "is that on the home front women temporarily assumed new roles ('Rosie the Riveter') but that no permanent or radical transformation took place."⁸ "This revisionist critique" and others like it, wrote Deborah Montgomerie, "has enriched our understanding of women's contribution to war and corrected misconceptions about the extent of the wartime challenge to the sexual division of labour." Such critiques, she concluded, "suggest considerable continuity between women's pre- and post-war employment, and between pre- and post-war definitions of femininity."⁹ Rosie the Riveter, it seems, was more legendary than historic. Despite the revisionist revelations, Rosie's popular legend continues undaunted.

An examination of the famous "We Can Do It!" poster illustrates some of the myths and misconceptions sustaining the Rosie legend. In late 1942, J. Howard Miller produced the "We Can Do It!" poster for Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company, which displayed it in factories from February 15 to 28, 1943. Miller was a freelance Pittsburgh artist who produced at least 42 posters for an advertising agency commissioned by Westinghouse during the war years.¹⁰ The "We Can Do It!" poster presents a seemingly powerful and affirming Rosie the Riveter image. It is the legend's primary visual symbol in our time, even though during World War II it was overshadowed by Norman Rockwell's *Saturday Evening Post* cover a few months later in May 1943. Rockwell's painting may have been inspired by a popular tune entitled "Rosie the Riveter," written by Redd Evans and John Jacob Loeb and sung on national radio networks in 1942 by Kay Kyser. It was a nationwide radio hit, whose lyrics provided a cultural backdrop for both visual works.¹¹

"We Can Do It!" has become part of our collective memory, a symbol of the good war that is itself resistant to critique. In the language of Michael Osborn, Miller's Rosie has ascended into the timeless category of "culture-types"—tangible "fiction which often passes for history" even as they "remind us of what it means to be American."¹² Miller's poster and the culturetypal Rosie legend, more generally, function together as a "representative character." "Remembered as product or story or some hybrid of the two," argued S. Paige Baty, a "representative character is a cultural figure" invested with "authority, legitimacy, and power," which functions "as a site on which American political culture is written and exchanged."¹³ Robert N. Bellah and others offered a similar perspective, suggesting that a "representative character" is a "public image that helps define, for a given group of people, just what kinds of personality traits it is good and legitimate to develop." "A representative character," they concluded, "provides an ideal, a point of reference and focus, that gives living expression to a vision of life."¹⁴ The "We Can Do It!" poster, in this sense, has become an indelible and influential part of U.S. culture, shaping collective

memory of World War II even as it continues to embody an empowering feminist fable.

Miller's Westinghouse poster has in recent decades become one of the most popular images dating from the World War II era, suggesting to later generations that they, too, can do it. The poster is so popular that the National Archives ranks it among its top ten most requested images.¹⁵ Miller's version of Rosie is now available throughout U.S. popular culture on everything from coffee cups and facial tissue wrappers to mouse pads and aprons. Her image is widely marketed on T-shirts, lunch boxes, poster reproductions, oven mitts, packing tape, buttons, and—not to be missed—bobble-head dolls and action figures. The U.S. Postal Service's *Celebrate the Century* series of stamps even featured a cropped version of Miller's poster as an emblem for the 1940s.¹⁶ Miller's Rosie, with its countless pop culture reproductions and variations, has become a national icon, joining such legendary iconic images as the flag-raising on Iwo Jima, Grant Wood's *American Gothic*, and James Montgomery Flagg's finger-pointing, authoritarian Uncle Sam.¹⁷ Perhaps it is not surprising, then, to find that the *Washington Post* recently named the Westinghouse image the "most overexposed item" in the Washington souvenir market.¹⁸

Yet, like all pervasive legends, the origins of the "We Can Do It!" poster remain murky. In some accounts, the image was an official U.S. government poster encouraging women to join the work force.¹⁹ In other reports, the poster appeared everywhere during World War II, including overseas.²⁰ Some accounts claim that Norman Rockwell drew the "We Can Do It!" poster, while the Ad Council recently claimed her as their own, alongside Smokey the Bear, McGruff the Crime Dog, and Vince and Larry, the Crash Test Dummies.²¹ But, as we shall show, "We Can Do It!" was not a government poster. It did not appear everywhere during the war, though Rockwell's later version did. Miller worked for Westinghouse through an advertising agency, not for the U.S. government. Finally, his image during the war years was nearly unknown beyond the Westinghouse factories, where wartime security ensured that its audience was limited to workers and management.

Only since the mid-1980s has Miller's image gained worldwide fame. Scholarly treatments of Rosie the Riveter do not appear to refer to Miller's poster before that time. Leila J. Rupp's 1978 *Mobilizing Women for War*, for example, discussed several versions of Rosie's image on the home front—including Rockwell's version for the *Post*—yet she did not mention Miller's image.²² Thus far the earliest reproduction of (or reference to) the "We Can Do It!" poster that we have found in the postwar years is in a 1982 *Washington Post Magazine* article that discussed poster reproductions then available from the National Archives. The poster recurred in a 1985 *U.S. News and World Report* article by Stewart Powell.²³ How it has become a national phenomenon three

decades after this reemergence is a sign of its quiescent rhetorical power and apparent timelessness. Miller's depiction of Rosie has become an empowering symbol for women. Online auction sites, for example, routinely refer to reproductions of the image as *feminist* posters. Miller's image has become a symbol for girls, too, inasmuch as Rosie appears as a heroine in children's stories and as an action figure who has joined the ranks of Batman, Wonder Woman, and various other superheroes on lunch boxes.²⁴ Most of all, Miller's poster has become a cultural touchstone, evoked by politicians, advertisers, profiteers, and feminists. Today, it is an image so powerful and iconic that it might be difficult to believe that it was virtually unknown before the mid-1980s.

In what follows, we construct a rich rhetorical history of Miller's iconic image, a labor that—as Cara A. Finnegan attested—"requires careful, situated investigation of the social, cultural, and political work that visual communication is made to do."²⁵ We explore the obscure beginnings of Rosie's rhetorical odyssey on a Pittsburgh Westinghouse factory floor. The essay starts with an examination of popular misconceptions in contrast with the realities of the authorship, production, use, and circulation of "We Can Do It!" because the contrast demonstrates how little today's viewers actually know about the poster's original communicative context. Then we turn to the poster's time-bound meanings, interpreting the symbols in the composition before pointing to the conflicted signals that her image conveyed to home-front women. The essay concludes by suggesting that these signals were such that, even though she was in some respects portrayed as an empowering symbol at Westinghouse, she also embodied women's complicity with elements of traditional, conservative expectations of their lives on the home front. Above all, we argue that Westinghouse used "We Can Do It!" and Miller's other posters to encourage women's cooperation with the company's relatively conservative concerns and values at a time when both labor organizing and communism were becoming active controversies for many workers. In this regard, contemporary depictions of the poster are oftentimes mythic in a strong rhetorical sense since they function as a character type, narrative, and enactment of U.S. culture's key values.

UNTANGLING MISCONCEPTIONS OF ROSIE

There is little doubt that J. Howard Miller's "We Can Do It!" poster has become a staple of modern U.S. popular culture. Yet the image's current fame may lead one to misconstrue the actual conditions of its production and distribution. For instance, consider this passage from *Women at War*—a recent *Reader's Digest* history of women in World War II—worth quoting at length. The author, Brenda Ralph Lewis, characterized Rosie the Riveter as the

most famous of all American wartime poster images. Rosie, another Norman Rockwell design, first appeared on posters in 1943, and on May 29 that year adorned the front cover of the widely read *Saturday Evening Post*. Rosie was a pretty girl, but one with rolled-up sleeves displaying arm muscles prominently flexed, a big fist and a straight-jawed look that exuded willpower and determination. “We can do it!” ran the message. One glance at the mighty Rosie was meant to convince women that they could . . . “do it” too.

There were other, less muscle-bound images designed to draw women into factory work. . . . [but] Rosie . . . was by far the most potent—so potent, in fact, that she has since become part of American folklore. Her spirit is still invoked today as a symbol of patriotic, responsible American womanhood.²⁶

This description is detailed, inspiring, and—as this section of the essay shows—riddled with factual errors about Miller’s poster. Unfortunately, it is not alone in its historical inaccuracies. Consider the numerous distortions of history in the *Houston Chronicle’s* May 21, 2004, account concerning the poster’s origins. The newspaper averred that “the original Rosie the Riveter, Rosie Will Monroe, worked on the assembly line at Ford building B-29 and B-24 military planes. She caught the eye of Hollywood producers who were casting a ‘riveter’ for a promotional film. Her exposure in the film resulted in the ‘We Can Do It!’ poster. She came to symbolize the generation of women who entered the workplace during the war.”²⁷ Again, this account is rich in detail but poor in accuracy. Such erroneous descriptions are increasingly commonplace, particularly on webpages. Considered together, these and similar descriptions appear to perpetuate numerous, commonplace misconceptions about the “We Can Do It!” poster in particular. In this section of the essay we will describe four specific recurring errors about the poster’s role in World War II that do not hold up to scrutiny.

Misconception One: Norman Rockwell Created “We Can Do It!”

The first misconception is that the “We Can Do It!” poster was produced by Norman Rockwell when, in fact, it was J. Howard Miller’s creation. The recollection of Betsy Ramelkamp—herself a munitions worker during the war—is quite telling: “The original print of the Norman Rockwell poster,” she said, “which appeared on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post* on May 29, 1943, sold recently for almost \$5 million. When I read this I paused to reflect, for I remembered that poster well.” “I had seen it,” she continued, “everywhere during World War II: on billboards, on building walls, and in newspapers. It showed a comely Rosie, in a blue-denim shirt, baring her muscular arms while eating a sandwich. Above were the words ‘We Can Do It!’”²⁸

Ramelkamp's recollection conflates the two images, giving Rockwell credit for both his own work and elements from Miller's Westinghouse poster. To be sure, her memory does accurately reflect how well known Rockwell's image was during the war years. After all, the *Post's* circulation reached millions of people on the home front, and its covers were a popular topic of conversation.²⁹ Yet somehow, over time, Miller's authorship has become confused with Rockwell's. Perhaps this is because Miller is still relatively unknown in comparison to Rockwell some 60 years after the war, or perhaps it is because Miller's name, which is obvious on the lower left-hand corner of the Westinghouse poster, is often cropped out of the modern reproductions. Whatever the reason, popular accounts have regularly misconstrued the authorship of the "We Can Do It!" image by attributing it to Rockwell, while others have misdescribed Rockwell's *Post* cover with references to features found only in Miller's version, such as Rosie's polka-dot bandanna or her exclamation. A closer examination of each poster will establish their very different compositions.

