

# Visual And Verbal Rhetoric In Howard Chandler Christy's War-related Posters Of Women During The World War I Era: A Feminist

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VISUAL AND VERBAL RHETORIC IN HOWARD CHANDLER CHRISTY'S  
WAR-RELATED POSTERS OF WOMEN DURING THE WORLD WAR I ERA:  
A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

by

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for the degree of Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies  
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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the development of a series of posters created by Howard Chandler Christy during the World War I era. During this time, Christy was a Department of Pictorial Publicity (DPP) committee artist commissioned by the committee chair, Charles Dana Gibson. The DPP was part of the Committee on Public Information (CPI) developed by the Woodrow Wilson administration to generate the propaganda necessary to gain the support of the American people to enter World War I. The CPI was headed up by George Creel, a journalist and politician, who used advertising techniques to create the first full-scale propaganda effort in United States history.

American poster images of women during World War I represent an era when propaganda posters came of age. These iconographic interpretations depicted in political propaganda helped shape the history of the twentieth century. While exploring these portrayals of women, the observer looks through a historical lens to contemplate the role of propaganda in the American war effort, while considering the disparity between images of women and the reality of their experiences in the patriarchal society in which they lived. Howard Chandler Christy's war-related posters represented the gendered rhetoric of a social order that functioned under the well-established assumption that men and women both had their place in society based on gender-specific stereotypic characteristics.

Women were central to propaganda posters from this era; their images were widely used in posters encouraging Americans to support the war effort. With few exceptions, these representations perpetuated traditional concepts of appropriate gender roles. Posters often used women as icons characterizing the nation in time of war. For

example, a beautiful woman, with a backdrop of the United States flag or sometimes even dressed in Old Glory, suggested why the nation was fighting. Some posters explicitly used beautiful women to signify that America's honor was at stake and we needed fighting men to protect it.

The poster art form spread rapidly during the early twentieth century, putting a woman in her place rather than challenging the historical circumstances that created the complex, problematic issues related to the visual representation. Reading these posters as cultural texts, it is apparent that women's images are central to gaining an understanding of the social norms and cultural expectations.

This thesis is dedicated to all the women who served their country proudly—the unsung heroes of World War I. There were many women who blazed the trail courageously and breaking ground that had never been explored. However, with dedication, true grit and great heart they journeyed forward. They passed right through prejudice and assumptions about their place in society, cutting a path for their daughters, granddaughters, great-granddaughters, and all the generations to follow.

This work is dedicated to one such trailblazer.

In loving memory 1897-1979

Yeoman (F) 1<sup>st</sup> Class Sarah Elizabeth Rigney-Duffy

United States Navy, World War I

July 24, 1917-November 30, 1918

This work is also dedicated to future trailblazers—the young women born on the brink of a new century. Your world has opportunities that your grandmothers could not even imagine. I encourage you to explore your possibilities and live up to your potential. Blaze those trails, carry the torch forward, and make a difference in your world. You can become a legend of this day. Katelyn and Madison it is for you that I dedicate this work with love, respect, and gratitude.

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I would like to thank Dr. Karla Kitalong for all the time and knowledge she has shared with me. Thank you also to my committee members, Dr. Melody Bowdon and Dr. Don Jones, for serving on my thesis committee. I realize this thesis has evolved over what seems to be an inordinate timeframe, but this topic has piqued my interest in so many areas and enlightened me of the sacrifices made by so many so others may live in a more egalitarian society. I thank you for your patience and encouragement. My research and work on this study made me more keenly aware of the true impact that women had on United States history.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

*In every time of crisis, women have served our country in difficult and hazardous ways... Women should not be considered a marginalized group to be employed periodically only to be denied opportunity to satisfy their needs and aspirations when unemployment rises or a war ends.*

President John F. Kennedy, 1961

### Introduction

While rhetoric has traditionally been thought of as being confined to the realm of language, the art takes other forms as well. As the abundant collection of Howard Chandler Christy's World War I propaganda posters demonstrates, rhetoric occurs not simply through oral and written language, but also through visuals or a combination of images and persuasive language. The dramatic propaganda posters of the Great War seek to evoke emotional and financial civilian support for the War effort through a variety of rhetorical strategies. Preparing for entry into the war, Woodrow Wilson (1856-1919) appointed his long-time and outspoken supporter, George Creel, to head up the newly developed Committee on Public Information (CPI). The sole purpose of this committee: sell the war to the American public. Additionally, Wilson and Creel saw the committee as a complete publicity venue—a salesmanship enterprise. Creel indicated that their efforts were to be “the world’s greatest adventure in advertising” (¶ 3). “The CPI was called into existence to make this fight for the ‘verdict of mankind,’ the voice created to plead the justice of America's cause before the jury of Public Opinion” (Creel ¶ 3).

In true bureaucratic style, Creel created the Division of Pictorial Publicity (DPP), which was headed by artist/illustrator Charles Dana Gibson (1867-1944). The DPP was the branch of the CPI responsible for all war posters issued. Under Gibson's leadership, the DPP handled the war poster propaganda effort: modern political propaganda was born. The newly formed division exploited posters, integrating emotionally suggestive graphical imagery with concise and effective textual messages. Many artists of the day saw tremendous possibilities of the poster medium; they were challenged to create posters to aid propaganda efforts, recruit military, request war loans, support conservation and relief efforts, request financial donations or sacrifices, and support national policies.

By the time World War I began, posters had become a fixed print form and persuasive advertisement tool in both the United States and Europe. All combatants in World War I used poster art to mold public opinion. Poster artists ranged from well-known painters and illustrators of the era—Howard Chandler Christy, James Montgomery Flagg, Charles Dana Gibson—lending more credibility to the genre. It makes sense that a governmental agency with the demands and challenges of war would take advantage of this influential medium.

During the American involvement in the war, the United States issued approximately 2,500 original posters (Wilkerson 103). Of these posters, the DPP created a total of 700—nearly one-third (Creel 138). Publicity operations for the Navy and Marine Corps or independent organizations, such as the American Red Cross, American Jewish League, General Electric, American Billiard Players, and Actors Fund of American, created the remainder of the posters. The importance of the DPP work was evident within these other organizations because they commissioned the DPP artists, which included Howard

Chandler Christy. George Creel became the mastermind behind the media campaign; he was a crafty political rhetorician with a flair for advertising and marketing. Interestingly, although the United States entered the war relatively late—April 1917—the number of war-related propaganda posters flourished. According to Duffy, the United States “produced many more propaganda posters than any other nation” (Propaganda Posters ¶5). Apparently, Wilson had selected the right man for the job!

Kitch suggest that the poster was the most “visible and distinctive medium employed in the war-publicity effort” (102). However, it was only a part of the media campaign launched by Creel. His committee existed to “not only reached deep into every American community,” but to carry “to every corner of the civilized globe the full message of America's idealism, unselfishness, and indomitable purpose” (Creel ¶ 4). The war poster was direct and appealed to the heart, not to the mind. Emotional agitation is a favorite technique of propaganda rhetoric. “Rather than an isolated message, each poster was part of a much larger campaign, its meaning influenced and reinforced by other recruitment and home front efforts” (Kitch 103). The committee organized a patriotic campaign to elicit American support. Some venues in this campaign effort included newspapers, films and documentaries, songs, plays, magazines, and State Fairs throughout the American countryside. Creel planned local rallies to win the favor of every aspect of America. He worked to reach citizens where they lived, where they worked, and where they played. In one effort, the committee arranged a series of war exhibitions that traveled from city to city, demonstrating the horrific struggle that waged in war-torn France. “In Chicago alone,” according to Creel, “two million people attended in two weeks, and in nineteen cities the receipts aggregated \$1,432,261.36” (¶ 12). Through their propaganda efforts, the CPI was a successful fundraising enterprise, gaining tremendous support for the war to end all wars.

This thesis examines a series of World War I posters created by Howard Chandler Christy while he was a DPP artist. Prior to his DPP work, Christy was a well-established artist who earned his livelihood as a magazine and book illustrator and portrait painter. His most famous works came from his Christy girl image that he began illustrating for *Scribner's* during the 1890's and early 1900's. One quality that Christy brought to his Christy girl image, according to Kitch, was that she "seemed friendly, perky, and approachable" (14). This is a quality that Christy often brought to his World War I poster images. While reading this study, one will discover a prolific artist who created over 40 posters supporting Wilson's propaganda effort.

My inquiry focuses around the following questions: What do the posters literally depict? What are the narrative schemata common to the posters? Are these posters art or propaganda? How do they reflect societal attitudes of the era? What do the images suggest about the meaning of women's lives in the early part of the twentieth century? How do they use patriotic images and colors to motivate the populace? My extensive research analyzes the interplay among arts, history, and theory in the rhetoric of Christy's posters. The methods developed in World War I to persuade and inform people are still in use. An important aspect of this work is to explore the shadows of the past so we may better understand how we have evolved as a society and chart our course into the future.

