

**‘I found a lovely photo of you and just thought I would drop you a few lines’:
Australian servicemen, mateship, and the World War II pin-up girl.**

**Madeleine Hamilton
(University of Melbourne)**

Abstract: *This article argues that Australian World War II servicemen were pulled in contradictory directions: on the one hand they were expected to conform to the Anzac ideal and its mateship ethos, while on the other they were encouraged for morale purposes to disavow the masculine military sphere and embrace instead dreams and memories of home as represented by the Australian pin-up girl. During World War II Australian servicemen were enthusiastic pin-up collectors and entire walls of kitchens, canteens, tents and workshops were covered with photographs and illustrations of young beauties. Australian servicemen did not just enjoy the visual representation of such women; they also wrote them letters in which they related their day-to-day routines, yearnings for home, and hopes for the future. My conclusions regarding the assurances provided by pin-ups during World War II are drawn from the sentiments expressed by servicemen in letters written between 1942 and 1945 to two Australian pin-up girls, Joyce Walter and Linda Browne.*

In his analysis of the American World War II pin-up girl, Robert B. Westbrook argues that American servicemen’s consumption of pin-up girls during World War II was related to their yearnings for home and the women they had left behind. The pin-up girl served to evoke the relationship and bond between men and women. As Westbrook argues, this bond – or ‘private obligation’ – was recognised and exploited by the American authorities well aware of the difficulties posed by a liberal democratic nation asking its citizens to effectively die for the state. Friends, parents and children were evoked in war propaganda to remind men of the freedoms and pleasures they enjoyed as Americans, and of their private obligations to family and other social connections.¹

To Maria E. Buszek, this evocation of the home and femininity in pin-up imagery did not result in repressive outcomes for American women. In her analysis of the work of Alberto Vargas, illustrator for *Esquire* magazine throughout the war years, Buszek argues:

[The] juxtaposition of fantasy and reality in Vargas's work reflected American propaganda campaigns that encouraged women to emulate and men to idolize female types normally vilified during peacetime and actively discouraged during the depression – powerful, productive women in professions and the military, whose beauty and bravery resulted in large part from their very entry into these spheres.²

Despina Kakoudaki similarly identifies the strength and power evoked in the pin-up:

As an image for domestic consumption by military personnel, it can concentrate and focus sexual energy, transforming it into military energy or patriotic (but also sexual) arousal. As an image directed against one's enemies, the pinup can channel this sexual energy (now relocated from the idealized female form to the military/sexual response it evokes) and use it as a weapon.³

For Kadoudaki this employment of pin-up imagery had more complicated repercussions than is acknowledged by Buszek. 'What', she asks, 'is the political and military effect of implicating the beautiful woman in the business of ugly war?'⁴

To date there has not been any comparable historical analysis of the investment the Australian military and individual servicemen made in pin-up girls. While Rosemary Campbell and Barbara Sullivan each address briefly the representation of women in wartime novels and men's magazines, and Ross Laurie highlights the negative depiction of the sexualised woman in Australian war comics and in post-war men's magazines, World War II pin-up girls are not the focus of these historians' work.⁵ Here I attempt to rectify this neglected, but highly intriguing aspect of Australian history. This article thus seeks to make a contribution both to the small international historiography of the World War II pin-up girl, and the study of Australians at war. My analysis documents the impact pin-ups had on the morale of male servicemen, and in turn their (previously unrecognised) contribution to the

Australian war project. The deployment of prevailing notions of both masculinity and femininity, via the production and consumption of pin-up imagery, I argue, played an important part in the Australian war effort.

I saw your photo in an old *Pix* today and it is really lovely. I thought I would write and see if you would care to write, I would love to hear from you, write and tell me how the old Bondi is going and especially about yourself, will you try hard. I have been in this area too long Linda, I am getting a little homesick previous to that I had seventeen months in New Guinea so I will be glad when it is all over here and I am free to get home again.⁶

So wrote Syd to Linda Browne, professional fashion model and magazine beauty contest entrant, sometime in late 1944. For Syd, homesick and fatigued by war, Linda, a 'delightful ... 22-year-old ... lass with an attractive smile, appealing personality', represented the pleasures of home.⁷ Pin-up girls provided two assurances to their Australian soldier admirers. Firstly, such imagery invited servicemen to bond through their shared consumption of pin-ups. Through the public display of heterosexuality that the consumption of these images facilitated, servicemen participated in and conformed to a masculine military culture. Traditional ideas about mateship, including compulsory heterosexuality were fundamental for the masculine war project, and the public consumption and display of pin-up girls enabled individual men to demonstrate their normality in this regard.⁸

Secondly (and somewhat contradictorily), pin-ups encouraged men to separate themselves from masculine culture and the Australian ideal of mateship in favour of memories and fantasies of home, domesticity and family. The freedom and happiness young and beautiful women symbolised boosted their morale and motivated them to keep fighting. In this regard they were fighting so they could get home, not because they privileged and enjoyed the masculine realm of the armed services.