J. Howard Miller's poster (see figure 1) has a relatively simple design executed in four predominant colors—yellow, blue, red, and white—though flesh tone and brown are also evident. The unidentified white woman, a bright red polka-dot bandanna covering her hair, gazes directly at the viewer while a caption directly above her within a blue word balloon exclaims "We Can Do It!" With her left hand, she rolls up her sleeve, flexing her right biceps, suggesting that she is setting about to work, while her other arm makes an upward muscle and her hand forms a clenched fist, conveying strength and confident determination to do her job. Cosmetics affirm her femininity, including mascara, eyebrow liner, a hint of lipstick, and fingernail polish on one well-manicured fingernail. A Westinghouse badge, which employees were required to wear on the factory floor, is displayed on her collar, where a photograph of the woman's face is encircled by the words "Westinghouse Electric" and by her employee identification number. In a blue band along the poster's bottom, production and display information pertaining to the print are easily legible in white lettering: "POST FEB. 15 TO FEB. 28" toward the left side of her waist. These pictorial elements are just below J. Howard Miller's signature as the artist followed by an *R* in the solid yellow background, and "WAR PRODUCTION CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE" continuing in the blue band to the right, just below the then-standard Westinghouse emblem. This emblem was made especially noticeable by breaking the blue horizon and by extending into the solid yellow background. The design's omissions are also noteworthy: the woman does not wear a wedding ring, and neither a baby nor a man is featured in relationship to her, as was regularly the case in other contemporaneous posters pertaining to the war efforts. She also does not display any tools pertaining to her labor.



Figure 1. J. Howard Miller, "We Can Do It!" [1943]. Poster produced for Westinghouse, 22 x 17 in. Courtesy of the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

In comparison, Rockwell's version of "Rosie the Riveter" is relatively complex (see figure 2). Rockwell's print depicts women in the work force as a vital part of patriotic war efforts, suggested by the flag enveloping the entire background as well as the symbols across the top of this Rosie's bib overalls, such as a V button for Victory and a Red Cross button. Rosie eats a plain sandwich, resting momentarily from her labor. In contrast with Miller's poster, Rockwell's print includes details identifying the presence of the enemy and its ruthlessness. Rosie's foot, which is resting on a copy of *Mein Kampf*—with "Adolf Hitler" plainly in view above a swastika—suggests that such women are helping to conquer the Nazis. The righteousness of her motivation was reinforced toward the upper left-hand corner below the *Post*'s masthead, where the cover previewed for readers the title of that week's feature, a report on "German Atrocities," which would presumably heighten Americans' motivation to engage the enemy. The muscular arms and well-developed shoulders, the manly leather bands on her wrist, and the overalls suggest gender ambiguities and violations insofar as they tended to be masculine attributes, as was the riveter resting across her lap. The tool's evident repairs, suggested by wires and abrasions, would presumably have been recognized as consistent with the government's recurring appeals to make do, because of rationing and shortages. Along with the lunch box with "ROSIE" scrawled in white lettering, these stereotypically masculine attributes are offset by relatively minor details affirming her femininity: lipstick, and a dainty kerchief in her right pocket (the viewer's left-hand side). Though her bib overalls are heavily soiled from her labor, she nonetheless rests the riveter on a blue cloth, perhaps to shield her body from the warmth of the equipment, perhaps a ladylike gesture reminiscent of a serviette. Rosie has no bandanna, but instead has goggles pushed back on her forehead plus an upraised visor that, because it is transparent, may be seen as a halo. As others have noted, the composition as a whole closely resembles Michelangelo's depiction of the prophet Isaiah on the Sistine Chapel, which may tacitly reinforce the print's masculinity and its righteousness, and which may also enhance the viewing pleasure of people familiar with fine art.³⁰ The date on the *Post* cover, "MAY 29, 1943," confirms that this image was published before the outcome of the war was evident. Finally, Rockwell's well-known signature is located toward the lower right-hand corner.

The two images do have some similarities. In rough outline, the two characters pose almost as if in a mirror image: Miller's Rosie raises her right arm whereas Rockwell's Rosie raises her left. Both young adult women are white and wear factory garb. Both artists emphasize the strength of their characters. Neither woman wears a visible wedding ring and neither composition features a baby or a man. Finally, both images depict a woman who could easily be described—at least to modern viewers—as a "Rosie the Riveter."

To view Norman Rockwell's "Rosie the Riveter," please visit the website of its copyright holder: www.curtispublishing.com.

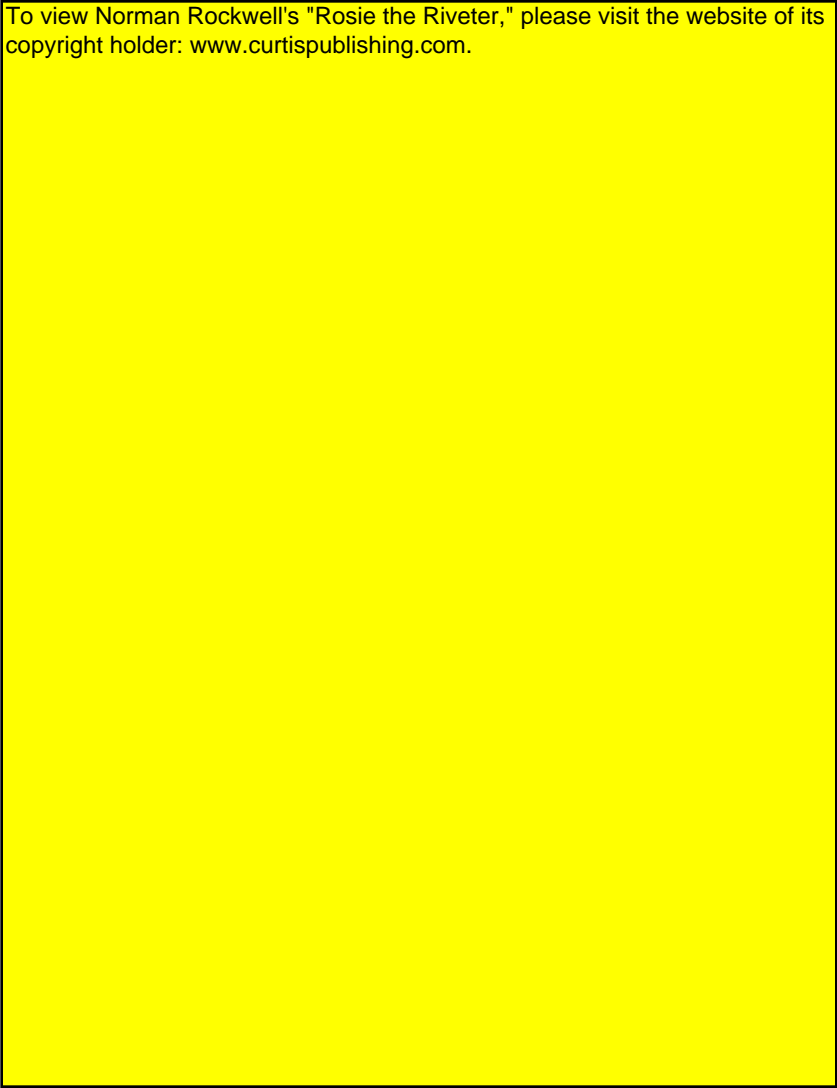


Figure 2. Cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*, May 29, 1943, featuring Norman Rockwell's "Rosie the Riveter," 13 x 10 in. © 1943 SEPS: Licensed by Curtis Publishing Co., Indianapolis, IN. All rights reserved. www.curtispublishing.com

In both prints, if one assumes that identification was a key component of the pictorial rhetoric's appeal, the audience appears to have been primarily working-class women, concerned with gender roles at the same time as they wished to support the war efforts. As for financially comfortable women in the

Post's readership, the Rockwell print presumably encouraged their willingness to approve of the working-class women's behavior, if not avidly support their decisions concerning their public performances of womanhood. Both groups of women may have sought to negotiate a double bind; wartime labor entailed gender-role-violating behavior by working-class women, norms with which many financially comfortable women of the period may have continued to be complicit. Although women from racial minorities worked in the factories, both prints feature a white woman, presumably to promote identifications with majority women workers in the Westinghouse factory in Miller's case and readers of the *Post* in Rockwell's.

On the other hand, the two images have noteworthy differences. Only Rockwell's character is explicitly named Rosie. Miller's character looks at viewers directly, even challengingly, whereas Rockwell's Rosie is looking to the side, evidently in thought. The Westinghouse character speaks to viewers emphatically through her word bubble, whereas Rockwell's figure is silent. Finally, Miller's image embodies a sense of activity, whereas Rockwell's image shows Rosie at rest, paused in between bites of her sandwich. Even if each artist had not signed his individual artwork, it would probably be clear that neither image was created or even influenced by the other. In sum, then, the idea that Norman Rockwell produced, created, or even influenced "We Can Do It!" is an error.

Misconception Two: The U.S. Government Produced "We Can Do It!"