### The Power of the Poster

Propaganda art has a long history. Since the inception of printing, huge billboards and scenic walls have dotted the landscape and marked the vicissitudes of history. European nations first used political posters in the early 1500s. It was in 1539 France that political posters were first used; they slowly but gradually substituted for town criers. In

this year, town criers stopped announcing official edicts in public; these notices started to appear posted in billboards. Prior to 1600, billboards were a principle communication medium for public expression; poster illustrations assumed a key role (Trepatt ¶ 7). The power of the poster continued to gain strength. By the French Revolution in 1789, posters had an attentive audience and the medium enjoyed an astounding development. The power of the poster was acknowledged in an 1835 law, allowing Frenchmen to spread their opinions in this wide-reaching public form, but indicating that complete liberty was not possible with these “drawings” because they could “incite to action” (Wilkins 425).

Prior to World War I, European nations had a flourishing poster art industry and “posters were familiar advertising devices throughout pre-war, pre-radio, pre-television,” according to Wilkerson, “but few Americans were then specializing in this medium” (103). Early government efforts used print shop workers to generate posters, but the quality was uneven and below par. Wilkerson suggests that “unfamiliarity with this art form’s combination of advertising copy, printmaking, lettering and image often resulted in poor or mediocre designs by good artists” (103). Fine artists had difficulty adapting their methods to the medium. A major difference between more traditional artwork and poster art is that people engaged in viewing artwork differently. They examined it; they observed it; they studied it; they analyzed it; they discussed it; they explored its possible meanings. Whereas the poster was viewed more casually, one often views a poster for simply a moment; often while engaging in everyday activities and daily routines. Getting the message across has a narrow window of opportunity. “Since there was a split-second in which a poster could engage one’s interest, the successful ones were both eye-catching and easily understood. Illustrators, printmakers, and commercial artists adapted more readily than most ‘fine arts’ artists” (Wilkerson 103).

Propaganda posters, especially during tumultuous times, can express both dissenting viewpoints and those that reflect dominant ideologies; they document some of the issues that divide and unite societal factions. “Whatever the message,” claims Heyman, “the poster reflects the explosion of ideas in the twentieth century, both intellectual and visual” (13). Poster art captures both individual and collective consciousness and demands attention, often providing patriotic appeals to voices raised in protest or praise and acting as a mirror that reflects and distorts our perception of reality.

On an interesting note, the images and verbal rhetoric used in the World War I propaganda poster surfaced from a popular medium of the day: magazine art. The American magazine, which was the first mass communication medium in the United States, first emerged in the 1700s, but did not reach the masses until the 1890s because of the perfection of lithography printing technique combined with the development of the rotary printing press. Both of these innovative developments reduced the cost of mass printing. The rotary printing press produced high volume at a speed that was not available with earlier methods. “Lithography,” as discussed by Ross, Romano, and Ross, “differs from the other graphic processes in that it depends on a chemical reaction instead of the physical separation of the inked and uninked areas” (191). This chemical process works based on the premise that water and oil do not mix. This process is far more cost-effective than earlier processes.

Kitch suggests that magazine illustrations depicted societal norms, values, and idealistic perspectives of gender roles; it was the forerunner to poster art. The gender-specific messages found in World War I recruitment posters were informed specifically by magazine art (102). “These now-famous poster images were not born solely out of patriotic spirit; instead, they were the product of a stereotyping process that had begun in an

established mass medium” (Kitch 102). World War I posters were an effective and powerful tool, generating a call to arms and mustering much needed troops; they were a powerful and glorious pageantry of visual images whose meaning has already been established in the collective memories of every American.

In addition to pathos, World War I posters reflect the ethos—the preexisting identity—our nation brought to the table in the process of making its appeals to gain its citizens’ support. The histories and values of society and culture play a large role in shaping the styles of our propaganda posters. The same artists who created magazine icons to both reflect societal mores and influence them illustrated these posters with familiar images that dominated popular magazines. This popular imagery functions in a complex manner. It reflects popular views since it aims to please and persuade the viewer, but it also influences popular attitudes since the repeated messages reinforce standards and norms. The beautifully illustrated posters mirror changes that took place in women’s lives during this moment in history; while the images themselves functioned as agents of change, introducing new standards of behavior and encouraging conformity to them. While many things can be seen to change, much remains the same. In these illustrations, certain attributes and characteristics of women are constant. The American woman is maternal and gentle. She is sweet and pretty. Even as she moves into a new era and becomes an integral part of the war effort, she remains and is captured in time as a feminine creature.

### Patriotic Images and the New American Girl

Howard Chandler Christy (1873-1952), an artist/illustrator, had been a significant presence in the early decades of the twentieth century; he gracefully transitioned from magazine illustrator to poster artist and drew a series of World War I posters. As I will



show, each poster employs a distinctive style in appealing to its audience; the posters use similar persuasive strategies and are all crafted with the same goals: to capture the immediate attention of the viewer and provoke and motivate with the patriotic imagery along with the picture of a coy, but spunky, new American girl.

During World War I, the military desperately needed men for the all-important task of serving their country proudly and honorably while stepping up to the plate and making the ultimate sacrifice: leaving their loved ones behind and fighting a battle on foreign soil. For the purpose of selling the war, women were an important commodity. Images of women on posters and postcards provided inspiration for the men in battle. The belief was that when a man saw the image of a woman, it would be a reminder of what he was fighting to protect. Moreover, he would also get a sense of comfort thinking about his loved one at home. Christy's war recruitment posters portrayed women as seductive temptresses luring men into the military to protect the world from the encroaching enemy. "They were new women who were strong and sexually glamorous, but they used those attributes for altruistic purposes" (Kitch 101). How well did Christy capture the early twentieth century woman? Christy not only captured the early twentieth woman; he also played a role in creating her. His famous Christy girl represented explicit significance to an early twentieth century readership. Christy created her at the turn of the century, when she, according to Kitch, debuted for a Spanish American War story in *Scribner's* magazine (51). The Christy girl both demurely and seductively appears as an apparition of a beautiful young woman who appears in a story with a war-torn infantryman. For the soldier, the Christy girl was an inspiration, a reward for carrying on, just as Christy presents her in his World War I posters.

If we look at the visual imagery of Christy's posters from this era, the power to persuade and inform becomes apparent in these visual texts. These texts, while representing the cultural attitudes, speak to each individual—"Enlist," "What did *you* do," "I want *you*," "Gee! *I wish I were a man I'd join the Navy*," "Fight or buy bonds!"—the widespread personal appeal is part of every poster of this era. These posters demonstrate effective organization of promoting a cause; a strong psychological approach was the rule, not the exception, in the rhetoric. James Montgomery Flagg's 1917 poster, "I want you for the U.S. Army," is still immediately recognized today. The hypnotic Uncle Sam icon combines Flagg's face-to-face confrontational image with his terse text commanding the reader to join the Army. Nearly 90 years after its creation, this is probably still one of the most recognized American posters of all time.

Women were central to propaganda posters from this era; their images were widely used in posters encouraging Americans to support the war effort. With few exceptions, these representations perpetuated traditional concepts of appropriate gender roles. Posters often used women as icons characterizing the nation in time of war. For example, a beautiful woman, with a backdrop of the United States flag or sometimes even dressed in Old Glory, suggested why the nation was fighting. Some posters explicitly used beautiful women to signify that America's honor was at stake and we needed fighting men to protect it.

Other posters also traded on images of female sexuality in other ways. These posters featured the young provocative woman dressed in a military uniform. One such poster, Christy's 1917 Navy recruitment piece, pictured a pretty, young woman dressed in a man's navy uniform. The shirt was loose fitting and bulky and the hat rather tilted. The

wind was blowing the collar and the ribbon tie was off to the side. On the surface, Christy's poster, which provocatively exclaims, "I Wish I were a Man," seems to challenge gender stereotypes, but on another more subliminal level it uses the teasing woman to reinforce traditional notions of masculinity—real men enlist. But it also may be a telling seductive message to men: you can be a man in the navy and have this too! We can expand the old adage: "a picture is worth a thousand words" to a picture has a thousand meanings. Once we peel away the obvious, the poster's core can reveal the more concealed messages — both conscious and unconscious.