My conclusions regarding the meaning of pin-ups amongst Australian soldiers are drawn primarily from collections of letters written to two Australian World War II pin-up models, Joyce Walter and Linda Browne, held privately in Victoria, Australia. I will first examine the lives these two women led during the war, and the context in which their photographs appeared in print. I will move on to a discussion of the general place of pin-up girls in the Australian military forces during World War II, before exploring the specific responses servicemen had to Joyce and Linda upon viewing their respective photographs. The letters written to these women reveal the two assurances pin-up images provided to their soldier admirers – that the bond between servicemen could be facilitated by publicly consuming images of young women, and that the comforts and pleasures of domesticity, family and femininity would be reattained at the conflict's successful conclusion. In providing these assurances, pin-up girls played a small but important part in the Australian war effort.

Joyce and Linda

Joyce Walter, like many young women in wartime Melbourne, experienced both hardships and pleasures. Residing with her family in the suburb of Armadale, she worked for a hardware supplier, took the tram to St. Kilda on Saturday nights to enjoy the seaside entertainment attractions with her friends, and did the shopping and cleaning for an elderly lady who lived two doors down. She met her fiancé, Roger Bond on the number 6 tram as it trundled down High Street. Roger and his family lived just down the line in East Malvern, but Joyce - like so many Australian women - spent most of the war apart from her partner. She and Roger made do exchanging letters while he served in Western Australia and Papua New Guinea.

Though her life may have been representative, Joyce's appearance in *Pix* was an unusual event that thrust her into the public limelight and subjected her to the gaze of a diverse audience. In late 1941, Joyce was photographed by her sister Irene, perched on a wall at the St. Kilda Baths in a white bathing suit. In her husband

Roger Bond's recollection, the photograph was taken spontaneously and Joyce was completely unaware that her sister planned to enter the photograph in a magazine competition.⁹ That she is somewhat incongruously wearing a pair of white high heels with her swimsuit, and assumes a noticeably contrived pose, reveals that while Joyce and her sister may not originally have intended to have the photograph published, they at least collaborated to create an image evoking the glamour of Hollywood pin-ups. Regardless of the circumstances and intentions of the two women in creating the St. Kilda Baths photograph, Joyce appeared in the 31 January 1942 edition of *Pix* and would soon become the focus of an admiring audience's fantasies and longings.



Joyce Walter in *Pix*, 31 January 1942. Courtesy of State Library of Victoria.

Another resident of Melbourne, Linda Browne was employed as a secretary during the early years of the war. Moving from one office position to the next, however, she never felt she was able to use her full potential: 'As soon as I learnt all I could at one job I went on to others. I was always looking for something more'.¹⁰ To some extent her energy and impatience were directed into extracurricular interests. She was employed to sing at the dances held at Collingwood and St. Kilda town halls on Monday, Friday and Saturday nights. The singing job satisfied Linda's love for performing and her desire for something different than her day-to-day routine.

While the advent of war disrupted the daily routine of Melbourne's population, it also brought new opportunities and experiences for local women. The influx of servicemen into Melbourne and the creation of new and larger entertainment venues and precincts, gave Linda the opportunity to sing in public.¹¹ It was also due to the disruptions and dislocations of war that Linda met her husband, Bill and commenced the next stage of her life.

Linda left her family and Melbourne behind to follow Bill to his ship's port of call, Sydney. 'There were times when he was fourteen months away', she recalls, 'If I had a chance to see him it would be there'.¹² Ever restless and desirous of a creative outlet, while in Sydney Linda pursued a professional modelling career. Through family contacts, she was introduced to Reg Johnson, a commercial photographer who received regular commission work from companies such as Grace Bros., David Jones, Jantzen Swim Suits and Lux Soap. Linda soon appeared regularly in advertisements for these products.¹³



Linda on Sydney Harbour Bridge, 1943-44. Photo courtesy of Linda Browne.

In August 1944, Johnson sought Linda's permission to enter a portrait photograph he had taken of her in the just-announced *Pix* Cover Girl Quest. Linda agreed, suggesting that if she won a prize they would split the money. As one of the first entrants to have her photo published, Linda received an enormous amount of interest from Australian, American, British and New Zealand servicemen stationed in Australia and around the world. Ultimately she would receive over 170 letters from such admirers.

Pin-ups in the services

In October 1944, Private W.J Conroy on behalf of the 14/32 Australian Infantry Battalion stationed in New Guinea wrote a letter to Linda. He, along with others in his battalion had seen and been much taken by the photo of her in *Pix*. 'As you know', he wrote:

[E]very unit has their own "Pin Up" girl and we have been looking for someone nice to be ours. The other units around here are always showing us how lovely their "Pin Up" girls are, we wanted someone lovely enough to take the wind out of their sails, at last we have found our ideal girl, who I am pleased to say is you.¹⁴

Private Conroy went on to politely request Linda's consent to be his unit's elected pin-up girl, assuring her that if she would be so kind to send a photo of herself it would be 'framed and well taken care of' by over eight hundred Aussies. As astonishing a request this may have seemed to Linda Browne, that her photograph had reached and been enjoyed by a large group of men in New Guinea was not, however, an extraordinary event. Indeed, by the late stages of the war in the Pacific, Australian servicemen had subscribed enthusiastically to the cult of the pin-up girl, and letters such as Private Conroy's reached many a pretty young woman who had appeared in Australian publications such as *Pix*.¹⁵ It was common during the war for entrants in beauty contests to have their home addresses printed underneath their photo.