The second misconception is that Miller's poster was commissioned, issued, or circulated by the U.S. government. It actually was a commissioned Westinghouse production. Like the idea that Rockwell had a hand in creating the poster, this error is commonplace. *USA Today*, for instance, told its readers on November 11, 2003, that women in the wartime workplace "were known as 'Rosies,' after the muscle-flexing 'Rosie the Riveter' in the iconic 'We Can Do It!' poster." This poster, concluded the account, "was part of a government campaign to bring women into the workforce to replace the men who had left to fight the war."³¹ In 2004, after describing Miller's poster, and after incorrectly claiming it was produced *later* than Rockwell's *Post* version, Emily Yellin averred in *Our Mothers' War* that "this government-commissioned poster" was a "softer rendering of Rosie" than Rockwell's "earlier" one.³² Similarly, the Rosie the Riveter Trust—an organization dedicated to fundraising for the new Rosie the Riveter Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond, California—claimed on its website that Miller's poster "was commissioned by the United States War Production Commission—Co-ordinating [*sic*] Committee for use on a recruiting poster in 1943."³³

Why is this idea that the government issued “We Can Do It!” so widespread? Apparently, it is because the organization listed in capital letters at the bottom of the poster—the “War Production Co-ordinating Committee”—looks and sounds like one of the many World War II-era government agencies on the home front. In addition, the poster’s Westinghouse insignia, if not examined closely, gives the print a bureaucratic-looking imprimatur, one that might convince casual observers that it was an official issue of some government agency.

However, archival evidence indicates that the War Production Co-ordinating Committee was a wartime labor-management organization within Westinghouse. A 1944 article in *Labor and Management News*, a War Production Board weekly newspaper, included the “We Can Do It!” poster in a montage of 11 posters from various labor-management committees.³⁴ Although the Westinghouse committee evidently changed its name twice during the war, its mission seems to have remained consistent: to increase production, to decrease absenteeism, and to avoid strikes.³⁵ A 1942 article in *Westinghouse Magazine* identified members of the War Production Committee by name for the East Pittsburgh factory and mentioned that their aim was to “propose methods for increasing output of war material, receive suggestions for greater production from both employes [*sic*] and management, and study such subjects as taking care of tools, preventing breakdowns, reducing accidents, adapting old machines to new uses, cutting wastage, breaking production bottlenecks and using every machine to the fullest extent.”³⁶ This list of topics corresponded well to the subjects covered in the series of posters that Miller drew for Westinghouse during the war years.

Such labor-management committees were not exclusive to Westinghouse. In fact, there were thousands of them in various factories and plants on the home front, all created in support of the War Production Drive—a national motivational effort of the government’s War Production Board.³⁷ Part of the drive’s aim was to convince defense plants to organize and publicize their individual labor-management committees with the aim of circumventing labor problems on the critical war production front. These voluntary committees performed in varied ways from factory to factory, but one of their “principal functions . . . was arranging for a steady display of production-incentive posters throughout plants.”³⁸ For instance, the War Production Drive recommended ideas for discouraging worker absenteeism by suggesting that “posters and display material may be effectively used to dramatize some of the causes of absenteeism,” as long as the posters doing so were “specially designed and conceived with the company’s specific absentee problems in mind and . . . [were] tied-in, if possible, with the company’s war product.”³⁹

Seen in this light, "We Can Do It!" was clearly one company's *response* to a government initiative, not an official government product. Indeed, it is unlikely that the government would have allowed the Westinghouse logo, which was widely known, to appear on an official government poster. Yet the familiar *W* logo was imprinted prominently on Miller's poster to feature Westinghouse along the bottom edge, just in front of Rosie's waist. The Westinghouse name recurred on Rosie's badge, located on her collar. Therefore, the idea that Miller's poster was an official government publication is a misconception.

Misconception Three: "We Can Do It!" Was a Labor Recruitment Poster

A related misconception is that the "We Can Do It!" poster served to recruit women into the factories. The *San Diego Union-Tribune*, for instance, stated as a matter of fact that "the popular image of Rosie the Riveter—a woman wearing a button-down shirt rolled up at the sleeves while flexing her bicep [*sic*—was used in propaganda posters to encourage women to work during the war. Four words above her bandanna-wrapped head say it all: 'We Can Do It!'"⁴⁰ Not to be outdone, the *San Francisco Chronicle* added recently that "Rosie the Riveter was a popular icon, whose slogan, 'We Can Do It!' helped mobilize millions of American women to replace the men who left to fight in battle."⁴¹ Finally, as CNN's web-based special report on the twentieth century observed, "spurred on by higher wages and a propaganda poster featuring a muscle-bound 'Rosie the Riveter' exclaiming 'We Can Do It!', millions of American women helped assemble bombs, build tanks, weld hulls and grease locomotives."⁴² All three accounts magnify the Miller poster's ability to recruit women into wartime factories.

The poster was an improbable candidate for a recruitment campaign. Since it was a product of a Westinghouse committee concerned with labor-management relations, its message was aimed at workers already employed at various Westinghouse factories, not at women with no association to the company. The poster was featured as such in a contemporaneous 1944 article entitled "Many Useful Ideas in These L-M [Labor-Management] Posters."⁴³ The "We" mentioned in the poster is thus not a reference to all U.S. women but rather only to the women (and, perhaps, the men) already employed at the Westinghouse factories. In addition, as we have suggested, labor-management committees were organized to reduce or prevent problems on the factory floor. Their purview does not appear to have included recruitment, which was, for the most part, a government endeavor.⁴⁴

Even if Westinghouse had chosen to use the poster as a recruiting tool, it is unlikely to have been effective. Rosie's message does not focus on

such obvious recruiting appeals as “Get a War Job!” or “Find Your War Job.”⁴⁵ Rather, Rosie’s message, “We Can Do It!,” was expressed to an audience that was already familiar with the task (“it”) at hand. The poster thus belongs to a category that the *Labor-Management News* called “shop posters.” Such posters, the newspaper recounted, “are tools of war” that are “born amid the rumble and attention-demanding motion of machinery.” Rather than being aimed at those outside the factory, continued the story, “Shop posters speak to the man in the shop in the language of the shop.”⁴⁶

Thus it seems evident that the Miller poster was calculated to motivate the working-class women already inside Westinghouse factories to increase productivity or to affirm that they would be able to accomplish the unspecified task. If the poster had been designed to recruit women, as has been erroneously asserted, it would typically have had explicit appeals for women to get a war job or to enter the factories as workers. In addition, the absence of a wedding ring makes it unlikely that Miller’s Rosie was designed to appeal specifically to housewives, the largest group targeted in the U.S. government’s recruitment campaigns. In short, the notion that “We Can Do It!” was a labor recruiting tool for American women is a misconception.

Misconception Four: “We Can Do It!” Was Famous during World War II

The final common misconception associated with Miller’s poster is that it was widely known during World War II. The *New York Times* recently contended, for instance, that in the war’s early years “the poster, with the title ‘We Can Do It’ [*sic*] above a painting of a muscle-flexing woman in a bandanna and overalls,” became “a worldwide symbol of women in the defense industry in World War II.”⁴⁷ The *Australian*, moreover, provided an international perspective on Rosie’s legend, contending that, during the early war years, “the Rosie the Riveter poster by J. Howard Miller . . . was also already becoming known worldwide as a symbol of womanhood in the wartime defence industry. Hanging on the walls of every government office and munitions plant, the image of the woman who had rolled up her sleeves for her country had caught the patriotic imagination.”⁴⁸ This view is widespread; the poster’s recent notoriety appears to have convinced later generations that it was well known on the home front. While it may seem almost inconceivable to viewers today, however, it is evident that the “We Can Do It!” poster was almost unknown during the war outside of Westinghouse factories.

Initially, because Miller’s poster was commissioned by Westinghouse as a shop poster, it was meant for display on the factory floor. While Westinghouse was a large company, its public relations division did not designate Miller’s

posters for circulation beyond the manufacturer's munitions factories. Westinghouse historian and museum curator Charlie Ruch agreed with this observation, affirming that the image "was one of a series of patriotic in-house posters . . . used during the war." The posters, recalled Ruch, were displayed "on about 1,800 company bulletin boards across the country."⁴⁹ However, Westinghouse's internal Printing Division account, completed July 15, 1946, suggested that during the war the print runs for the company's posters may, in fact, have been 1,000 or less, as compared with literally millions of war bond posters sponsored by the government.⁵⁰ The minute size of this print run for Miller's posters indicates how improbable it would have been for them to have gained nationwide notoriety during the war.

It is conceivable that government officials saw "We Can Do It!" and had it widely reproduced during the war. But so far there is no evidence substantiating that this was the case. There was no mention of Miller's poster in Westinghouse's in-house magazine or its postwar history, even though surely the company would have trumpeted the poster's fame had it been ubiquitous. Visual examination of thousands of contemporaneous World War II photographs has not shown a single instance of "We Can Do It!" posted in public places, not even at Westinghouse (though it was indeed posted at the factories—for about two weeks, as affirmed explicitly on the posters which said "POST FEB. 15 TO FEB. 28"). One photograph of the poster that did become public circulated in the 1944 *Labor-Management News* article mentioned above, although this publication was distributed primarily among factory personnel. Finally, the artist himself did not live to see his poster gain fame, according to April Cass, a young artist for whom Miller was a friend and mentor in the postwar years.⁵¹

Ironically, when the poster did have an opportunity to gain nationwide fame during the war, it apparently failed at the task. In June 1943, the War Production Board decided to hold a poster contest among the thousands of labor-management committees on the home front. From the many posters that were submitted to War Production Board headquarters, only 50 were selected for public showings in Washington and in New York. *The Labor-Management News* accounts of the show, however, suggested only that Westinghouse was a participant in the contest. None of Miller's posters (there were eight entered in the contest) was named in the newspaper's account, and none were pictured. Had the poster been famous already—or had the contest vaulted it into national fame—surely the articles describing the show would at least have mentioned "We Can Do It!" by name.⁵² In sum, the idea that Miller's poster was widely known throughout U.S. culture during World War II is a misconception.