During World War 1, there was not a great deal of emphasis on attracting women to join the military. Nurses were the principal focus in terms of recruiting. The posters' primary purpose was to recruit men. The Navy and Marine posters using Howard Chandler Christy illustrations of women in uniform were actually designed to recruit men, not women. Retired Air Force Brigadier General Wilma Vaught, who is also President of the Women in Military Service for America Memorial, suggests that images of women on World War I posters were designed to recruit men (qtd. in Williams ¶ 3). Considering the primary purpose was to recruit men, the campaign was successful. America was only in the war a little over 19 months—from April 6, 1917 to November 11, 1918—but, according to Bussler, 4,734,991 served in the military and war fatalities reached 116,516. Interestingly, while our troops were off fighting the enemy to protect democratic principles, over 350,000 of those Americans, serving their country were African Americans, who lived in segregated units.

Although there was not an aggressive initiative to recruit women, the propaganda campaign reached the women of America as well. The secondary purpose was to recruit

women to take over clerical positions left by men in stateside military installations and offices. The military needed men to go overseas to pick up the sword of justice and swiftly fight the battle in the trenches. Many of the posters alluring women to join were simply messages saying the war effort needed them, listing an office address for them to contact. In spite of negligible recruiting effort, over 30,000 women accepted the challenge and served the United States in uniform during the Great War. So even though less intensive strategies were used, the secondary purpose was also successful.

The rhetorical appeal eliciting pathos reached the intended audience. A myriad of powerful and persuasive posters were created by a variety of DPP artists. These posters used a variety of approaches to sell war to the American public, including “appeals to patriotism and to love of home and family, and concern for Americans overseas” (Wilkerson 103). The United States and her citizens rallied around the call to arms to protect democratic values and concerns. Propaganda posters not only recruited American citizens to join the military, but also elicited support on the home front. Americans willingly bought into the war bond schemes, conserved resources and food, joined forces both at home and abroad to make the world safer for democracy and their way of life. Christy combined his “blatant sex appeal of his ‘Christy girl’ with the guilt inducing slogan aimed at everyone not overseas in uniform *Fight or Buy Bonds*” (Wilkerson 104).

Howard Chandler Christy “drew more than 40 posters for the war effort,” according to Kitch, and “personally auctioned off the oil paintings from which his posters were printed” (103). Incidentally, Christy later became “an honorary graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy because of his Navy recruitment images” (Kitch 103). Beautiful and attractive young women sold bonds to support the war effort then as they sell many products today

and wide-eyed children tugged at American heartstrings asking for help as they do today. Wilkerson suggests that hatred and fear of the enemy were motivating factors and both pride and guilt interplayed with personal challenges such as *Fight or Buy Bonds* or *Our Daddy is fighting at the Front for You—Back Him Up—Buy a United States Gov't Bond* (103). One issue is quite evident: it was the first generation of Americans who were asked to prove their patriotism with their hard-earned cash!

### Literature Review

During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the American illustrator and painter Howard Chandler Christy produced more than 40 World War I propaganda posters. The predominant motif underlying these posters is that of a single female figure enticing the viewer to support the war effort through recruitment or investment in liberty bonds although Christy used his talents to assist in the Red Cross and civilian war efforts as well. Christy's war-posters portray women at the cusp of a new era—a time where society shifted from Victorian attitudes to progressive ideals. It was during the progressive era that middle class women entered the political arena. They supported the final drive for and conquered the resistance to attain suffrage; they began to pursue higher education and enter the workplace in significant numbers. The Victorian images of “women in corseted, neck-to-floor dresses, with serious expressions on their faces” did not represent the new women. (Kitch 13). The aspiring new society had developed progressive ideas and a new way of looking at women. They were now outside the home engaging in modern activities.

As the new images depicted clothing styles changes, women's bodies came out of hiding. The images portrayed them with a new sensuality not displayed before. The illustrations on Christy's posters showed women to be beautiful and sexual. However, even

as she moves into the factory or milliner's shop, schoolhouse or hospital ward, even as she swings her tennis racket or golf club or mounts her bicycle or drives a car she remains the romanticized all American girl next door. However, the images are simply legendary fables—idealizations and perceptions of women who never existed. Conversely, they are quite real; they are powerful and important forces guiding and modeling attitudes of both women and men in the course of our history.

Research for this project draws on traditional sources found in libraries and archives in the Women in the Military Memorial in Washington DC. The texts used in my research fall into three major categories: visual rhetorical theory, feminist theory, and historiography. Several subcategories augment the major categories to provide further discussion and detail, offering significant research on a variety of topics: American posters of World War I, art history, women in the military, women's history, and the feminist movement during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Kress and van Leeuwen's *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* is the primary source to address the visual rhetoric theory. They explore how images speak and shape meaning through color, perspective, framing and composition, offering a fascinating and important examination of the broadening the concept of literacy to focus on visual elements. Throughout history, text (words) and images have occupied separate domains, forcing us to choose between two literacy spheres: word people or visual people; the bridge between the elements is finally closing wide gap. Kress and van Leeuwen's work demonstrate the differences and the similarities between the grammar of language and that of visual culture. Mitchell's *Picture Theory: Essays on Verbal and Visual Representation* strives to balance the connection between text and images in critical theory. Mitchell posits

we are in a historical time where there is a reorientation surrounding visual media so we need to seriously consider the relationship between images and language.

In addition two composition textbooks, *Envision: Persuasive Writing in a Visual World* (Alfano and O'Brien) and *Picturing Texts* (Selfe et. al.) provide a look at reading visual texts and the importance of thinking rhetorically about both words and images. These typify how college students are being taught to read images. As the field of visual rhetoric has evolved, it has become progressively more important to understand how people assimilate and read images. With developments in printing processes and digital media, we have become an increasingly visual society. In 1969, John Debes coined the term visual literacy. While there are a variety of definitions for visual literacy, Debes offers the following clarification of the phrase:

“Visual Literacy refers to a group of vision-competencies a human being can develop by seeing and at the same time having and integrating other sensory experiences. The development of these competencies is fundamental to normal human learning. When developed, they enable a visually literate person to discriminate and interpret the visible actions, objects, symbols, natural or man-made, that he encounters in his environment. Through the creative use of these competencies, he is able to communicate with others. Through the appreciative use of these competencies, he is able to comprehend and enjoy the masterworks of visual communication.” *John Debes* (quoted in IVLA)

While exploring Christy's posters, it is important to have a fundamental understanding of visual literacy. One must consider how people learn to read and analyze visual texts to make informed interpretations about what they see. These sources support my analysis of the posters because both are grounded in visual rhetorical theories and provide insight to

the way readers derive meaning from and interact with their visual environment. In addition, these sources support an interpretive strategy of reading outward from the images themselves, which represents factors in visual literacy theory. These basic college texts provide the groundwork for analyzing and interpreting Christy's visual texts.

Martha Banta's work *Imaging American Women: Ideas and Ideals in Cultural History* examines American art and culture from 1876-1918. Banta's book explores the culture that supported the ideal of the all-American girl as represented by artists and illustrators such as Howard Chandler Christy and Charles Dana Gibson; she considers how this phenomenon shaped society. She also looks at how nationalism was represented in allegorical female forms such as Lady Liberty, Republic, and Columbia. Banta provides examples and discusses the conventions that enable one to read an image. Because this book uses art to explore cultural values, it provides a glimpse into Christy's work and his impact on early twentieth century culture. To complement Banta's work, Michelle Bogart's book, *Artists, Advertising, and the Borders of Art*, delves into and analyzes the struggle endured by illustrators for recognition and validity of their craft. Bogart also discusses how illustrators, such as Christy, changed the boundaries between commercial, popular, and traditional art forms. Since this book looks at the genre from an art history perspective, Bogart's work situates the political poster within the mass media of the advertising industry.

In addition, the Women In Military Service For America Memorial (Women's Memorial), located at Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC is an unparalleled primary research source to learn about the history and specificities of women's service and roles in defending America throughout history. "The Women's Memorial is a unique, living



memorial honoring all military women—past, present and future—and is the only major national memorial honoring women who have served in our nation's defense during all eras and in all services” (Vaught par. 1). This source is a depository for wealth of information that has guided my research and enabled me to gather data to contextualize my research and ground it in women’s history. The Women’s Memorial contains biographical data and written oral histories of those early trailblazers, whose service in the military overcame barriers of gender. These oral histories, along with testimonials, diaries, memoirs, and letters, provide a personal perspective. Transcending place and time and addressing the absence of women’s voices from history, the Women’s Memorial offers a connection with the past while honoring and commemorating generations of history's most notable and unnamed women—those who proudly served their country in times of turbulence and war.