While some Australian servicemen adored a single pin-up girl, others concentrated on amassing extensive collections of photographs and illustrations of beautiful, scantily clad women. To these men, the bigger the smorgasbord of young beauties, the better. That the consumption of such images was accepted, perhaps even encouraged by the army is evident in the very public manner in which pin-up collections were displayed. Entire walls of kitchens, canteens, tents and workshops

were covered with photographs and illustrations of girls, and groups of servicemen competed with each other to build the best collections.¹⁶ Favourite images were reproduced by amateur artists on the noses of aircraft, again with the apparent blessing of military superiors.¹⁷

The tacit approval by the armed services of the consumption of pin-up images indicates official recognition of the role such images played in the military environment. Specifically, the pin-up girl functioned as a focal point in the process of male servicemen bonding with one another. Australian soldiers were directed to the Anzac as the ideal man and encouraged to emulate his legendary strength, stoicism, bravery, and commitment to his mates. By aspiring to the Anzac ideal, the Australian World War II serviceman could achieve the qualities necessary to bond with others in an environment of heavy military conflict. He could participate in the glorification of masculinity by upholding and adoring the Anzac ideal.¹⁸ His public and enthusiastic consumption of such pin-up images, however, assured his heterosexuality.¹⁹ Historically, John C. Pettegrew argues:

“Real men” needed not only to desire a woman but *to express* that desire in ways that made other men supremely aware of it - the more public, exaggerated, and demonstrative the better. Within the context of homosociality, heterosexuality would be not just an identity a man has or does not have; it would also serve as an ideal of manhood, and thus an individual man’s ability to meet that standard would be determined in more or less visible *relation* to other men competing for social-sexual contact with women (emphasis in original).²⁰

The constant visual presence of the pin-up allowed men to ‘safely’ bond with one another in the homosocial military environment without fear of compromising their sexuality.²¹ The shared consumption of an image, such as the *Pix* photo of Linda Browne facilitated public adoration of the female body, thus reducing homoerotic tensions in the male-only setting. As Private Conroy wrote to Linda, her photo

would be framed and displayed prominently so all the men in his unit could admire her. Consequently they could publicly perform their heterosexuality.²²

Interestingly, the practicality of pin-ups in facilitating the performance of heterosexuality was not immediately apparent to some Australian soldiers. The privileging of mateship in Australian culture led in some ways to men and women leading separate rather than shared lives. As Rosemary Campbell argues:

According to national legends, Australian men were supposed to be capable of mastering any emergency situation, but had no reputation for sophisticated drawing-room banter. Eulogised as a national treasure, the Australian male's virility was a manliness associated with surviving against a hostile environment (the bushman) or war (the Anzac), a blood bond to men rather than a passion for a woman.²³

The Americans' sexual appreciation of women was treated with initial suspicion and distaste by some Australian servicemen. The comments Gavin Long, war correspondent and official historian of Australia's involvement in World War II, recorded in one of his notebooks is illustrative:

In the ward rooms ... normally the first thing you see is a picture of the King ... we went into this ward room and there was one picture - a large autographed photograph of Dorothy Lamour in a sarong. One of the chaps said, "Well that just about expresses it. We worship an ideal and they worship c..t".²⁴

This particular comment illustrates both the xenophobic anti-Americanism that was demonstrated verbally and physically in several notable instances during the war, and the misogyny subscribed to by some Australian servicemen.²⁵ According to some historians, the World War II pin-up girl often attracted and facilitated disturbing anti-woman sentiment and behaviour. One example, cited by Robert B. Westbrook, is a poster of Betty Grable's body overlaid with a grid. While this device

was meant to aid the concentration of troops being instructed in map reading, to Westbrook 'it is difficult not to view it ... as a 'targeting' of Grable's anatomy'.²⁶ Philomena Goodman argues that the employment of pin-ups for official military purposes was highly problematic: 'Women's naked bodies were used to remind men of the reason for their mission, and pin-ups were employed to teach camouflage techniques and map reading to new recruits. Women's bodies were presented to men in terms of their sexual and promiscuous availability'.²⁷

Groups of servicemen and pin-up girls

While there is no doubt that an element of misogyny was evident in the cult of the pin-up, contemporary photographs of Australian servicemen displaying their pin-up collections demonstrated the great pleasure and pride these men took in such images as they enthusiastically surrounded themselves with pin-ups in their work and rest areas. Indeed, Australian soldiers posing in front of their pin-up collections seem to have been a genre of war photography.²⁸ Famous Australian war photographer, Damian Parer took many such photographs. His biographer, Niall Brennan, writes:

At base, Parer made a number of informal pictures of the airmen around their camp. These were not his best work, viewed retrospectively, although they probably had great morale value at the time. There was a general tendency then, in England and the United States as well as Australia, to portray all servicemen – but, strangely, airmen in particular – in an unreal way. Sentiment was laid on heavily, especially by the commentators. Pictures of airmen gambolling among their tents like schoolboys, the ubiquitous female photograph in the background, were all right perhaps on their own; wedded to a commentary which described 'free and easy gallant young men ... a fighting brotherhood known only to those who live dangerously ...' and harnessed noisily to the "Ride of the Valkyrie" [sic], all this was un-Parer and has not survived the passage of time at all well.²⁹

While Brennan highlights the value of such photographs in boosting morale on the home front, 'the ubiquitous female photograph in the background' reveals one of the ways in which servicemen attempted to bolster their own spirits.