Together, these four misconceptions point to the enduring power of Rosie's legend. Much like a Greek goddess, she has become a timeless icon that today's

viewers seek to explain in terms that they can understand, despite limited access to real historical information. That professional historians—in addition to journalists, feminists, and war buffs—have misunderstood some of the most basic facts about the “We Can Do It!” poster is likewise an indication of a deep cultural need to adapt the image in ways that are useful in modern culture. One of the most important such uses is to borrow Miller’s image as an empowering and overarching feminist icon. As the following section details, however, to its wartime audiences this use of the poster would have been inconsistent with the company’s evidently patriarchal values regarding women, especially as portrayed in the rest of Miller’s poster series. Moreover, viewers committed to women’s rights during the war years would have held perspectives that existed long before today’s diverse views of feminism.

MIXED MESSAGES TO U.S. WORKING-CLASS WOMEN: PATRIOTISM, PROFITS, AND POWER

Widespread misconceptions concerning the “We Can Do It!” poster obfuscate the complex, mixed messages its original audiences in all likelihood received during the war. The misconceptions also disguise the multifaceted and sometimes entwined motivations of women already working at the Westinghouse factories in 1943. Put simply, it is easy to look back more than 60 years later and see empowering qualities in Miller’s poster. However, the poster’s original audiences would not have received Rosie’s empowerment in such an unequivocal fashion. Instead, both men and women workers on the Westinghouse factory floor would have understood Miller’s image in a much richer—and idiomatic—context, including the material reality of the war and working-class people’s lives as well as the dozens of other posters also authored by Miller for Westinghouse; those posters emphatically circumscribed women’s place and roles. In certain ways, Miller’s “We Can Do It!” poster functioned rhetorically as a token in that his Rosie was an exception to his otherwise much more typical and traditional depictions of women.⁵³ Moreover, as we will argue, factory workers would have been familiar with the social functions of the in-group ritualistic gesture displayed in the poster, since it was already a commonplace performance at the East Pittsburgh factory with idiomatic, community-building qualities.

This section attempts to uncover the poster’s time- and place-bound meanings within Westinghouse’s organizational culture in two ways. Initially, we explore the association between the poster’s visual elements and its accompanying words.⁵⁴ This critical activity depends on the notion that an image and its associated verbalizations exist in a mutually informing relationship, each giving meaning to the other.⁵⁵ In the case of Miller’s poster, Rosie’s verbal

utterance, her visual appearance, and her gesture offer historical clues that, even as they reflect on and reinforce each other, considerably narrow possible interpretations of the poster's message in light of such factors as who could view the shop posters, the workers' identifications and divisions within the organizational culture, and the varieties of labor undertaken at Westinghouse. When contrasted with modern understandings of the poster's elements, the differences are stark.

Second, we turn to Peter Burke's insight that works of art initially created as a composite might well have a more cohesive message when considered as part of a culturally- and historically-situated series, even if they have been separated by time or circumstance. As he put it, "scholars have often joined together images which events had put asunder, paintings which were originally designed to be read together but are now dispersed in museums and galleries in different parts of the world."⁵⁶ Miller's collection of at least 42 wartime Westinghouse posters offers an opportunity to consider "We Can Do It!" within a programmatic series. In other words, since the original Westinghouse audiences for the posters saw them in succession—and without realizing that one of the images would become famous decades later—it is worth considering the series of Miller's shop posters to see how audiences at Westinghouse might have perceived them taken together, rather than focusing on just one of the posters in isolation. These two ways of approaching Miller's "We Can Do It!" make it possible to interpret its mixed verbal and visual messages in their original communicative use, circulation, and placement in his series of shop posters.

Visual and Verbal Elements in "We Can Do It!"

Initially, Miller's poster offers subtle suggestions that its meanings were designed for Westinghouse factory audiences with idiomatic and vernacular symbols having localized understandings. The poster's ambiguous use of words and its pictorial elements may have been rhetorically strategic in some conscious, deliberate sense; "We," "It," and the character's emphatic, nonverbal gesture are of particular interest.

To begin with, the constitutive "We" in the poster's title is a surprisingly complex term. Since the poster's primary utterance is located in a cartoon-like word balloon, it is evident that Rosie is speaking to someone. Her gaze makes it clear that she is addressing the viewers. Obviously "we" includes Rosie and at least one other person—but precisely whom does she mean to include?

Since the poster was limited primarily to Westinghouse factory workers during the war, and since access to the factory floor was restricted, the poster's "we" could only have referred to the women already working at

Westinghouse—and to their male coworkers. Rosie's appearance in the image as a factory worker supports this interpretation, particularly the prominent display of the employee identification badge on her collar. The poster's working viewers—under the stricture of wartime plant security—would have gazed at the image's Westinghouse badge authorizing her entry even as they wore their own badges likewise assuring their access to the factory floor. Therefore, Rosie's "we" was constitutive in that it addressed specific time- and place-bound audiences, constructing them as a team with a distinctive company identification and mission in the war effort—and rhetorically differentiating them from other potential groups, such as non-workers and workers for other organizations. Moreover, by addressing workers as "we," the pronoun obfuscated sharp controversies within labor over communism, red-baiting, discrimination, and other heartfelt sources of divisiveness.⁵⁷

While a degree of identification affirmed with "We" would have been anchored by the employee badge on Rosie's collar, viewers today do not necessarily see her badge as a significant detail assuring access to the restricted factory floor. If today's viewers assume that the poster was widely known during the war, then the "we" would seem to have been addressed at that time to all working women on the home front, since Rosie directs her gaze toward viewers as a part of the collective "we." In this sense, the poster operates for many modern viewers much like the Iwo Jima photograph and its later reproductions. In that famous shot, the six marines were faceless in ways that made it possible for audiences to project themselves onto the image, as Janis L. Edwards and Carol K. Winkler have contended in their essay concerning the visual rhetoric of the photograph.⁵⁸ Here, although viewers can see Rosie's face, she seems to be timelessly including them as equals by addressing them eternally as "We." Modern viewers—knowing the poster's approximate age—are unlikely to assume that they are themselves included in the "we," except perhaps by extension. Rather, they often project onto the poster an anachronistic recognition of feminist empowerment, allowing the "we" to broaden to include many more women during World War II than was possible for the poster's limited circulation. Consequently, stripped of its history of in-house factory circulation, Miller's poster functions today both to conceptually broaden the scope of women's empowerment and to allow modern viewers to project a variety of women from the time period into its perceived audience.

The poster's use of "it" is similarly complex. Modern audiences are likely to consider what they know about the World War II home front and assume that the "it" designated such tasks as riveting airplanes and ships. The poster's Westinghouse audiences, however, would have made no such assumption,

since they surely realized that they were not engaged in riveting either airplanes or ships. Ruch recalled that "Westinghouse didn't employ riveters—of either sex."⁵⁹ Because Westinghouse did not employ riveters during the war years, the absence of a riveting tool in the "We Can Do It!" poster would have made perfect sense for its initial viewers. They would have known to what "it" referred, since the message appeared in the very factory where they were already accomplishing the task at hand. For the Westinghouse audiences, then, the woman in the poster was not necessarily a riveter; she may not even have been a Rosie.

However, for audiences decades later—to whom the woman in the poster is always already a riveter (and a Rosie)—the "it" could easily be reconstrued as riveting airplanes and ships. This conflation makes it much easier for modern audiences to reconstruct her as a sort of wartime Everywoman, casting her as a famous representative of women's empowerment on the home front. Thus the audiences whom Rosie seems to be recognizing with her confident declaration have shifted significantly over the decades. This shift suggests that abstraction and ambiguity have contributed meaningfully to changes between the poster's contemporaneous and modern interpretations.

Modern viewers may also fail to interpret the poster's gesture as it would have been understood by her primary audiences at the time. Westinghouse documents from the war years indicate that Rosie's symbolic performance of raising her arm with a clenched fist was not the public display of a rugged, individualist woman. Rather, it was a routine, team-building gesture that men and women alike at Westinghouse adopted for rallies and community building. Photographic evidence from the period, as recorded in Westinghouse's in-house magazine, featured a man performing the dramatic gesture of raising his clenched fist upward as early as September 1942, a factor suggesting that Miller's rhetorical invention for the poster tapped observations of an idiomatic performance among workers specifically at the East Pittsburgh Works. According to that month's issue of the magazine, "With *Let's Show Them* as their slogan and a clenched fist as their symbol, the East Pittsburghers rolled up their sleeves and worked out a program that not only thrilled more than 25,000 East Pittsburgh Division employes [*sic*] in a three-day, round-the-clock series of rousing rallies, but also became a pattern for many other plant rallies." The article was replete with a black-and-white photographic illustration of a male worker, Bill Hunter. As the article pointed out, "Hunter's clenched fist emphasizes [the] spirit of 'Let's *Show Them*' at one of the rallies at East Pittsburgh Works" (see figure 3).⁶⁰ Contemporaneous posters and photographs taken at Westinghouse document the company's pervasive use of the fist as a symbol of determination, one that Miller's later poster echoed (see figure 4).⁶¹