The realization of how many women contributed significantly to our country’s military history is awe-inspiring. Men always had a connection with their history because they always had a presence in the public arena; this was, of course, not the case for women because of their exclusion and absence, and relegation to an inferior status. As one walks the halls of this repository of historical data, there is a definite connection with the past. One can experience the collective struggle for recognition and a level playing field of these women who made their mark in their male-dominated society. The Women’s Memorial validates an appreciation for women’s historical contributions while acknowledging that, historically, society limited the role that women could play. This phenomenal memorial allows women to explore their past and present roles in society, and, perhaps, even pique their interests in those women who gallantly came before them.

Higonnet's book, *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I*, a wide-ranging collection of women's memories of World War I, is unique because it exclusively recounts the women's war experiences. This book combines the women's perspective and vision of both the home front and battlefield. This text is unique because this voice has been absent from previous literature; the vision of the Great War has nearly been exclusively recounted by men's histories, speeches, and battlefield stories.

Accompanying research sources to support the art and history categories include a versatile body of work. Helen Copley's *The Christy Quest*, a fascinating book detailing the author's journey through a decade of research into the incredible life of famed artist and illustrator Howard Chandler Christy provides necessary biographical and background information. Linda Notching, a leading art historian, critic, and theorist, provides a unique perspective in her works *The Politics of Vision* and *Representing Woman*. Both books contain essays that consider a variety of subjects, spanning the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. She addresses historical and political issues surrounding the representation of women in art—as subjects and participants. Romaine's *Communicating Gender* provides a multidisciplinary approach showing how discourse and language play a role in communicating gender and culture. These pieces situate Christy's posters, detailing how women are represented during this era and how the first-wave feminist movement influences them.

In addition to the rich wealth of resources, Christy's 1906 publication, *The American Girl As Seen and Portrayed by Howard Chandler Christy* provides a first hand look at the way Christy viewed and revered the American woman. In this exact reprint of Christy's literary and cultural treasure, he offers an adoring tribute to the all-American girl.

Through his own words, Christy depicts the Victorian debutants and women who lived during the first decade of the twentieth century. This jewel provides one with the opportunity to hear what Christy truly thought about those beautiful women and young girls he captured with his pallet over a century ago.

For the final element in this complex issue, there are varieties of sources from which one can draw much information. Setting historical context is important to my work because it gives breadth and depth to the meaning behind and generated by Christy's posters. Kitch's *The Girl on the Magazine Cover* positions my research to better understand the origins of the political propaganda poster of the World War I era. Much of the work done by illustrators at this time evolved from the media and advertisement messages from the magazine industry. Kitch reviews the origins and historical link between poster and magazine art of the era. She discusses Christy's early connection with magazine illustrations and how he effortlessly moved to the poster genre. Kitch discusses the Victorian imagery as well as the new twentieth century woman and focuses how magazine illustrations informed the extensive work of the poster illustrators, including Christy.

Gavin's *American Women in World War I* and Godson's *Serving Proudly: A History of Women in the U.S. Navy* provide a look at women's contributions to the military during the World War I era and their 80-year struggle for recognition and respect for their efforts. Brown's *Rosie's Mom* considers the contribution to our economy and workforce made by those whom she calls the "forgotten women." Brown reminds us that a generation before Rosie the Riveter, women answered the call of a nation at war.

In 1917, a full generation before Rosie the Riveter rolled up her sleeves and adorned the cover of the Saturday Evening Post, American women entered the workshops of the First

World War. Trading their ankle length skirts for coarse bloomers or overalls, they built fabric-covered biplanes, hauled scrap metal, filled hand grenades with powder, made gas masks, processed meat to send to the troops, and helped keep the freight trains running. By filling men's places, at less than men's wages, they helped win the war (Brown ix).

While telling Rosie's Mom's saga, Carrie Brown explores the human story buried under the historical events of the World War I era. Eleanor Flexner's *Century of Struggle* is the definitive history of the early women's rights movement. This work sets the historical, political, cultural, and social context for women's history and their century long battle to gain full citizenship in the society to which they contributed and in which they lived.

These sources characterize how women's images sold the idea of supporting the war effort to not only men but women. Additionally, they establish that the time arrived when society began to view the need to use women to replace men in the workforce and menial tasks in the military to free men for the business of war. There were many elements and complex issues that Christy captured in his posters.

### Research Significance

Exploring these portrayals of women allows the observer to contemplate the role of propaganda in the American war effort, while considering the disparity between images of women and the reality of their experiences in a patriarchal society. Howard Chandler Christy's war-related posters represent the gendered rhetoric of a social order that functions under the well-established assumption that men and women both have their place in society based on gender-specific stereotypical characteristics. In earlier centuries people assumed that God determined man's and woman's roles in life. The man as protector, provider and head of the family was quite distinct from the woman cast in the role as wife, mother, and

housekeeper. As the gender disparity continued, these patriarchal concepts were questioned, leading to a great debate concerning the role of women and, subsequently, men as well. However, the poster art form spread rapidly during the early twentieth century, keeping a woman in her place rather than challenging the historical circumstances that create the complex, problematic issues related to the way in which visual representations depict women. Consequently, these assumptions were about to be further challenged. Women were no longer protected by home and hearth as they once were. Many were becoming active participants in the democratic process. Many of the posters have a nostalgic charm and are amusing to look at from our modern day perspective. But in looking back one must consider: What are these images? They provide food for thought! They were part of the ordinary life of the time, commonly found in public places, people's homes, and shops and other businesses. What did they mean to people in the past? What do these popular images tell us today?

The results of my research provide a new voice among the researchers of this fascinating era. Currently, the literature addressing the rhetoric of Christy's war-related propaganda posters is limited. Christy was a young artist when cosmopolitan magazines clamored for sophisticated and provocative images. Creating illustrations had become a lucrative field at the time, so he focused his artistic talents on this genre and became an illustrator. While Christy's body of work is extensive, he is more widely known for his Christy Girl series, where he illustrated an ideal American woman. His work includes magazine illustrations and covers, calendars, portrait paintings, programs, advertisements, and book illustrations; his poster art is a small aspect of his body of work. My research provides a way to look at Christy's work, not simply as propaganda art commissioned by the United States Government, but as a true representation of how the patriarchy perceived

women and their place in society. Moreover, my work looks at an era when women marched shoulder-to-shoulder and battled the status quo for over 70 years demanding suffrage—an indicator of full citizenship—but with an ironic twist were able to serve in the military before gaining their voting rights. Women proudly served their country and finally stepped out of the conventional parameters that denied them their just place in their society.

## CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

*I think, with never-ending gratitude, that the young women of today do not and can never know at what price their right to free speech and to speak at all in public has been earned.*

Lucy Stone, 1893

### The Early Twentieth Century

The World War I propaganda poster had an unwavering allure and, as a rule, conveyed a pathetic appeal. The objective was to conjure an immediate understanding of its message and evoke a call to action. The goal was to appeal to the intended audience, create a powerful impression and make an obvious and explicit suggestion while generating a long-lasting influence. As American military officials registered young men to fight the war across the ocean, American artists sketched out familiar images—valiant, patriotic, heroic, and sentimental—into one of the most influential and pervasive of all the arts: the American war poster. Howard Chandler Christy's new American women emerged in their conventional girl next door role promoting conscription or urging participation in war efforts or liberty loans; to capitalize on patriotism, she was often clothed in the heroic drapery of Lady Liberty or Lady Victory.

Moreover, while representing established women's roles of girlfriend, mother and housewife and combining them with these powerful images, the posters illustrate how the war exposed young women to new roles and responsibilities. By the end of the nineteenth century, during America's tumultuous passage from an agrarian to an industrialized society, nearly everyone's way of life was changing; the Victorian woman began to step

out of her armor of domesticity and into a changing society where a new place was developing for her. Images showed her out of the home and away from family life and responsibilities to represent her in different roles. She was now bold and confident riding in cars, going to college, playing golf, and rowing her own boat on a Sunday afternoon. She was no longer always depicted in the home engaged in traditional female roles. She was represented by the strength of Liberty leading the way to a victorious battle. These representations and changes are closely tied to first-wave feminism. Flexner asserts that the “enormous influx of women into industrial work and public service sharply altered their standing in the community” (288). The early Women’s Movement organized women in a century long struggle for equal rights. However, World War I took them out of their homes and into new spheres of action to champion their cause.

### Mixed Messages

Historically, sentimentality and idealism characterized the popular imagery of American life. Women were gentle, raising angelic obedient children, homes were happy, men were strong, and honesty, justice, and integrity were always triumphant. In times of war, America’s values and illusions are dusted off, shined, and enlisted in the cause. The Great War (and other modern war efforts) mobilized not only soldiers and sailors, but the workforce and taxpayer as well. During modern warfare, elaborate education and communication strategies are used to gain support. War is sold! In effect, it becomes the definitive product that for survival everyone must buy. The country fights because the enemy on a very deep and individual level poses a threat to each one of us.