As Private Conroy's letter to Linda attests, Australian servicemen were keen to seek their ideal girl's permission before she was appointed the hut, unit, or ship pin-up girl, and also to request an original photograph from her.³⁰ In such instances, the member with the best grammar or handwriting was elected to compose the required missive. As these letters were ostensibly from a group and would inevitably be read and approved by each member, the writer did not generally disclose feelings of loneliness or vulnerability. Rather these letters are jocular, robust, and demonstrate the cohesion and camaraderie of the group. In October 1944, Jack McIntosh wrote to Linda from Darwin:

The *Pix* Cover Girl contest has aroused much interest in our unit, and after much debating and many arguments we, that is my three tent mates and myself have unanimously decided you are the ideal cover girl, the contest is won as far as we are concerned.³¹

Debates and competitions were a way for servicemen to pass time and disrupt the monotony of army life. Pin-up girls were evidently a frequent topic of debate amongst Australian servicemen who argued over which woman was the most beautiful entrant of a magazine contest, who had the best collections of pin-ups, and which Australian state had the monopoly on pretty girls.³² Fred Seaton wrote to Linda in late November 1944,

As usual in our mess ... the inevitable arguments result, among which of course is the subject of beautiful women, each one claiming his state to have the best. So to cut a long story short I produced your photo from the *Pix* Cover Girl contest in support of my argument and won that.

Then of course friendliness cropped up, so to solve this we have written to the respective girls in our own states.³³

These group letters do, however, occasionally hint at the low morale experienced by the men, especially when news of home was rare. 'There are no women around here', wrote Ted Stewart to Linda in November 1944, 'and mail is the only means by which we can keep in touch with happenings in our own states, so you can see what your answer would mean to us'.³⁴ E. Goodall wrote from Darwin, 'On behalf of all the boys, whose morale is kept high by your smiling photograph, I send you my best wishes, and hope to hear from you just once'.³⁵ There was much interest when a pin-up girl responded to a group letter: 'Your letter came to hand yesterday and we were very pleased on receiving it', wrote John McCallum to Linda. He continued:

On passing it on to the boys, you may imagine the state in which it looked on return, as they were working among grease and what not, but between the finger prints a person could still distinguish and make sense of it. After reading it they were coming to me in ones and twos telling me to write and thank you very much.³⁶

As well as Australian servicemen sharing and debating pin-up material amongst themselves, Americans and Australians also gave each other gifts of pin-up pictures. Australian soldier, Neil Webb was given an Alberto Varga calendar by some American servicemen to thank him for playing *The Last Post* on his bugle at a funeral service for more than a dozen members of an American bomber crew shot down and killed near the island of Emirau.³⁷ Several American servicemen wrote to Linda Browne after they had been given her photograph and address by Australian counterparts. In October 1944, Jack Hickey wrote,

I was talking to one of the sailors from an Australian ship and he showed me his favorite "Pin-Up Girl" and guess who it was – that is correct - you sweet and adorable you and I can honestly say he has an "eye for

beauty”, he told me to write to you but not to mention the name of his ship ... He had never written to you but is just one of your many unheard of admirers.³⁸

Two months later another American, Leslie, wrote to Linda, ‘One of your friends who I met on the beach is stationed here and he gave me your address. He is [in the] RAAF, a very swell guy’.³⁹ In spite of the derisive attitudes towards Americans entertained in some quarters of the Australian services, the exchange of pin-up images seems to have helped to facilitate positive interactions between the two groups. While pin-up girls functioned to help Australian servicemen bond with each other, they also apparently worked to connect Australian and American men, breaking down perceptions of cultural difference.⁴⁰

The letters received by Linda Browne and Joyce Walter indicate that the pin-up material decorating tents, work and mess areas, and aircraft played an important role in helping servicemen bond with each other. Whether it be through swapping material, comparing collections, debating the relative merits of individual models, or writing group letters to a favourite pin-up girl, Australian servicemen demonstrated their heterosexuality and normality, thus relieving the potential tensions inherent in a homosocial context where the Anzac soldier was upheld as the ideal.

Morale and memories of home

While the pin-up girl facilitated the display of compulsory heterosexuality amongst servicemen in a homosocial military environment, she played another somewhat more contradictory role. While an object of shared public heterosexual desire, the pin-up also enabled individual servicemen to turn away from the relentlessly masculine sphere of the armed forces towards memories of home and the pleasures of domestic life. Dozens of letters received by Linda and Joyce attested to the admiration and adoration her photograph inspired amongst entire units, huts and ships, but many more were composed by individual soldiers sharing the loneliness, isolation, boredom and terror they experienced, and how much they

longed to return home and meet someone like them. Such letters articulate the vulnerability and alienation many Australian men experienced when surrounded completely by other men and having to constantly conform to the ideals of Australian masculinity – toughness, endurance, stoicism, and mateship.⁴¹ These men sought a correspondence with women like Joyce and Linda to help them through the harsh conditions of war, and to remind them of the simple pleasures of home. Thus Joyce, Linda, and other Australian pin-up girls, represented the ideals of the domestic sphere, and the comfort such ideals inspired.⁴² Eric Leach was one Australian serviceman to seek contact with a young woman he'd seen in a magazine in order to help relieve feelings of isolation, boredom and fear. In August 1942, he wrote to Joyce,