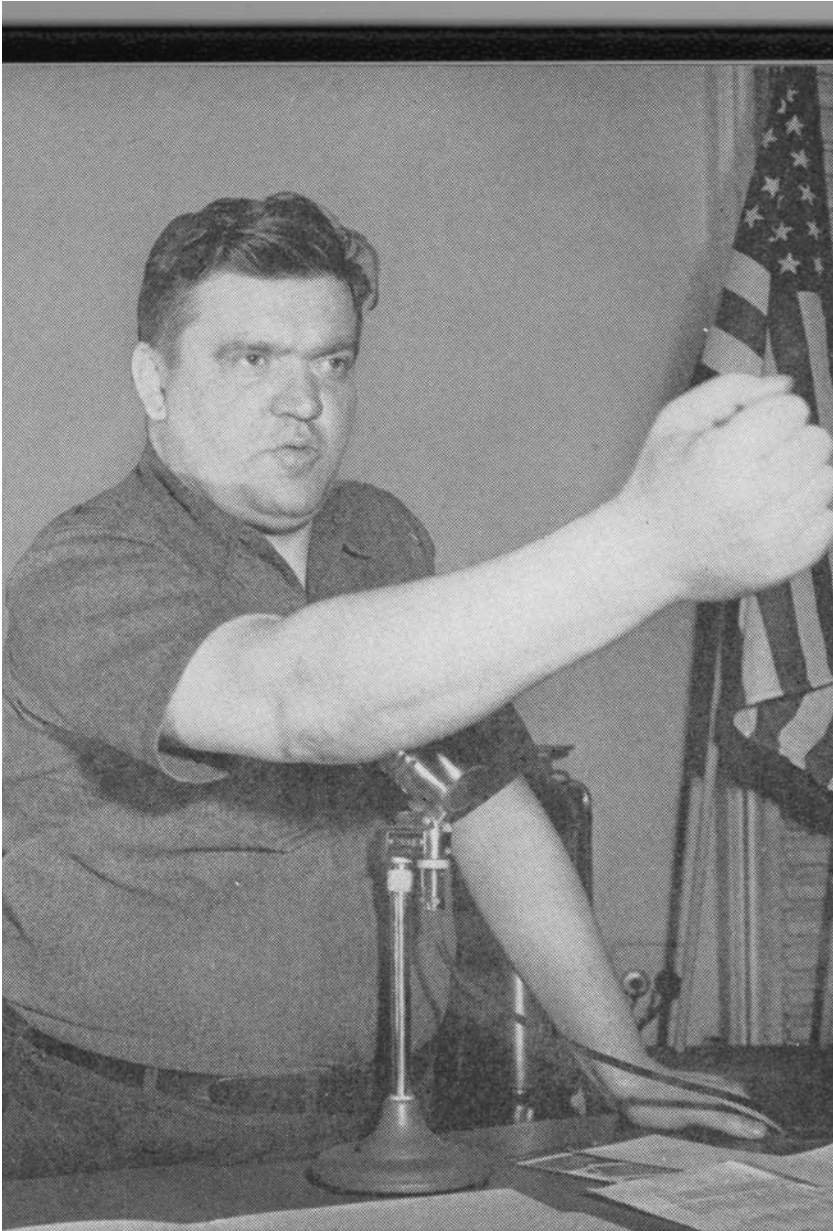


Figure 3. Photograph of a Westinghouse worker at a rally, from *Westinghouse Magazine*, September 1942, 4 x 3 in. Reproduced by permission of the Library and Archives Division, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, PA.



Figure 4. Photograph of two posters used at Westinghouse rallies early in the war. Note the use of the fist as a symbol of determination. From a 1942 War Production Drive booklet, *How To Build the Will to Win*, 5 x 4 in. Courtesy of the National Archives.

Taken together, the poster's gesture, its use of "we," and its use of "it" clearly suggest that Miller's message targeted in-house viewing audiences. Considered as a performance, this Rosie's display took place on what Erving Goffman called the "backstage," an area where widespread public viewing is not allowed, and where "we may expect reciprocal familiarity to determine the tone of social intercourse" among the performers themselves.⁶² Rosie's gesture thus operated as an example of what Finnegan has termed "image vernaculars" in that it was familiar to the poster's limited pool of viewers inside the Westinghouse factory and, indeed, functioned as a means of communal identification, in Kenneth Burke's sense, rooted in consubstantiality as an acting-together.⁶³ At the same time, the gesture would have *excluded* other viewers, who—even if they managed to see the poster during the war—lacked the Westinghouse audiences' company membership, factory-floor access, team identification, and specific understanding of the raised fist as a gesture affirming their backstage solidarity.

In summary, Rosie's appearance as a factory worker and the badge affirming her Westinghouse identity were visual elements that both informed and restricted the meanings of her verbal utterances, including "we" and "it," to construct team unity on the factory floor. Goffman's distinction between front stage and backstage may also shed light on the gestured performance. Because the gesture took place on the backstage for Westinghouse employees' eyes in the presence of management, it was a sign of their team unity within the organization. However, the gesture may be mistaken today as a front stage performance by one self-possessed woman, transforming the gesture from a vernacular performance unifying men and women workers alike into an individualistic, feminist icon.

Moreover, because "We Can Do It!" circulated almost exclusively among Westinghouse employees, it had a special and idiomatic meaning for them, which would have made the "we," the "it," and her gesture much less ambiguous for the poster's original audiences than it is today. In short, while the phrase "We Can Do It!" may have accurately captured both management's and labor's shared desire to increase productivity, it obscured the fact that the bulk of labor's statements concerning women never questioned their ability to accomplish the tasks. Rather, workers emphasized equal pay for equal work, the elimination of sex-based distinctions for jobs, other forms of workplace discrimination, child care, red-baiting and communism, and, above all, labor organizing. Since labor union memberships more than doubled during the early 1940s in District 6 (which included Westinghouse's East Pittsburgh factory represented by Local 601), there appears to have been little doubt that the workers could, in fact, "do it."⁶⁴

"WE CAN DO IT!" IN PROGRAMMATIC SERIES

Although today Miller's poster appears to portray a performance of women's empowerment and strength, we believe that it also circumscribed them so thoroughly as to diminish an interpretation of it as feminist—in any modern sense. First, the poster's circulation only on the Westinghouse factory floors among women and their male coworkers who were already Westinghouse employees advises against an interpretation that the print empowered millions of housewives by moving them into the work force.

If the "We Can Do It!" poster's message was an image vernacular, available and intelligible especially to Westinghouse employees during World War II, it is still conceivable that it served to empower the many women employed by Westinghouse. After all, Miller's Rosie is, at first glance, both determined and confident. This impression, at least, must have been the same on the home front as it is now. What woman would not have received a message of feminist strength from seeing the poster while at work?

This viewpoint fails to take into account the poster's use in a programmatic series that was produced by Miller. As we have established—and as the print itself clearly indicates—"We Can Do It!" was displayed for only two weeks in February 1943. Both before and after it appeared, dozens of other works by Miller were posted in the Westinghouse factories. Most did not feature or refer to women at all, a curious absence if one believes that Rosie's posted "space" was a site of feminist empowerment during the war. Amid the various portrayals of male workers, munitions, soldiers, factories, and scenes of battle, Miller's posters displayed a noticeable emphasis on *men*.⁶⁵

When Miller's posters did feature women, they revealed a clear pattern of traditional and conventional femininity, including some characters who were emphatic in their devotion to home life over work life. Perhaps the best illustration of the latter is Miller's "MAKE TODAY *a Safe day*" (see figure 5).⁶⁶ In this poster, a woman calls out a word of farewell from the front of a white home with green shutters and a multipane window to a man (presumably her departing husband), a broad smile on his face conveying his pleasure and satisfaction at the prospect of going to work at the Westinghouse factory (which is visible in the valley below the house). The woman appears in partial profile, a red ribbon in her hair, while her husband strides toward the distant factory in his work clothes. She wears lipstick and has extremely long eyelashes, much like the woman in "We Can Do It!" Yet unlike that more familiar character, this woman is a vision of domesticity, seeing her breadwinner off to enact his masculine role in the factory. Such a representation of femininity is often viewed today as circumscribing women's potentiality and as being patriarchal in its implications.

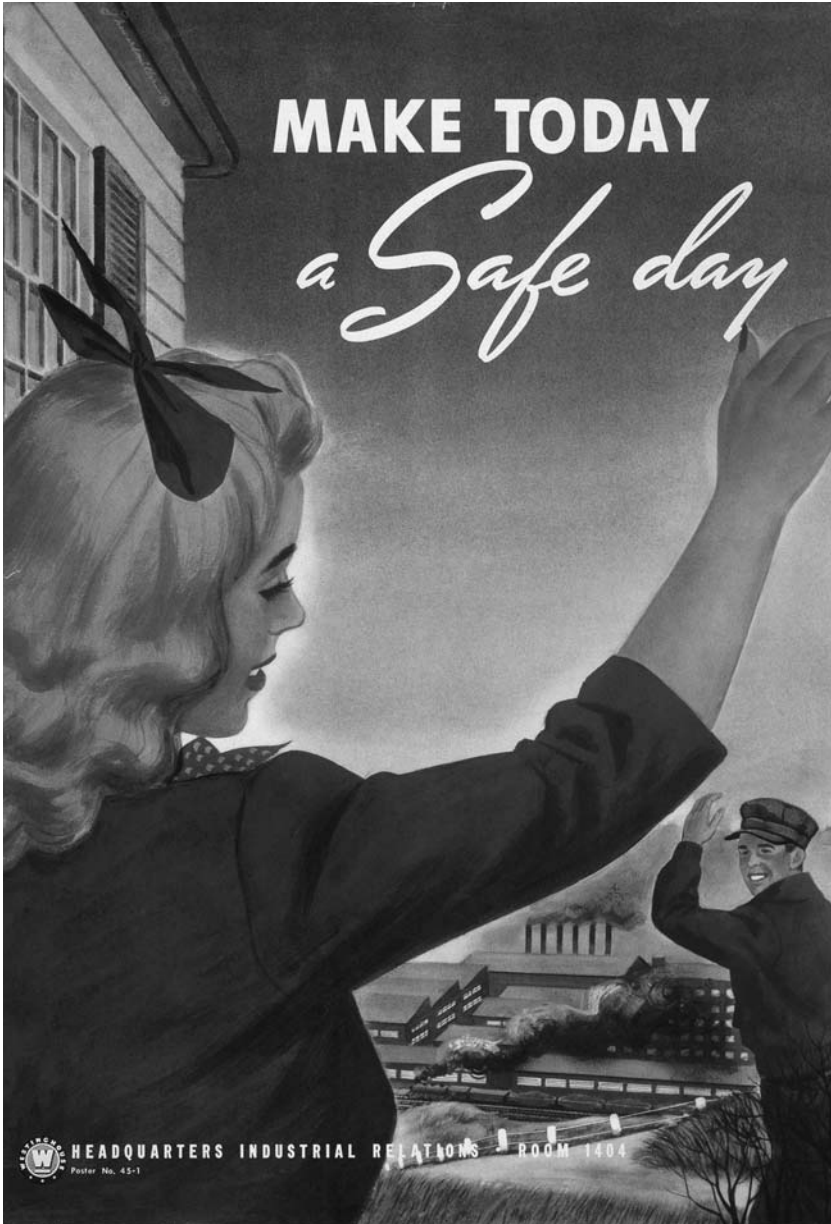


Figure 5. J. Howard Miller, “MAKE TODAY *a Safe day*.” [1945]. Poster produced for Westinghouse, 22 x 17 in. Courtesy of the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. Note the artist’s signature under the eaves.