As a result, the pretty girl draped in the American flag conveys a convoluted message: she is the girl next door; she is daughter, sister, mother, grandmother, and all the



defenseless persons who depend on men to protect them. She is family, home, and everyday life; she is also Lady Liberty and Lady Justice. She is our way of life and the nation itself, which are both in grave danger. Throughout history, men have served as fighters, protectors, hunters and gathers—strong, aggressive, and violent. Women have generally been the child caregivers, the nurturers, and the protected—weak, passive, and gentle. Popular imaginary consistently reinforces and reflects these differences; in wartime it draws attention to them. Women are even more passive and in need of protection than in peacetime. They encourage their men to fight, tearfully sending them off to war and waiting patiently for their return. When they served directly in war activities, it was usually in a traditional female role, as nurses caring for wounded and sick men or clerk typists freeing men to go overseas to engage in battle.

### Women's Early Contributions

Ironically, this emphasis on women's weakness and domesticity in the Great War's propaganda obscures what women have actually done and what war has truly meant to them. Every major American war has loosened the rigid role divisions that have consistently kept women out of the productive and rewarding jobs in the economy and confined them to "women's work." For example, during the American Revolution (1775-1783), women served the Continental Army on the battlefields as nurses, cooks, water carriers, laundresses, and spies. Teipe discusses trailblazers like Mary Ludwig Hayes, who as a water carrier earned the nickname Molly Pitcher. When her husband collapsed at his battle station, the legendary Molly Pitcher took his place at the cannon, performing competently and heroically (Teipe ¶ 2). Additionally, Deborah Sampson was so dedicated to the revolutionary cause that she enlisted as a revolutionary soldier as Robert Shurtieff

(Teipe ¶ 5). After the Revolutionary War, women returned to a patriarchal society where their contributions went unrecognized. The newly established republic for which they fought remained a man's world.

According to Godson, Civil War era women also became activists for the cause, bringing their unique talents to fill many roles for both the Union and Confederate armies. The need for medical care increased as the war escalated. Appointed by the Secretary of War, Dorothea Dix became superintendent of Army nurses. There were approximately 9000 Army nurses placed in field hospitals. These nurses were not part of the military; they were "angels of mercy" who cared for and tended to the wounded and dying soldiers (16). During the Spanish American War in 1898, the U. S. Army contracted over 1,500 nurses to serve (Godson 29). During every American war, a few women have disguised themselves as men and fought as soldiers. Most have stayed behind the lines to fill places vacated by men gone off to fight and work at new jobs created by the war itself.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, women sailed in ships of every sort—hospitals, whaling, merchant, pirate, privateer, clipper, and war—and often learned the intricacies of shiphandling and seamanship. At the same time, they provided the gentle nursing care so essential to sick and injured men, often using their talents in military settings. These two elements, familiarity with ships and maritime matters and nursing skills, would provide a foundation for women's twentieth century participation in the U. S. Navy (Godson 1).

Women have contributed to their society both in times of war and in times of peace. They were rich and dirt poor. Some were literate and some found a voice only through their experiences. As varied as their experiences were, each found her own way through the expectations of domesticity to blaze the trails for those who followed.

## Social and Cultural Climate: Historical Grounding

It is difficult to discuss the social and cultural climate of this period without first setting the historical context. In the early days of our nation's history, the position of American women was most certainly precarious. Despite social status, under English common law, prevalent in American colonial times, women had few rights, but many mundane duties and responsibilities. This was especially true of married women, who simply by their marital status had no rights; the legalities of marriage simply transferred her from her father's control to her husband's domain. "Married women in particular suffered "civil death," having no right to property and no legal entity or existence apart from their husbands" (Flexner 7). Of all the prohibitive restraints these pioneers had to endure, the most difficult to overcome and the most important to help situate women to induce change had to be public speaking. Prior to the abolitionist movement, women prohibited—by law and tradition—to organize or speak in public. Without the right to speak in public, women's voices would never be heard.

Using biblical passages, religious organizations kept women in their proper place, silencing them from church affairs and supporting popular social beliefs of the day. "The churches merely expressed a dominant social pattern which dictated that the speaking of women in public was unseemly" (Flexner 44). In the late nineteenth century, women first organized to gain the right to speak in their own behalf.

Although women were traditionally denied the right to speak in public venues and in some instances restricted by law, history produced a few brave women who explored the domain. Women could not achieve equality until they claimed their right to engage in public speaking. When a woman spoke, she demanded her equality; she herself was proof

that she was as able as her male counterparts to function in the public sphere. According to Flexner, the first women to pass through the curtain of silence was Frances Wright, a Scottish woman, stunned audiences of both men and women in 1824 with her short cropped hair, her attire, and her views, which included religious freedom, women's rights, universal education, abolition of slavery, and birth control. To discourage women from exercising their right to speak in public, those who attempted to challenge this tradition were labeled “Fanny Wrightists.” This intimidating tactic intended to frighten away any women with aspirations to the public speaking arena (27).

Although Fanny Wright publicly expressed her views, Flexner avows, the first women to open the doors to public speaking were South Carolinian abolitionists, Sarah and Angelina Grimké. Although they were born to a Southern plantation owner, the Grimké sisters spoke out fervently against slavery—an institution they absolutely abhorred—throughout the Northern states. Both Sarah and Angelina belonged to and lectured for the Anti-Slavery Society. Their achievement in the public arena enabled large numbers of women to be heard (45). Apparently, the Grimkés were eloquent and passionate speakers. Their speeches against slavery generated a huge following: “When the Grimkés led, other women soon followed in growing numbers<sup>1</sup>” (qtd. in Flexner 45).

Lucy Stone, a pioneer in the women’s rights movement, also toured the country speaking out against slavery with the Grimke sisters. Women’s speaking in public was such an uncommon occurrence. Churches and civic groups issued proclamations condemning

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<sup>1</sup> Flexner quoted this passage from the *Writings of Margaret Fuller*, ed. Mason Wade, p. 125, published June 1941. Margaret Fuller was a nineteenth century journalist and women’s rights activist who was the first women journalist to work on a major newspaper staff. She was a literary critic on Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune*; she wrote about a wide-range of issues, including art, literature, theatre, and social reform movements.

women engaging in public speaking activities. Even staunch abolitionists forgot about the slave in their attempts to silence women. In her last public speech at the Chicago World's Fair, Stone related a story about Abby Kelley Foster, a member of the Anti-Slavery Society, who frequently lectured with the Grimké sisters. Abby Kelly Foster once entered a church and found she was the sermon's subject. The biblical text preached from the pulpit: "This Jezebel is come among us also." After the service and as Foster walked toward the town square, church members heckled her and threw stones at her. They pelted her with rotten eggs for the crime of being a woman who dared to speak out against social injustice. Some of the anti-slavery advocates, who supported the very cause for which she endured such humiliation, readily condemned her. Lucy Stone ended her story with the following statement: "I think, with never-ending gratitude, that the young women of today do not and can never know at what price their right to free speech and to speak at all in public has been earned" (qtd. in Oldham 58). These dedicated and passionate advocates of justice and reform—these phenomenal trailblazers—had much to say. Their mantra, *our voice is strong and we shall be heard* still resonates today.

Flexner indicates that the first anti-slavery societies for men only began to form after the Nat Turner Rebellion in 1831. This led to the underground railroads where men and women became involved with assisting slaves to find their way to freedom. This movement quickly gained momentum. Women were drawn to this movement and it was during this struggle to free the slave that they launched their own battle for equality (41). Pioneers from the first Women's Movement gave all women who followed them a voice in their destiny. While men were often engaged in battle, women waged a war to control their place in society and their importance to the balance in the world. Interestingly, it was

during the abolition movement that “women first learned to organize, to hold public meetings, to conduct petition campaigns” (Flexner 41).

The difficulty that women faced during the abolitionist movement and into the reconstruction era where they began to speak out and situate themselves as citizens sitting at the table for justice was appalling. Women’s experiences during this battle for equality and equitable treatment for all citizens made them acutely aware that they too had far to go if they were to live in an egalitarian society. It was during this time that they learned the skills necessary to fight a battle on their own behalf. “As abolitionists, they first won the right to speak in public, and began to evolve a philosophy of their place in society and of their back rights. For a quarter of a century, the two movements, to free the slave and liberate the women, nourished and strengthened one another” (Flexner 41).

Women have struggled for equality, freedom, and justice ever since the inception of male dominated societies. For centuries, women have tried to achieve full citizenship, the right to take part in the political and social life of their time, and to stand on a plane of equal human dignity with men in their personal relationships. Many women longed for a professional life; others defied societal norms and conventions and pursued professional status, oftentimes, paying a huge price.