I am a very lonely soldier. I am not allowed to tell you where I am stationed. But perhaps you can guess by some of the things I say in this letter. I found a lovely photo of you and just thought I would drop you a few lines hoping you don't mind anyway here's hoping you don't. I have been up here for eight months and have seen all the raids. I have had some lucky breaks and have survived them all so far I had better touch wood. I had better tell you about myself in case you decide to write to me as a friend. I am five foot ten inches tall and weigh twelve stone, in civil life I am a Boundary Rider on my father's station at Wagga Wagga. I am twenty-one... I hope I hear from you very soon and please don't think too badly of me for writing to you. P.S write soon please.⁴³

Chas Leach wrote to Linda seeking a pen friend to help break up the monotony and boredom of army life:

Well Linda it is well over twelve months since I last saw the mainland, and life in New Guinea goes monotonously on. One has to reconcile himself to this deadly sameness of routine, day in and day out, by realizing that the day will dawn again when a normal life can be resumed.⁴⁴

In addition to feelings of isolation and boredom, Australian servicemen were of course involved in life-threatening events which led them to crave the stability and normality of home. 'I would be very pleased if you wrote to me occasionally as it gets very lonely up here dodging bullets all the time', wrote David Summers to Linda in September 1944.⁴⁵ That Linda was from Sydney made her particularly popular with servicemen from New South Wales. Bob Bannan, serving on HMAS Westralia, wrote:

I am a Sydney native and live at Double Bay and haven't been home for quite a long time, and I would be very grateful to you if you would drop me a few lines now and again as you have no idea what letters mean to a chap up here.⁴⁶

Evidently, servicemen such as Bob Bannan saw Linda as representing the home cities they hadn't seen for extensive periods of time and longed to return to. Though Bob suggests that Linda has 'no idea' how much letters from young Australian women were valued amongst servicemen, she was actually well aware of the desperate loneliness experienced by soldiers, airmen, and particularly sailors, as her husband was away for long periods of time serving on HMAS Hobart. Bill knew intimately how important a response from Linda was to these servicemen. Indeed, rather than feeling threatened or jealous by the flood of letters that arrived for Linda after her appearance in *Pix*, he insisted that she reply to all of them.⁴⁷ The men of course were delighted to receive Linda's letters, even if they contained the news of her marriage status. 'Many thanks for writing in answer to that terrible letter of mine', wrote John Butler, 'As you said mail does mean a lot to us lads up here. I thank you from the bottom of my heart and hope that we may become firm pen friends'.⁴⁸ Ultimately, Linda became overwhelmed by the amount of time required to maintain pen friendships with so many servicemen, but her preparedness to respond at all indicated her recognition of the meaning her pin-up photograph and letters held for them.

Roger Bond says that Joyce never did reply to any of the servicemen who sent her letters. The pair married while he was on leave in late 1942, and perhaps Joyce felt it inappropriate to correspond with other servicemen, particularly those holding a romantic fascination with her. Roger Bond recalls the moment when he learnt Joyce's photo had been published. Stationed in Geraldton, he remembers one of his mates, 'coming out when we were out on manoeuvres tearing down the track telling me my girlfriend's photo's in *Pix*'. While relating he was excited by seeing Joyce in the magazine and that he found the shot 'quite glamorous', he won't be drawn on whether he had any feelings, positive or otherwise, about Joyce's image being consumed by a mass audience, saying he 'never thought about it to be honest'.⁴⁹ That her photograph was published by a high circulation magazine, and she was in effect being publicly celebrated as a beauty with an ideal figure, was and remains, however, a point of pride for Roger and today he has the framed clipping from *Pix* displayed prominently amongst the family photographs in his Melbourne home.

'You look a little lonely sitting on that concrete wall', wrote Stan Cartledge to Joyce in September 1942, "but I bet you are not half as lonely as the boys out here. It would be not so bad if only we could get some more mail from home, but somehow or other, our mail has been delayed ever so long since we have been out here in the Middle East".⁵⁰ Letters such as this sent to Linda and Joyce after their respective appearances in *Pix* reveal the heavy investment Australian servicemen made in memories of their hometowns, and the young women who resided there, to help them endure the conflict. Australian pin-up girls, such as Linda Browne and Joyce Walter clearly had an important place in the day-to-day existence of many servicemen and their popularity reveals how central fantasies of home and family, which they represented, were in these men's strategies of coping in an alienating and frequently dangerous environment dominated by other men.