Figure 6. J. Howard Miller, "Sure, *WE'RE* in the War, Too!" [1943]. Poster produced for Westinghouse, 22 x 17 in. Courtesy of the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

While “MAKE TODAY a *Safe day*” is perhaps the most extreme example of what viewers today could see as a disempowering image among Miller’s Westinghouse posters, there are others that function in a similar fashion. Of the ten posters that explicitly feature women, two feature only a little girl, while a third features a girl with her parents planting a victory garden. In each case, the female images appear as emblems of home and family. Even when they do not appear as part of a family, Miller’s women always wear cosmetics—and so do the little girls, as in “NOW is the time to plan a VICTORY GARDEN.”⁶⁷ In fact, if a woman’s face or fingers are visible in the posters, without exception they have cosmetics or are otherwise adorned. The women’s eyelashes are regularly so long that they seem to cast shadows. Even when they are expressing verbal support for the war, their glamorous and objectifying beauty presents a jarring contrast to war’s destruction and violence, as in “Sure, *WE’RE* in the War, Too!” (see figure 6).⁶⁸ Because feminists’ diverse understandings of cosmetics have changed over the decades, the ramifications of such imagery for women are quite different today than they were during World War II. In 1940s U.S. culture, cosmetics often suggested a female’s preoccupation with appearance and desire to become an object of sexual attention. In fact, when cartoonists depicted men using cosmetics in the World War II era, the cartoons insulted and belittled them as superficial and unmanly.⁶⁹

One of Miller’s posters, “DRESS SAFELY for *your* protection,” illustrates eloquently the conflicted, mixed messages sent to women workers at Westinghouse.⁷⁰ In this poster, although the worker is doing a traditional male job by using a drill press, a disembodied voice addresses her patronizingly, as though she cannot figure out that her attire should not compromise her safety. (Men were not exempt from this paternalistic attitude, to judge from another Miller poster entitled “LOOK ’EM OVER!” in which a befuddled male is instructed to “Return *Idle* Ones to the Tool Crib”).⁷¹ Another poster, “IT’S A TRADITION WITH US, MISTER!,” appeared only two months after “We Can Do It!,” and may have featured the same model (see figure 7).⁷² Here the Westinghouse worker is juxtaposed with a ghostly female forebear packing a musket behind her. In contrast with “We Can Do It!,” the absence of a word balloon for the title makes it appear that someone else is speaking for the depicted women. Another stark contrast is that both the musket-packing ancestor and the wartime worker gaze downward as the viewer looks at them. Displaying women in such a pose, wrote Gillian Dyer, can often “symbolize dependency and submissiveness.”⁷³ Finally, the pictorial analogy of the “TRADITION” poster implies that women have stood behind and beside their men for centuries, not killing enemies themselves but helpfully supplying men with the means to do so.



Figure 7. J. Howard Miller, "IT'S A TRADITION WITH US, MISTER!" [1943]. Poster produced for Westinghouse, 22 x 17 in. Courtesy of the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

Each of these prints sends an objectifying and unrealistic image of women's beauty, especially considering the dirty conditions of the munitions factories. Viewed together as a series, the posters convey a traditional, conventionally masculine perspective toward women and their relationship to family and the workplace. They suggest that, even while women are engaged in industrial labor, they continue to be subjected to men's gaze. Some of Miller's female depictions share similarities with the voluptuous characters of the artist Alberto Vargas, whose objectifying images—the so-called “Varga Girls”—were considered by many on the home front to be both titillating and offensive.⁷⁴

In all, of the 42 posters by Miller for Westinghouse that we have located to date (there were certainly more), only 10 explicitly feature women, in one case represented only by her well-manicured hands. In other words, the main focus of the vast majority of the prints was on male workers and the war itself, while only a small fraction, less than 25 percent, featured women meaningfully. Even then, most of those images were traditional or conventional in their depictions of women in subordinated roles. The whole poster series, we must conclude, creates a message far different from the one implied by the single “We Can Do It!” poster.

These images also help to clarify the serial context of the “We Can Do It!” image. Even if the now-famous poster's role as a backstage performance seen by both men and women in Westinghouse factories is not enough to show that its empowerment was much narrower in scope than viewers commonly assume today, its juxtaposition with other posters from the series puts its apparent strength in sharp relief. If the poster was indeed empowering for some viewers in the factory, its potency was significantly diminished by at least 41 other images, most of them ignoring women altogether, while several others explicitly validate women only in domestic scenes, feature unrealistic images of femininity, and presume a consistent male gaze. Moreover, since “We Can Do It!” appears to have been the first poster in the series to depict a woman, the domestic nature of Miller's subsequent posters suggests that, if any feminist messages were sent for two weeks during February 1943, they were an exception, even an aberration.

CONCLUSION

Our aim in this essay has been to provide an in-depth rhetorical history featuring J. Howard Miller's “We Can Do It!” poster displayed at Westinghouse in 1943. Almost everything today's viewers think they know about Miller's poster is in error. These errors are shockingly prevalent in modern culture, even in published scholarship. The poster was not a Norman Rockwell product, even though numerous publications claim otherwise. The government

did not commission, issue, or disseminate the poster, despite the red tape implied by the poster's sponsoring organization, the War Production Coordinating Committee. The poster was not used for labor recruitment during the war. Most crucially, the poster was not even well known on the home front. In fact, with a print run at or below 1,800 copies, the Westinghouse shop poster was anything but famous during the war. Home-front Americans, even if they had been near a Westinghouse factory for the two weeks the poster was displayed in 1943, would have been hard-pressed to access the factory's display areas because of wartime security restrictions. Therefore, the image's current status as the ultimate pop-culture icon is built on numerous historical misconceptions.

More critically, our project questions the notion of Rosie's allegedly empowering role for women on the home front. When viewed as part of the Westinghouse vernacular culture, as well as in its programmatic series, the poster emerges as less feminist in its portrayal than complicit in its level of tokenism. At the very least, these findings speak to the perils of projecting our modern sentiments back in time, seeing another era's culture through an anachronistic visual and terministic screen. Consequently, today's understandings of Miller's posters are for the most part mythic in a strong rhetorical sense in that they deflect attention from the material and symbolic realities of World War II factories.

Miller, as a male freelance artist commissioned by a male-dominated organization, depicted women workers in his poster series in such a way that, for all practical purposes, he spoke for and about their motivations as rooted in patriotism rather than economic gain or necessity. Further, his prints strongly suggest the women's loyalty to feminine domesticity and presentation of self that are not even close to what modern thinkers would consider feminist. By always featuring white women, moreover, he deflected attention from racial minority women's contributions to the war effort, thus presenting another variety of disempowerment, this one based in absence, omission, and silence. That he portrayed patriotism rather than economic gain or necessity as a reason for the women's labor may have purified their motivations, by providing a transcendent warrant for their otherwise potentially disturbing presence in the factories. William L. Bird Jr. and Harry R. Rubenstein generalize that "[a]lthough posters [in the World War II factories] carried many direct messages to work harder, keep quiet, or conserve, the underlying and more important message that was repeated hundreds of times over was the relationship of production to patriotism, and the transformation of employees into factory combatants."⁷⁵

Firsthand voices by women, both white and black, about their views of their jobs did sometimes mention patriotism—and these were the very accounts

trumpeted by the government during the war. But recent oral histories and biographies are frank that women were often prompted by economic need or improvement over their existing jobs' wages. That their work served an apparent patriotic purpose was, for many of them, a less important factor, at least privately. Moreover, it is probable that labor-management relations were such that the workers' efficiency would have risked reduction of their long-term wages by reducing the hours needed to produce, not to mention how patriotism could be invoked to circumvent strikes and characterize workers' unrest as un-American. Recalling the United Electrical labor union's major accomplishments during the 1940s, James J. Matles and James Higgins observed that "among the most important of the eighteen hundred cases which the union argued before panels of the War Labor Board . . . was one which established the right of women workers to receive equal pay for equal work. When, in 1945, the board ordered GE [General Electric] and Westinghouse to cease pay discrimination against women workers, it marked a first breakthrough on this issue in mass production industry."⁷⁶ Therefore, while the words in "We Can Do It!" may appear to emerge from a female source, the image's beauty and elegance conceal the fact that it is a ventriloquist's voice commissioned by Westinghouse, a voice whose purpose was evidently masculine and perhaps even exploitative.⁷⁷

Whatever sense of empowerment the poster retains, then, must be considered anomalous. The primary wartime viewers of "We Can Do It!" did not experience the poster in isolation, but from within a working-class community that gave it special meaning, and from within a time- and place-bound, two-week period in which they experienced the not-yet-famous print as only one of a series of fleeting images. To say that the poster was a source of broad empowerment on the home front is thus to engage in what Dana L. Cloud called a "rhetoric of tokenism," using the poster's apparently feminist gesture to metonymically construct a discourse of empowerment that includes a too-large swath of women on the home front.⁷⁸ To say that the poster was a source of empowerment specifically for Westinghouse women is to ignore the poster's placement in a series, while simultaneously projecting a modern desire for feminist self-empowerment onto a population that was very different both socially and culturally.⁷⁹ Thus, although it was certainly an exceptional image, "We Can Do It!" was far from the feminist icon it has retroactively become. The poster has come to represent a past that never was.