### Women Struggle for Equality

The early part of the twentieth century saw a rise to the early feminist movement, which has been a long uphill battle that spanned decades of outspoken women demanding their rights and full citizenship—nothing more, nothing less. Often while fighting for the rights of others, women become aware of their own lack of rights. For example, women did not have the right to speak in “mixed” groups; it was not acceptable for women to speak in

public. If they wanted to speak at their tea parties, garden club, or other women's social activities, hearing women's voices was not an issue. However, if women wanted to raise their voices in protest or to express an opinion at a community or political gathering, shared public values and customary traditions silenced their voices.

An American delegation of abolitionists attended the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London; the American attendees included a number of women such as Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Societal norms relegated Mott and Stanton to sit in the galleries as passive observers, not active participants, simply because they were women. After the sessions, these two women walked the London streets discussing the occurrences of the day. Flexner indicates that Stanton and Mott discussed "the anomaly of devoted workers in the anti-slavery cause being denied any voice in its deliberation simply because they were women and the need for action" (71). This inequity did not rest well with these progressive women; they decided that they would hold their own convention to discuss the "social, civil and religious rights of women" (Flexner 74). It was on a summer day in 1840 London when two women were denied a seat as delegates to the World Antislavery Convention; however, this event finally planted the seed for the Seneca Falls convention, where the American woman's movement began.

Stanton used the Declaration of Independence as a guide to draft her Declaration of Sentiments, stating that all men and women are created equal and demanding equal rights for women, including the right to vote. In 1848, Stanton presented her declaration in her hometown chapel in Seneca Falls, New York; she eloquently brought to light women's subordinate status and made recommendations for change. Flexner discusses the Seneca Falls Convention, which was held July 19 to July 20, 1848, and became the first Women's

Rights Convention held in the United States. Seneca Falls, New York became known as the birthplace of feminism (71). The first wave women's movement formally began in a small upstate New York church chapel, where this group of 300 women and men gathered and raised their collective voices in discontent, determined to right a wrong. No more status quo! The time had arrived for women to organize and prepare a pathway to secure equal rights under the law. Flexner said of this event:

Beginning in 1848 it was possible for women who rebelled against the circumstances of their lives, to know that they were not alone—although often the news reached them only through a vitriolic sermon or an abusive newspaper editorial. But a movement had been launched which they could either join, or ignore, that would leave its imprint on the lives of their daughters and of women throughout the world (77).

Until this point, social and cultural norms had defined woman's arena. For many years, a woman's place was in the home, taking care of everything and everybody. For many women, support of their right to full citizenship came through activism in other causes. Where their participation in causes like temperance could be, and was, viewed as an extension of their roles as wives, mothers and keepers of family values and morality, society viewed political activism as a male dominated activity. With the expansion of education, participation in the workforce and social protest movement like temperance, women began to question their proscribed role as quiet supporters of family morality and began to demand direct political participation.

Women continued to become disenchanted with the social order; they were looking for their voice, recognition and self-actualization. In a 1972 interview, Alice Paul, early twentieth century feminist, political activist, and architect of the Equal Rights Amendment,



said: “I never doubted that equal rights was the right direction. Most reforms, most problems are complicated. But to me there is nothing complicated about ordinary equality” (qtd. in Lindman 5). Through the years, many brave souls stood up against the establishment and demanded equality for all Americans. Such bold women were still a threat to the social order established by male domination. A woman’s place was still very much in the home. We had to develop a more egalitarian perspective on gender roles. However, first, women had to become aware that the time had come for them to join the ranks and sit at the table of equality.

### The 72 Year Journey Begins

In the early days of the woman’s suffrage movement, women continued to work toward abolition and human rights. Frederick Douglass eagerly supported woman’s suffrage; he attended the Seneca Falls Convention and signed Stanton’s Declaration of Sentiments. When the Civil War broke out, both northern and southern women became part of the war relief efforts: working at local hospitals, rolling bandages, and supporting hospital relief efforts. During reconstruction these early feminists were pulled in two directions: securing the rights for blacks and women; they gave priority to blacks. The need for equality for those who suffered from the indignations of slavery was far more pressing, so rights for freed African slaves moved to the forefront and woman’s suffrage temporarily took a back seat.

The two staunch supporters of both the abolitionist movement and the women’s suffrage movement were Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Both were bitterly disappointed when the Fourteenth Amendment granted Negro men the right to vote, but not women. Flexner discusses the controversy surrounding the two movements during the

reconstruction era and indicates that Stanton believed the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment would set “woman suffrage back a full century” (144). Women worked tirelessly to secure civil rights for both the African slaves and women of America that it was a slap in the face that black men were enfranchised without consideration for the women’s vote. Anthony’s reaction was that of total indignation; she later pledged that “I will cut off this right arm of mine before I will ever work for or demand the ballot for the Negro and not the woman” (qtd. in Flexner 144). Because of this set back, Stanton and Anthony started the National Woman’s Suffrage Association (NWSA) to promote women’s rights throughout the United States and abroad.

During the years following reconstruction and throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century, women made strides in important areas, but still battled to gain full equality and suffrage. Educational reforms made it possible for the numbers of college and professional women to increase. According to Flexner, 1889-1890 saw a rise in women completing a Bachelor of Arts degree; there were more than 2,500 degrees awarded women during this time. In 1870 there were 90,000 women in teaching professions; twenty years later that number rose to 250,000. Additionally, in 1870 listed 544 women as health care professionals and paraprofessionals<sup>2</sup>; by 1890 this number had risen to nearly 4,500 women (179). Although women made tremendous strides during this twenty year period, they still did not have full citizenship: voting rights.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, life was very different from what our forefathers envisioned. America was no longer primarily an agrarian society. In the last part

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<sup>2</sup> Flexner indicates that the 1870 census that women were loosely categorized as “physicians, surgeons, osteopaths, chiropractors, healers, and medical service workers.” Since these professions were clumped together, the census did not provide a breakdown or division for each area.

of the nineteenth century, she became an industrialized society. More importantly, women were living under different circumstances than their mothers and grandmothers had lived. A new breed of suffragettes with a more militant approach joined the ranks of the NWSA. Two outspoken leaders in the move toward equal rights and suffrage were Alice Paul and Lucy Burns. There were philosophical conflicts between these two new activists and those who were established in the movement. The NWSA split and Alice Paul formed the National Women's Party (NWP) in 1916. The NWP formed large gatherings and held parades to generate public interest in women's rights.

### Leaving Home and Hearth

During the World War I era, more women were in the workforce than ever before. Additionally, women had recently gained access to educational facilities. "Young women flocked to colleges and universities, and between 1910 and 1920," claims Godson, "their numbers more than doubled. They comprised 47 percent of all college students"(56). Many women continue to enter typically female positions: teaching, nursing, social work. However, there were now professional positions available to women, especially those receiving higher education. Godson's research indicates that women began to enter the white collar positions, such as sales clerks, typists, stenographers in record numbers. Surprisingly, 25 percent of women worked outside the home; however, the majority of these workers continued to be poor and uneducated, taking positions as domestics or factory workers (52). During the latter part of the nineteenth century, women began to enter the workforce, mostly through trade unions, where they engaged in sewing, ironing assembling or other factory work. This rapid move continued until World War I. Working conditions were not pleasant for the poor and uneducated. In all professions, trade unions,

factories and other fields, “women received less pay than men for comparable work” (Godson 56).

More than previous wars, World War I depended as much on industrial production as it did on the battlefield. In addition to guarding the trenches, the Great War had tremendous technology to harness. The weapons of war—tanks, machine guns, chemical warfare, aircraft technology—had evolved and came to dominate the battlefields. Moreover, the technological innovations of the Great War produced a new battlefield, requiring new industries and production strategies. In addition to creating a need for men to join the battlefield, World War 1 generated a tremendous need for defense workers to keep the war effort going. This is in addition to those jobs being left as men were sent to fight the battle on the European front lines. Men off fighting and the inevitable casualties of war generated a serious labor shortage.

During the war, women became a vital part of the workforce. While men were off fighting, the women were needed to stay home and run things so that the economy would not destabilize and to support the war efforts. “By the end of the war more than ten thousand women were employed making gas masks. Whenever possible, managers hired women who had relatives overseas, so that the work would be done with extraordinary care” (Brown 153). Many employment opportunities opened for women because men were off fighting in Europe. Many worked in the mass transit industry. Some of these new opportunities such as the mass transit industry offered better paying jobs to women than they had been accustomed to before they were needed to fill the positions left by men. A streetcar conductor in Cleveland, Laura Prince, had worked as a waitress for 10 years. Because of the shortage of men, Prince applied for a job with the Cleveland Street Railway

Company. “Compared to waitressing,” Prince stated, “it was a dream job<sup>3</sup>” (Qtd. in Brown 179). Women were called upon to make sacrifices and they answered the call. However, after the war, the jobs were gone. According to Brown, “the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company fired nearly three hundred women, citing the state law that prohibited women’s night work” (Brown 180). This was not an uncommon occurrence; it happened to women in every state and in every industry.