Conclusion

For Australian World War II servicemen, the pin-up girl offered two highly important assurances. By publicly consuming any number of images, individual men were able to display their heterosexuality in a potentially homoerotic environment in which the male body and the masculine Anzac legend were evoked as ideals. Official approval of the public display of images of attractive young women indicates the currency of a notion that, with their shared interest in collecting and admiring pin-ups, men could bond with one another 'safely'. The second assurance pin-ups provided was the existence of a world completely separate from the masculine war project. For Australian servicemen confronted with the grim realities of conflict, the prospect of returning home to a loved partner and family, or fantasies of meeting a new beautiful girlfriend motivated them to keep fighting. As the cult of the pin-up girl demonstrates, Australian World War II servicemen were pulled in contradictory directions: on the one hand they were expected to conform to the Anzac ideal and its ethos of mateship, while on the other they were encouraged for the purposes of morale to disavow the masculine military sphere and embrace instead dreams and memories of home as represented by the Australian pin-up girl.

The letters to Joyce Walter and Linda Browne raise additional questions regarding the two roles pin-up girls played in the services that are not addressed here. Further interviews with former Australian servicemen may reveal if their recollections of wartime pin-ups are influenced by the collective memory of the home-front and the social and economic position of women during World War II. Accordingly, they might recall that pin-ups evoked home life but that such images did not play a part in the relationships between men. Further examination of letters to pin-up girls and interviews with former servicemen may also reveal a more dynamic, layered reading of pin-up images than could be identified here. Indeed, it is likely that servicemen appreciated that such material could concurrently strengthen ties amongst themselves, *and*, by evoking memories of home and civilian life, boost the morale of individuals.

¹ 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", in *American Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 4, December 1990.

² Maria Elena Buszek, *Pin-up Grrrls: Feminism, Sexuality, Popular culture*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2006, p. 185.

³ Despina Kakoudaki, 'Pinup: The American Secret Weapon in World War II', in Linda Williams (ed.), *Porn Studies*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2004. p. 341.

⁴ Despina Kakoudaki, 'Pinup', p. 343.

⁵ Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers: A Question of National Identity*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1989, p. 75; Barbara Sullivan, *The Politics of Sex: Prostitution and Pornography in Australia Since 1945*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 1997, p.42; Ross Laurie, "Masculinities and War Comics", *Journal of Australian Studies*, No. 60, 1999, p. 121; and Ross Laurie, 'Fantasy worlds: the depiction of women and the mating game in men's magazines in the 1950s', in *Journal of Australian Studies*, No. 56, 1998, p. 117.

⁶ Letter to Linda Browne from Syd, undated.

⁷ "Nation-wide 'Cover Girl' Quest", *Pix*, 19 August 1944, p. 17.

⁸ For discussions about the role of masculinity in war see Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996; John C. Pettegrew, 'Homosexuality and the Legal Sanction of Male Heterosexual Aggression in the Early Twentieth Century', in Michael A. Bellesiles (ed.), *Lethal Imagination: Violence and Brutality in American History*, New York University Press, New York, 1999; Susan Jeffords, *The Remasculinization of America: Gender and the Vietnam War*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1989; Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1987; Leo Braudy, *From Chivalry to Terrorism: War and the Changing Nature of Masculinity*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2003; Katerina Agostino, 'Men, Identity and Military Culture', in Mike Donaldson and Stephen Tomsen (eds.), *Male Trouble: Looking at Australian Masculinities*, Pluto Press, Melbourne, 2003; Steven Garton, 'War and Masculinity in Twentieth Century Australia', in *Journal of Australian Studies*, No. 56, 1998, pp. 86-95; and Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity During World War II*, Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, 2004.

⁹ Interview with Roger Bond, 13 March 2005. See 'Rush of Entries in Pix £400 Pounds Quest', *Pix*, 31 January 1942, pp. 32-33.

¹⁰ Interview with Linda Browne, 19 December 2005.

¹¹ For a discussion about entertainment in wartime Melbourne see Kate Darian-Smith, *On the Home Front: Melbourne in Wartime, 1939-1945*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1990. pp. 153-9.

¹² Interview with Linda Browne, 19 December 2005.

¹³ The modelling work kept Linda busy while her husband was away serving on HMAS Hobart. She also won a part in *Smithy* and did a screen test with Peter Finch at the Cinesound studios for the *The Rats of Tobruk*. Linda recalls that while the filmmakers acknowledged she photographed well, she missed out on the part due to her speaking voice. Having developed a skill of impersonating American film stars, Linda no longer spoke like an average Australian girl when she performed. She did, however, land a role in a Sydney Tivoli production, playing a fashion model in a fantasy sequence in which a young WAAAF member dreams of all the beautiful gowns, jewels and outfits she could be wearing instead of her uniform. Interview with Linda Browne, 19 December 2005.

¹⁴ Letter to Linda Browne from W.J Conroy, 26 October 1944.

¹⁵ In September 1944 the magazine announced 'prizewinning pictures published weekly in *Pix* have brought to those who submitted them a flood of correspondence from admirers, many of whom seek pictures for pin-up purposes. They have received letters and telegrams from soldiers, sailors, airmen, grammar school boys, convent school girls, dairy farmers, football clubs, and university students'. 'Quest Entrants Sought as Pin-ups', *Pix*, 30 September 1944, p.12; see also 'Quest Is Popular With Servicemen', *Pix*, 9 December 1944, p.12.