NOTES

1. Christopher Trump, "Introductory Remarks" (symposium on "The Poster as a Force in War and Peace," Overseas Press Club, New York City, February 27, 1976), 2, in William J. Brennan Papers, box 19, folder 6, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

2. David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 325.
3. William Henry Chafe, *The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920–1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 183, 184. He cites National Manpower Council, *Womanpower* (New York, 1957), 3, 9. Similarly, William H. Chafe, "World War II as a Pivotal Experience for American Women," in *Women and War: The Changing Status of American Women from the 1930s to the 1950s*, ed. Maria Diedrich and Dorothea Fischer-Hornung (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 21–34.
4. Paddy Quick, "Rosie the Riveter: Myths and Realities," *Radical America* 9, no. 4–5 (1975): 114–31, quotation on 115.
5. Quick, "Rosie the Riveter"; Karen Anderson, *Wartime Women: Sex Roles, Family Relations, and the Status of Women during World War II* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981); D'Ann Campbell, *Women at War with America: Private Lives in a Patriotic Era* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); Susan M. Hartmann, *The Home Front and Beyond: American Women in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982); and Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984). Similarly, Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987); and Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex during World War II* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987).
6. Karen Tucker Anderson, "Last Hired, First Fired: Black Women Workers during World War II," *Journal of American History* 69 (1982): 82–97.
7. For a discussion of women's complex set of motivations to join the home-front labor force, see Anderson, *Wartime Women*, 27–30. Regarding the financial motive, see Honey, *Creating Rosie*, 11: "Clearly, economic imperatives and the fulfillment of doing skilled work exerted a greater influence on women who had advanced during the war than did propaganda or private fantasies."
8. D'Ann Campbell, "Women in Combat: The World War II Experience in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, and the Soviet Union," *Journal of Military History* 57 (1993): 301–23, quotation on 302.
9. Deborah Montgomerie, "Reassessing Rosie: World War II, New Zealand Women and the Iconography of Femininity," *Gender and History* 8 (1996): 108–32, quotation on 108. Sherrie A. Kossoudj and Laura J. Dresser similarly argued that "the social perception of the World War II industrial woman is of Rosie the Riveter, but this myth is much stronger than the reality of riveting as a war-production occupation for women." See their "The End of a Riveting Experience: Occupational Shifts at Ford after World War II," *American Economic Review* 82 (1992): 519–25, quotation on 525. Note that Montgomerie ("Reassessing Rosie," 129, n. 3) pointed to a recent view of the watershed account in which Marilyn Lake asserted that the war created a "new understanding of femininity" and that "the structure of femininity itself" was changed by the war: Lake, "Female Desires: The Meaning of World War II," *Australian Historical Studies* 24 (1990): 267–84, quotations on 268, 267.
10. The 42 Miller posters may be found at two archives. Forty-one are held at the Smithsonian Institution's Museum of American History, Washington, DC, while the National Archives, College Park, MD, holds eight, one of which is not at the Smithsonian. Both hold an original "We Can Do It!" The Heinz History Center and Museum in Pittsburgh holds a few of

these posters as well. That Miller worked for an advertising agency (and not directly for Westinghouse) is supported by testimony from an ad producer whom Miller befriended after the war. George Popichak, in conversation with the authors, March 8, 2006.

11. Redd Evans and John Jacob Loeb, "Rosie the Riveter," New York: Paramount Music Corporation, 1942, <http://www.umkc.edu/lib/spec-col/ww2/WarNews/rosie.htm> (accessed February 24, 2005).
12. Michael Osborn, "Rhetorical Depiction," in *Form, Genre, and the Study of Political Discourse*, ed. Herbert W. Simons and Aram A. Aghazarian (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1986), 79–107, quotation on 90; and Osborn, "In Defense of Broad Mythic Criticism—A Reply to Rowland," *Communication Studies* 41 (1990): 121–27, quotation on 123.
13. S. Paige Baty, *American Monroe: The Making of a Body Politic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 10, 8.
14. Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 39. Also cited in Janis L. Edwards and Carol K. Winkler, "Representative Form and the Visual Ideograph: The Iwo Jima Image in Editorial Cartoons," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83 (1997): 289–310, quotation on 296.
15. Ellen Fried, "From Pearl Harbor to Elvis: Images That Endure," *Prologue* 36, no. 4 (2004): 38–45, comment on 40, photograph on 43.
16. Ekaterina V. Haskins, "'Put Your Stamp on History': The USPS Commemorative Program *Celebrate the Century* and Postmodern Collective Memory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89 (2003): 1–18, esp. 4.
17. Edwards and Winkler, "Representative Form," 306. Although the woman in Miller's image is unnamed, for convenience we will refer to her as "Rosie."
18. Michael O'Sullivan, "And the Winners Are . . .," *Washington Post*, December 8, 2000, N39.
19. For example, Greg Cannon, "Auction Set for Norman Rockwell's Rosie the Riveter Painting," *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News*, May 21, 2002, 1: "'We Can Do It' [sic] was actually part of a government campaign to recruit women to the factories."
20. For instance, Lisa Treiber-Walter wrote that "the 'We Can Do It!' character . . . soon developed into more than just propaganda as her face became the foremost symbol of the new-found strength and independence of American women." Lisa Treiber-Walter, "'Rosie the Riveter' Remembers," *Fredericksburg (TX) Standard Radio Post*, June 9, 2004, Internet edition, <http://www.fredericksburgstandard.com/articles/2004/06/09/news/05rosie.txt> (accessed March 20, 2006).
21. It is not uncommon to find references to Rockwell as the artist of Miller's poster. The London *Independent*, for example, wrote that "Rosie the Riveter, designed by Norman Rockwell, . . . quickly became one of the iconic poster images of the Second World War. In blue overalls, her hair carelessly wrapped in a polka-dot scarf, Rosie flexed her biceps and proclaimed 'We Can Do It!'" Mark Bostridge, "Iron Maidens," *Independent on Sunday*, October 12, 2003, Features, 6; Ad Council, *Matters of Choice: Advertising in the Public Interest: The Advertising Council (1942–2002)* (New York: Ad Council, 2002); Bob Garfield, "Inspiration and Urge-to-Serve Mark the Best of Ad Council," *Advertising Age*, April 29, 2002, C2.
22. Leila J. Rupp, *Mobilizing Women for War: German and American Propaganda, 1939–1945* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), 146, 148. In contrast, the poster is a common feature in more recent works on the World War II home front. Rupp herself uses the

image in her recent article "From Rosie the Riveter to the Global Assembly Line: American Women on the World Stage," *Magazine of History*, July 2004, 53–57. Another example is a video—Connie Field, *The Life and Times of Rosie of Riveter* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: Clarity Educational Productions, 1980; Santa Monica, CA: Direct Cinema, 1999)—inasmuch as the initial version did not feature Miller's poster at all, while the more recent reproduction has it on the cover.

23. Patricia Brennan, "Poster Art for Patriotism's Sake," *Washington Post Magazine*, May 23, 1982, 35. After this early reference to the poster, the next reference we have located in popular culture was in Stewart Powell, "The Legacies of World War II," *U.S. News and World Report*, August 5, 1985, 38–41. The three-year gap between these two early references suggests how little known Miller's image was at the time. Although we have been unable to track down the National Archives personnel who first made the poster available as a souvenir image, we speculate that the poster's reemergence was connected to celebrations of World War II's 40th anniversary.
24. For two examples, Christine Petersen, *Rosie the Riveter* (New York: Children's Press, 2005); Catherine Lukas, *Rosie the Riveter* (New York: Little Simon, 2000).
25. Cara A. Finnegan, "Recognizing Lincoln: Image Vernaculars in Nineteenth-Century Visual Culture," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 8 (2005): 31–58, quotation on 33.
26. Brenda Ralph Lewis, *Women at War: The Women of World War II—At Home, at Work, on the Front Line* (Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest Association, 2002), 29–30.
27. "Spacek on Hand to Honor WWII 'Rosie the Riveters,'" *Houston Chronicle*, May 21, 2004, 3 Star ed., A2.
28. Betsy Ramelkamp, "Rosie Was so Riveting I Decided to Join Her," *Christian Science Monitor*, July 31, 2002, 18.
29. The *Post's* circulation during the war was between three and four million. For more detail on the *Post's* history, see Donald Stoltz, *Norman Rockwell and the Saturday Evening Post: The Middle Years* (New York: MJF Books, 1994); Jan Cohn, *Creating America: George Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989).
30. Melissa Dabakis, "Gendered Labor: Norman Rockwell's *Rosie the Riveter* and the Discourses of Wartime Womanhood," in *Gender and American History since 1890*, ed. Barbara Melosh (London: Routledge, 1993), 182–204, reference on 196.
31. Joe Eaton, "'Rosies' Get Their Day in the Sun," *USA Today*, November 11, 2003, 8D.
32. Emily Yellin, *Our Mothers' War: American Women at Home and at the Front during World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004), 44, 43.
33. Rosie the Riveter Trust, "Frequently Asked Questions," <http://www.rosietheriveter.org/faq.htm> (accessed March 20, 2006).
34. "Many Useful Ideas in These L-M Posters," *Labor and Management News*, May 13, 1944, 7, in War Production Board Policy Documentation file, RG 179, box 293, folder 1, National Archives, College Park, MD. Note that the name of this newspaper varied at times during the war, sometimes hyphenating "labor-management" in the title.
35. The organization appears to have changed its name twice, creating three consecutive series of Westinghouse posters. Of the 42 Miller posters that we have located, the initial series (December 1942 to at least November 1943) was attributed to the familiar War Production Co-ordinating Committee. The second series (up through June 1944) was attributed to the Labor Management Coordinating Committee. The final series (through the end of the war,

though since this series is mostly undated it is unclear how far beyond the war's end they were issued) was attributed to Headquarters, Industrial Relations.