Through my research, it became apparent that times were changing considerably for American society and through the necessities of war; women left the shelter of home and became part of the war effort on the home front as well as overseas. It also became evident that this generation of women has yet to receive their full acknowledgement and that this generation of women’s voices has been truly silenced. Rosie the Riveter’s sacrifice a generation later is well documented and remembered; however, many of the stories of World War I women were never told because they did what was asked of them, and then quietly retreated back to patriarchal society that dominated their existence and assumed their role of domesticity. However, not only did they have to keep the home fires burning but they took on voluntary and paid employment that was diverse in scope and showed that women were highly capable in diverse fields of endeavor. There is little doubt that this expanded view of the role of women in society began to change the outlook of what women could do and their place in the workforce; the status of women in the labor force changed.

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<sup>3</sup> The information about Laura Prince came from transcripts of proceedings before the National War Labor Board, March 13, 1919. These proceedings were not uncommon because many women struggled to join labor unions, which in some industries often prohibited women members. After the war, women had to leave their jobs and return to their underpaid “female” trades, which were oftentimes unhealthy and unsafe working conditions.

## Women Move Slowly Toward Freedom

It is important to realize the Great War affected women in a number of ways. In social terms, many revolutionary changes accelerated during this time. Moral codes and social norms for women began to move—ever so slowly—forward into a new era of freedom and challenge for women, shedding the Victorian constraints that shackled women to domesticity. Opportunities, of course, begin slowly, but the war gave many women greater participation in the work force. Many women became trolley car drivers, factory and field workers, and nurses. During the war, women became an important part of the work force. Why? Since most of the men were off fighting, women's services were necessary on the home front. While women entered the workforce in unprecedented numbers, there was another issue looming in the forefront: how the military could free up men from the mundane clerical duties so they could participate in the more important issue of wartime—fighting the enemy!

Before the war, specifically in 1901 and 1908, the government established Army and Navy Nurse Corps, which opened the door for women in the military to some extent, but very slightly. When the United States entered World War I, through necessity the War Department became serious about using womanpower. However, this was unprecedented territory so the War Department had difficulty in moving forward with a plan of action: they did not know what to do. The United States Army stumbled around in bureaucratic circles trying to figure it all out. The United States Navy, while staying within bureaucratic guidelines, took a more proactive approach: they set up a committee (Godson 60).

Unbelievably, the United States Navy set up an investigative committee to determine whether women as well as men could hold the rank of yeomen (lowest possible

enlisted rank). They discovered that nothing stated that only men could hold this position, so they formally allowed women to join the ranks. Whatever their qualifications or prior experience were, these women could never hold any rank other than yeoman. They were referred to as "yeomanettes." Their job of course was to free up the enlisted men from their clerical duties so they go off to fight the war. What probably looked like a fantastic possibility and new opportunity for women turned out to be a hearty welcome to the typing pool!

During World War I, stated Godson, over thirty thousand women had served in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps, the Marine Corp, and the Coast Guard, and the Navy as Yeoman (F) Female—they distinguished between M and F on the rank. (60). Godson indicates there were many reasons for women to enlist; however, the “strongest motivation for these women was patriotism, the desire to help their country in its struggle against the Central Powers” (61). Ironically, these trailblazers served their country before they could vote! “Those women who entered the naval service had no idea that they were pioneers. They joined the Navy because the country needed their talents” (Godson 78). Although they opened the door to the military a bit further, it would be twenty-three years, not until World War II, before the United States remotely considered women an integral part of its military institutions. However, in these interwar years “the Navy would have to grapple with new decisions about women’s place in naval service” (Godson 79). The women of World War I served their country well; they were pioneers, freeing deskbound men for combat. According to Gavin, “the enthusiasm and capable participation of the country’s female population on all fronts was duly noted in Washington” (15). These women did not know they were doing anything extraordinary, but they paved the way for future

generations of women to make their marks on their society and communities in ways that, perhaps, they would not have considered had it not been for the women of World War I.

After the Great War the role of women reverted to prewar society's expectations. Once the war was over and the men began to return home, the military discharged women and those in the job market gave up their positions, just as their daughters did a generation later, to give the returning veteran his job back. Women were simply holding down the fort and keeping the home front running smoothly. Society expected women to return to the kitchen and hearth as before, and they did. Gavin suggests that an initiative that was so experimental and the first of its kind became a total success. The important role that so many women played in both the military and civilian arenas during the war became the moving force behind the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, which expanded suffrage to women (19). There is no doubt that World War I was a turning point in the battle for women's rights. By the time the Twentieth Century had arrived, American feminists had been struggling for the right to vote for more than 50 years. When the Nineteenth Amendment was finally ratified in 1920, it had been a 72 year undertaking from the humble beginnings when those first feminists met during the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention.

The women of World War I did not get the fanfare or attention that their daughters and granddaughters received. They were not admired or considered patriotic. Women in uniforms and in pants were not applauded; they were the little-known nameless few who proudly served a naïve and idealistic nation. Woodrow Wilson's words declared our isolationism and reluctance to enter the war; however, his actions eventually indicated that true Americans would fight to protect their homeland and their democracy, paving the way



for democratic principles to reach foreign shores as we entered the war. “The First World marked America’s emergence from isolationism to involvement in world affairs, and it necessitated the mobilization of not only the armed forces but of the civilian population as well (Wilkerson 103). Defending American interests was not simply the right thing to do; it was one’s patriotic responsibility. These women stood tall as their nation entered the war to end all wars, proudly demonstrating their patriotism. There was no applause as there would be a generation later for Rosie the Riveter, the WAC, and the WAVE. As long as the war lasted, they were needed. But when the bands stopped playing for the returning Doughboys and Seamen and the emergency ended, these women were expected to return to the kitchen, the nursery, the typing pool, and the little red schoolhouse. The return to peace meant that women had to relinquish their good jobs to the men returning from war as the country returned to normal life. After all, a return to normalcy was what it had been fighting for in the first place. Their dedication to the cause is undeniable; their contributions helped shape a nation and transformed our concepts about political participation and active citizenship; these were the unsung women of World War I.

## CHAPTER 3: THE ARTIST

*It is the sunrise I love. I love the morning because it is new; it is the creation of life all over again. And I love to paint in the morning.*

Howard Chandler Christy

### Christy the Artist

The birthplace of Howard Chandler Christy—one of America’s most prolific and well-known illustrators and portraitists—was a simple farmland community in Morgan County, Ohio. Born in 1873, Christy’s talent became evident to his parents as early as three years old. It was clear to his parents that he was destined for a career in art so they did all they could to support and nurture his innate talent. When Christy was four, his father took him to meet local artist Charley Craig. At ten Christy took his first commercial job: printing a sign for the local butcher shop. By the time he was 13 one of his sketches was published by a daily newspaper, *Toledo Blade*. Because of his love (and talent) for art, Christy’s goal was to study art in New York; he left school at 12, worked on his parents’ farm, took local commercial commissions, and saved his money to follow his dream (Kominis 48).

In 1892 he was able to set out on his adventure in New York. He registered at both the National Academy of Design and the Art Students League. At this time New York was the “artistic capital of the nation” (Pisano ¶ 1). Both these institutions represented the vibrant center for contemporary art. Both seasoned and aspiring artists gathered in New York, making it the American art Mecca. The National Academy of Design, established in 1825, is an association of American artists with a museum and fine arts academy; it is a

major art institution and one of America's oldest organizations of its kind; its mission is to "promote the fine arts in America through instruction and exhibition" (National Academy History ¶ 1). The Art Students League, founded in 1875, originated because students and artists in New York became increasingly aware that the Academy, established 50 years earlier, no longer met the needs of the growing artist community in New York. After becoming a member of the academy and the league, Christy's future in the art world was solidified.

### Early Struggles as a Young Artist

Christy's ambitious objective, to become a serious art student, was inhibited by the financial realities in turn-of-the-century New York, requiring him to find a more stable source of income. This need became more acute with the 1895 Wall Street crash because it wiped out his family's savings so he could no longer expect financial support from them. This forced Christy to explore the field of magazine illustration as he realized that illustrations were more marketable than paintings (Miley ¶ 3). Within a year, Christy's illustrations were published in *Life* magazine; he also was commissioned to illustrate a novel, *In Camphor*, by Rose B. Woodyear. Christy's big break came when the Dodd, Mead, and Company publishing firm commissioned him to illustrate Shakespeare's *Hamlet* for their forthcoming edition. This led to more contracts and Christy's commercial art career generated steady illustration commissions. His work was in demand by newspaper, magazine, and book publishers.