¹⁶ On official approval of American servicemen pursuing hobbies and collections, Steven M. Gelber writes, 'The fundamentally conservative message of hobbies – set goals and work hard to achieve them – remained valid in both the civilian and military environment. Members of the armed forces appear to have received minimum support for their hobbies during the early part of the war, but

toward the end ... both the army and navy supported hobby programs for armed personnel and used them as part of the rehabilitation programs for wounded servicemen'. *Hobbies: Leisure and the Culture of Work in America*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1999, pp. 48-9. The example of the widespread collecting of pin-ups indicates that Australian servicemen received similar support for such pursuits.

¹⁷ The men of No. 24 squadron RAAF operating in New Guinea adopted performers from the Sydney Tivoli as their pin-up girls. Dancers June McPherson, Ruby Lacey, Ronnie Eliot, Jan Rhynd and Joyce Smith all had their likenesses painted on the noses of bombers. The squadron's Welfare Officer, Ron Barker recalls the impact the Tivoli girls made on camp life: 'How would you be if you were up there for six months closeted in a jungle situation cut off from the outside world? So when the Tivoli showgirl business came on the camp came alive. It was the topic of conversation. The fellows loved that. The ground staff would get to work and do the painting... It changed the whole atmosphere... It made a lot of difference. I learnt a lot of lessons from that. I realised then that you can't have people put aside and just expect them to be normal... You've got to introduce something to keep their minds ticking'. Interview with Ron Barker, 17 April 2006. See also, 'Ballet Girls "Fly" With Our Airmen', *Pix*, 17 June 1944, pp. 4-5.

¹⁸ Joanna Bourke argues that during World War I, British soldiers were encouraged to bond by upholding a physical ideal: 'An expedient method of binding together servicemen involved inspiring pride in the aesthetic qualities of men as a group, and was effected by the military authorities' affirmation of the male body's beauty, both in its state of dress and undress . . . There was an irony in this positive bonding: the aesthetically binding function of uniforms could only succeed by encouraging the development of narcissism. The group could only be adored if the individual serviceman could first admire his own body... The excitement of war speeded up the transition from narcissism to group adoration'. See *Dismembering the Male*, pp. 128-9.

¹⁹ Robert D. Dean argues, 'A state of 'helplessness' contradicts a soldier's functionally necessary self-conception as an active, powerful agent. Such a sense of ineffectuality prevented the individual soldier from using the ordeal of war to compose a useable identity narrative of warrior masculinity'. See *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy*, University of Massachusetts Press, Amherst, 2001, p. 55. In the Australian context, the constant rupturing of the soldier's self-conception as the pinnacle of manhood and heroism fed a need to constantly re-form this fractured constructed male soldier identity. The Anzac ideal had to be constantly reinforced.

²⁰ John C. Pettegrew, 'Homosexuality and the Legal Sanction of Male Heterosexual Aggression in the Early Twentieth Century', pp. 319-20.

²¹ Gelber writes, 'All the various relationships that form the social structure – including class, race, gender, and age – express themselves in leisure activity, and even activities that critique the dominant mode are determined by it. While resistance may not be futile, ultimately there is no escape, and leisure is part of the cultural scaffolding that has been constructed to hold up Western free-market capitalism'. Steven M. Gelber, *Hobbies*, p. 11. Though often risqué and racy, 1940s pin-up girls replicated and reinforced dominant notions of gender relations in Western culture, rather than challenging them. Official approval of soldiers collecting pin-ups reveals a satisfaction that this was a 'safe' pursuit, rather than one that could potentially unsettle army ideology.

²² Susan Jeffords argues that this display of heterosexuality in the military context has insidious repercussions for female bodies: 'Because gender is seen within the vocabulary of the masculine bond as a sexually defined category, the efforts to reaffirm male sexual identity are unavoidable repercussions of its definition. Only through the constant reaffirmation of such sexual difference can the conservative structure that frames the collective be maintained. More important, sexual difference is insisted on as an aspect of the collective, something that men share together *in the same ways*. It is here that the collective becomes the spectacular, as the sexuality that confirms the masculine bond is displayed with insistence and, on occasion, with a vengeance'. (emphasis in original) *The Remasculinization of America*, p. 69.

²³ Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes and Lovers*, p. 69.

²⁴ Quoted in Rosemary Campbell, *Heroes & Lovers*, p. 91.

²⁵ Rosemary Campbell argues that while Australian servicemen's resentment towards their American counterparts resulted in violent confrontation, it was more likely that Australian women who associated with the 'Yanks' became targets: 'A reading of contemporary letters and comments indicates that the brawls between servicemen were minor compared to the hostility that was

levelled at women generally for their potential and actual 'betrayal' of Australian males'. *Heroes & Lovers*, p. 71.

²⁶ Robert B. Westbrook, "'I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James'", p. 602. Thomas B. Hess cites a similar example of a pin-up girl being employed for training purposes: Posters of Chili Williams, the 'Polka-Dot Girl', were used by the Chemical Warfare service of the Army to teach recruits how to identify lewisite, phosgene and other poisonous gases. 'Pinup and Icon', in Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin (eds.), *Woman as Sex Object: Studies in Erotic Art, 1730-1970*, Allen Lane, London, 1973, p. 226.

²⁷ Philomena Goodman, *Women, Sexuality, and War*, Palgrave, Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2002, p. 111.