36. "Joint War Production Committees Formed," *Westinghouse Magazine* 14, no. 2–3 (February 1942): 9, in Library and Archives Division, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, PA.
37. For details on the War Production Drive, *Industrial Mobilization for War: History of the War Production Board and Predecessor Agencies, 1940–1945*, vol. 1, *Program and Administration* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947), 423–24, 711–12; Henry P. Guzda, "Industrial Democracy: Made in the U.S.A.," *Monthly Labor Review* 107, no. 5 (1984): 26–33. Although many of the labor-management committees existed only on letterhead, hundreds were very active. Since Westinghouse's vice president for industrial relations was a member of the national War Production Drive Committee, the company's committee played an especially active role.
38. "Donald Nelson Says—," *District 6 Journal* 2, no. 5 (April 4, 1942): 2, in UE N40, box 1039, folder 163, Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA; William L. Bird Jr. and Harry R. Rubenstein, *Design for Victory: World War II Posters on the American Home Front* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998), 75.
39. War Advertising Council, *How Industry Can Cooperate with the U.S. Government Information Program to Reduce Absenteeism* [1943], in War Production Board, Policy Documentation file, RG 179, box 2462, envelope 1, National Archives, College Park, MD.
40. Janine Zuniga, "They Did Everything Men Could Do: A Real Rosie the Riveter Tells How Womanpower Helped to Win WWII," *San Diego Union-Tribune*, September 8, 2001, B1.
41. Ruth Rosen, "Rosie the Riveter Lives," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 29, 2004, B7.
42. CNN.com, "Rosie the Riveter," no direct URL; link is available at <http://edition.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/century/episodes/04/> (accessed March 20, 2006).
43. "Many Useful Ideas in These L-M Posters," 7.
44. For example, War Production Board, *War Production Drive: Official Plan Book* (Washington, DC: WPB, [1942]). This booklet lists the responsibilities of labor-management committees, including such tasks as "pay attention to plant efficiency," "arrange for handling suggestions," and "establish a subcommittee on posters" (7). The booklet does not mention the recruitment of new workers.
45. These and similar phrases were common on wartime recruitment posters.
46. "Shop Posters Shout 'ALL PRESENT,'" *Labor-Management News*, April 22, 1944, 5, 4, in War Production Board Policy Documentation file, RG 179, box 293, folder 1, National Archives, College Park, MD.
47. Tony Marcano, "Famed Riveter in War Effort, Rose Monroe Dies at 77," *New York Times*, June 2, 1997, B13. Or, consider the observation of Jeannine Yeomans: "Rosie the Riveter, the image of a muscle-bound woman with her sleeves rolled up, appeared on billboards and posters across the country emblazoned with the words 'We Can Do It' [sic]. She became an enduring wartime symbol of the country's 'can-do' spirit." Yeomans, "Riveting Rosies Now Collecting Overdue Glory," *Women's E News*, January 29, 2001, <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm?aid=420&context=cover&mode=today> (accessed March 20, 2006).
48. "Accidental Symbol of Patriotic Womanhood," *Australian*, June 16, 1997, 13.
49. Charlie Ruch, as quoted in "NOT Rosie the Riveter," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 14, 1995, V6.

50. Westinghouse records indicate that "[w]ar posters provided by Industrial Relations [the successor to the War Production Co-ordinating Committee], by the government and others were distributed for one thousand bulletin boards at the various works and offices frequently throughout the war. A large proportion of these were of four-color design and were produced in our printing plant." This extremely small print run means that original Miller posters are now quite rare (and likely quite valuable). Printing Division, "Westinghouse in the War: World War II," typescript, July 15, 1946, 14, in Westinghouse Electric Corp., WWII—Reports—Printing Division, MSS 424, box 215, folder 4, Westinghouse Collection, Library and Archives Division, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania, Pittsburgh, PA. We are aware of two extant original "We Can Do It!" posters, one held by the Smithsonian Institution in the Museum of American History and another at the National Archives. There may well be others in private collections.
51. April Cass, in discussion with the authors, March 16, 2006.
52. "Fifty L-M Posters Picked for Display," *Labor-Management News*, October 11, 1943, 1, 7; and "L-M Posters Draw Crowd in New York," *Labor-Management News*, October 18, 1943, 1, 7. Both are in War Production Board Policy Documentation file, RG 179, box 292, folder 1, National Archives, College Park, MD. Incidentally, the contest is most likely responsible for the poster's fame today, albeit indirectly. The eight Miller posters now held by the National Archives all date from June 1943 or earlier. Since the contest took place later that summer, these eight were presumably Westinghouse's entry into the poster contest; eventually, the posters were preserved along with their competitors in the contest after the War Production Board's records entered the archives. Around 40 years later, evidently when archives staffers were seeking period posters to reproduce for souvenirs, "We Can Do It!" was selected and has since become popular years after its initial appearance on the factory floor.
53. Dana L. Cloud, "Hegemony or Concordance? The Rhetoric of Tokenism in 'Oprah' Winfrey's Rags-to-Riches Biography," *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 13 (1996): 115–37, especially 122–23.
54. W. J. T. Mitchell recognized this centuries-old idea that critics must not ignore what he called the "image-text," the relationship between a given artifact's visual and textual markers. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 89, n. 9.
55. Peter Wagner refers to this as the "iconotext" in his *Reading Iconotexts: From Swift to the French Revolution* (London: Reaktion Books, 1995).
56. Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London: Reaktion Books, 2001), 39.
57. These issues within labor are evident in voluminous records from the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America in District 6 in general, which encompassed Local 601 at the East Pittsburgh factory, especially the *District 6 Journal*, its successor publication *Progress*, as well as correspondence among the leadership. Examples are ubiquitous in UE N39, box 1038; UE N40, box 1039; UE N151, box 1501; UE N154, box 1504; *District 6 Journal*, vols. 1–3 (bound copy); Papers of Margaret Darin Stasik (1936–45), UE 73:32; and the transcribed interviews with men and women workers at Westinghouse factories in Erie and East Pittsburgh in record group 91:15, all held at Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA.
58. Edwards and Winkler, "Representative Form," 296. More detail on the iconic Iwo Jima photograph is available in Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, "Performing Civic Identity:

The Iconic Photograph of the Flag Raising on Iwo Jima," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (2002): 363–92.

59. Charlie Ruch, as quoted in "NOT Rosie the Riveter," V6.
60. "Westinghouse and the War Production Drive," *Westinghouse Magazine* 14, no. 6 (September 1942): 3–7, quotation on 6, caption and photograph on 7. Note that "let's show them" and "we can do it" are closely linked in a perlocutionary sense in that the persuasive effect of each phrase is essentially the same.
61. "Case Study No. 3—Westinghouse," *How To Build the Will to Win: A Collection of Articles on War Production Drive Programs*, War Production Drive, 1942, photograph on 47, in War Production Board, Policy Documentation file, RG 179, box 2463, envelope 4, National Archives, College Park, MD.
62. Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), 128.
63. Finnegan discusses "image vernaculars" in "Recognizing Lincoln," 34. For discussion of the concepts of identification and consubstantiality, Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 20–23.
64. "District Council #6, UERMWA [United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America], Report of the Officers, 1940–1941, Submitted August 24, 1941"; likewise, *Report of the Officers, District Council 6, United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America: Submitted to District Council 6, August 23, 1942*; UE, N40, box 1039, folders 153, 154, Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA.
65. A few examples of these almost unknown Miller posters are available in Bird and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory*, 79–81.
66. J. Howard Miller, "MAKE TODAY a Safe day," poster [1945], emphases in original, catalog no. 1985.0851.26, Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
67. J. Howard Miller, "Now is the time to plan a VICTORY GARDEN," poster [1945], emphasis in original, catalog no. 1985.0851.17, Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
68. J. Howard Miller, "Sure, WE'RE in the War, Too!," poster [1943], emphasis in original, catalog no. 1985.0851.12, Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
69. For an example portraying men using cosmetics, see Ben Yomen's untitled cartoon in the *District 6 Journal*, February 23, 1943, vol. 3, no. 6, 2, which circulated exactly during the same week as Miller's "We Can Do It!" poster for the same labor union audiences at Westinghouse. *District 6 Journal* (bound), Archives Service Center, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA. For a discussion of diverse feminist perspectives with attention to generational changes, Bonnie J. Dow, "The Traffic in Men and the *Fatal Attraction* of Postfeminist Masculinity," *Women's Studies in Communication* 29 (2006): 113–31.
70. J. Howard Miller, "DRESS SAFELY for your protection," poster [1944], emphases in original, catalog no. 1985.0851.23, Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
71. J. Howard Miller, "LOOK 'EM OVER! Return Idle Ones to the Tool Crib," poster [1943], emphases in original, catalog no. 1985.0851.16, Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
72. J. Howard Miller, "IT'S A TRADITION WITH US, MISTER!," poster [1943], emphasis in original, catalog no. 1985.0851.09, Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution,

Washington, DC. The tool in the woman's hand may be a compressed air drill or possibly a riveter, though, if it were the latter, it would indicate Miller's lack of familiarity with tools used at Westinghouse.

73. Gillian Dyer, *Advertising as Communication* (New York: Methuen, 1982), 100.
74. For historical perspective on Vargas and his work, Joanne Meyerowitz, "Women, Cheesecake, and Borderline Material: Responses to Girlie Pictures in the Mid-Twentieth-Century U.S.," *Journal of Women's History* 8, no. 3 (1996): 9–35.
75. Bird Jr. and Rubenstein, *Design for Victory*, 66.
76. James J. Matles and James Higgins, *Them and Us: Struggles of a Rank-and-File Union* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974), 138. For another account, David O. Woodbury, *Battlefronts of Industry: Westinghouse in World War II* (New York: J. Wiley and Sons, 1948).
77. Linda Alcoff, "The Problem of Speaking for Others," *Cultural Critique* 20 (1991–92): 5–32.
78. Cloud, "Hegemony or Concordance," 122.
79. As Dyer argued, "even the simplest images are interpreted and reproduced differently in different cultures" (*Advertising as Communication*, 96).

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