²⁸ The Australian War Memorial holds a substantial collection of such photographs. See <http://www.awm.gov.au/database/collection.asp>.

²⁹ Niall Brennan, *Damien Parer: Cameraman*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1994, pp. 207-8.

³⁰ Interview with Linda Browne, 19 December 2005. The regular request for pin-up girls to send original photographs of themselves was precipitated by the deterioration of newspaper cuttings in tropical weather conditions. Due to paper shortages, Linda Browne was unable to meet many of these requests.

³¹ Letter to Linda Browne from Jack McIntosh, 24 October 1944.

³² American soldiers also conducted such competitions. As related by Candace Savage, 'Beauty contests were... held in... improbable sites, including Auflag 64, a prisoner-of-war camp in Poland, where a thousand American officers were detained. According to the *New York Times*, for 9 November 1944, "the pretty contestants - or reasonable facsimiles of them, by way of photographs - were entered in the contest by the officers, who wrote home for the pictures of their personal 'pin-up girls'". *Beauty Queens: A Playful History*, Abbeville Press Publishers, New York, 1998, p. 86.

³³ Letter to Linda Browne from Fred Seaton, 27 November 1944.

³⁴ Letter to Linda Browne from Ted Stewart, 19 November 1944.

³⁵ Letter to Linda Browne from E. Goodall, 17 November 1944.

³⁶ Letter to Linda Browne from John McCallum, undated.

³⁷ Interview with Neil Webb, 7 May 2005.

³⁸ Letter to Linda Browne from Jack Hickey, 1 October 1944.

³⁹ Letter to Linda Browne from Leslie Janitor, 11 December 1944.

⁴⁰ In their letters to pin-up girls, Australian servicemen sometimes shared their feelings about their American counterparts. Jack wrote to Linda, 'I am stationed on Morotai Island ... and there are plenty of Yanks here. They are mostly decent fellows'. Letter to Linda Browne from Jack, undated. Private Townsend was not so complimentary, deriding the Americans for being 'bad judges in every way', and even rejecting the term 'pin-up girl' which he declared was, 'an American expression which is not becoming to a girl who we feel sure is typically Australian'. Letter to Linda Browne from Private W. Townsend, 8 August 1944.

⁴¹ A similar emotional conflict was experienced by New Zealand servicemen. Deborah Montgomerie writes, 'In their correspondence, partial and censored though it may be, we can glimpse some of the strategies men developed to deal with distance and separation, strategies that were as much about finding ways to connect with the world left behind as the crafting of new identities in response to the military environment. Not everyone saw himself as a "hard man", and even a self-professed hard man might hanker for home.' *Love In a Time of War: Letter Writing in the Second World War*, Auckland University Press, Auckland, 2005, p.58.

⁴² While I am arguing that pin-up girls represented the home and domesticity, it should be noted that the cartoon character, Wanda the War Girl was highly popular amongst servicemen and Australian civilians. Created in 1942 by illustrator Kath O'Brien, Wanda was 'beautiful and feminine ... [but also] a tough independent woman who during the war worked as a spy and adventuress'. Wanda's toughness and active contribution to the war effort complicates to an extent my argument that pin-up girls evoked the home. I am grateful to the anonymous referee for this insight. For further information about Wanda the War Girl see <http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/ncas/resources/exhibitions/ACE/women.html>; and A. Ciddor, *Australia in the twentieth century*, MacMillan Education, South Yarra, 1998, p.23. Wanda was not the only cartoon character popular amongst Australian servicemen: Olive Oyl was awarded fourth place in a pin-up girl contest conducted by an AIF unit serving in Papua New Guinea. See 'Diggers

in N.G. Choose Pin-up Girls', *Pix*, 19 January 1944, p. 30. Amongst British troops, the cartoon character Jane was extraordinarily popular. See Andy Saunders, *Jane: A Pin Up at War*, Leo Cooper, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, 2004.

⁴³ Letter to Joyce Walter from Eric Leach, 8 August 1942.

⁴⁴ Letter to Linda Browne from Chas Leach, 19 November 1944.

⁴⁵ Letter to Linda Browne from David Summers, 1 September 1944.

⁴⁶ Letter to Linda Browne from Bob Bannan, 24 November 1944.

⁴⁷ Linda recalls asking Bill whether he'd want to see his 'wife's photo on the end of some soldier's bed, or in the mess on a ship [he] might be visiting. "Of course", he said, "I'd say she's my wife, cobber!" Marina Films, *Pin-up Girls of World War II* trailer, April 2006. That Linda felt compelled to respond to the servicemen who wrote her letters reflects Marilyn E. Hegarty's argument that 'wartime woman had a reciprocal duty to wartime men, especially servicemen. She must construct her self in the prescribed manner in order to provide servicemen with both motivation and morale. In a sense, her body would repay him for risking his life in her defense'. 'Patriot or prostitute? Sexual discourses, print media, and American women during World War II', in *Journal of Women's History*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1998, p. 117.

⁴⁸ Letter to Linda Browne from John Butler, 1 November 1944.

⁴⁹ Interview with Roger Bond, 13 March 2005.

⁵⁰ Letter from Stan Cartledge to Joyce Walter, 24 September 1942.