When the U.S. battleship Maine was destroyed in Havana Harbor in 1898, he actively pursued and received commissions to cover the Spanish-American War, becoming a war correspondent for various New York periodicals. As a war correspondent he

followed Theodore Roosevelt's Rough Riders through Cuba, sketching their exploits. The Rough Riders drawings attracted attention in New York, earning Christy some fame and celebrity for his work. By the time Christy was 25, he was a proficient and well-respected illustrator. Overwhelmingly, his success commanded attention, guaranteeing him commissions with major publishers of the day (Vadeboncoeur ¶5).

### A Soldier's Sweetheart: The Christy Girl

Ultimately, his fame and popularity cultivated a thriving environment for creative expressions, the Christy Girl. While following the Rough Riders Cuba campaign, Christy created a series of sketches. One of these sketches was an imaginary, beautiful girl he titled "The Soldier's Dream," published as a picture illustrating a story in *Schribner's* about the Spanish-American War. "If she began as a man's dream, she soon became his friend" (Kitch 51). She differs from the typical portrayal of women during this time period. Rather than wearing an adorning crown of lush, long locks, her hair is cropped, giving her a more practical and modern look.



**Figure 1: A Soldier's Dream**

She is dressed for comfort—no corsets or bustles for this girl. She shed her crinolines and does not worry about getting her hair mussed. This picture of a soldier’s sweetheart was so well received that upon his return from the Spanish-American War, “he began more and more to paint pretty young women: they became known as the ‘Christy Girls’” (Reed 16). Who is the Christy Girl? She embodies a mixture of charm and social grace and combines innocence with a sense of fun loving adventurousness.



**Figure 2: Christy Girl**

Christy, according to illustration scholar Mimi Miley, is credited with “turning the demure Victorian girl into an athletic modern woman” (quoted in Kitch 51). The Christy Girl personified an active and daring contemporary woman, becoming the original All-American Girl.

She became so popular and recognizable that she set the style for women’s fashion for years to come. Her popularity was so great that entire books were successfully dedicated to her image, specifically *The Christy Girl* (1906) and *The American Girl* (1906).

The Christy Girl represented the quintessential woman as Howard Chandler Christy saw her through his rose-colored view, and with his artist's pallet, he created a new woman, who emerged from the Victorian era as a playful and flirtatious young woman.

Christy became so associated with beautiful women that “as a nationally recognized ‘expert’ on beauty, Christy was invited to judge the first Miss America Pageant in 1921” (Miley ¶ 12). In addition, Christy’s artistic talents were highly sought after for novels and books of poetry; he illuminated and celebrated the immortalized words of Longfellow, Tennyson, and Sir Walter Scott. He illustrated seven of James Whitcomb Riley’s books, published individually and included in the twelve-volume memorial edition of Riley’s *Complete Works*.



**Figure 3: Elegant Dancers**

Who is the Christy Girl? According to Helen Copley, “She is Beauty, she is Hope, she is Joy, she is the dancer and the dance, youth and promise—she is Romance” (Copley Girl

1). Christy's body of work, particularly his loyal devotion to his work following the Rough Riders through their Cuban campaign and his penchant for beautiful women, reveals his stylistic flair and idealistic patriotism.

### From Christy Girls to Maidens in Uniform

The loyalty Christy demonstrated in the Spanish-American was rekindled during World War I. He drew from that commitment and his extraordinary talent to create posters for the war effort; he transformed his Christy Girl to a sophisticated propaganda device—an innocent maiden in uniform, where she appeared and re-appeared in many Navy and Marine uniforms in a variety of coquettish poses.



**Figure 4: Gee! I Wish I Were A Man**

Like her predecessor, “The Soldier’s Dream, the uniformed girl is friendly, making eye contact with the viewer. “The cheerful girls Christy drew in military uniforms for World War I posters,” his most enduring and best remembered work, “were positively tomboyish”

(Kitch 51). His Christy Girl made her exit from the Victorian era and stepped into a more modern industrialized world where opportunities outside the home were beginning for her.

### Who Was That Girl?

As Christy became a more successful, well-known, and sought after illustrator, his earning power began to improve; he felt it was possible to marry. In 1898, he married Maybelle Thompson, one of his models; their marriage produced a daughter, Natalie Chandler Christy. However, the relationship was tumultuous from the very beginning, which is “documented in several newspapers and gossip columns of the day” (Miley ¶ 9). Their marriage ended in 1908 at which time Christy left New York and returned to Ohio with their daughter. In 1912, he met a young model, Nancy Palmer. To work with Christy, she went to Ohio, and soon the two fell in love. Christy’s serene and carefree happiness, depicted in his idealized country romance, was not to last. In 1915, he and Nancy moved back to New York. As the war in Europe began to unfold, Christy was certain that the United States was about to enter World War I. He was eager to serve in the war effort as he had in the Spanish American War.

During World War I, Christy’s patriotism and propensity toward the war effort generated another period in his artistic career. “He painted over 40 posters for recruitment, bond sales, victory liberty loans, and other efforts on behalf of the war” (Lloyd ¶16). During this time, Christy produced some of the images that became the most famous of his works: war propaganda recruitment posters featuring Nancy Palmer. During this time, the partnership between the artist and his model changed. They married in 1919 and remained married until his death in 1952. She modeled for many of his illustrations. Many of the models for his DPP commissioned propaganda posters strongly resembled Nancy.



Who was the girl in the poster? Martha Banta describes the Christy Girl as “the sister who becomes the American male’s dream-wife” and “becomes the mother of the nation’s future” (267). She was Christy’s dream girl. In his 1906 book *The American Girl as Seen and Portrayed by Howard Chandler Christy*, he poses his Christy girl as the quintessential American girl. In this, one of his two first books both originally published 1906, Christy portrays his American girl as a school girl, as a debutante, in the country, in the city, in society, as a bride... This book is a tribute to his girl; he celebrates her beauty and charm. The Christy Girl is the fairytale princess to young girls and sophisticated contemporary for middle class women. With each illustration and poetic passage, Christy reveals his admiration and high esteem for women. “But the qualities herein declared to be characteristic of the American Girl are, either in greater or lesser degree, those that belong to the whole body of American womanhood” (156). Christy’s American girl is as far removed from us now as daVinci’s Mona Lisa or Botticelli’s Venus. As the 1800s turned into the 1900s, she was a trendsetter; she was a dichotomy, created by Christy that both reflected society and individuality. “Here’s to the health, the happiness, and the prosperity of all the women of America—God bless them, every one!” (Christy 157). Young women aspired to be a Christy Girl; she was featured on magazine covers, in book illustrations, and eventually on posters. On his “Greeting” page, Christy compares the girls his book to a time-honored military toast: “It is a custom in the Army and Navy to end the formal day with a grace to womankind—to drink a toast to the ‘Sweethearts and Wives’ who are the inspiration and reward for valor. And there seems no good reason why a sort of grade should not precede a book devoted to the praise of those whom we civilians honor no less than do the Boys in Khaki and in Blue” (9). Ironically, these women, like Christy’s propaganda posters, are not partners in valor, they are the reward.

Some of Christy's poster images from the Great War era portray women as the protector of the earth and the defender of the home front. When looking at these images, one can see women as the moral protector of society. Christy's World War I posters, like his *Christy Girl* series, portray a beautiful woman proclaiming support for the war efforts and enticing the viewer to support the war effort as well. After all it is the patriotic way; it is the only way!

## CHAPTER 4: THE POSTERS

*World War I poster imagery presented a rejuvenated American masculinity while naturalizing various ideals for womanhood through exaggerations of them: beckoning beauty, angelic healer, avenging warrior, sacrificing mother, supportive wife.*

Carolyn Kitch, 2001

### Poster Analysis

During World War I, the visual arts in America were an important part of the war effort. Both the government and the private sector used cartoons, poster art, film, and even individual artists as part of this orchestrated effort. Between Creel's Committee on Public Information (CPI) efforts and Gibson at the helm for the Division of Pictorial Publicity (DPP), war propaganda spread like wildfires. Historian Jordan A. Schwarz claimed that "the heroes of the Great War were its administrators of the home front. These ingenious organizers, managers and publicists of 1917-1918 rallied an unenthusiastic American citizenry to arms in support of a dubious European adventure"(3). War propaganda posters much like Christy's were essential to this campaign. Through the war effort, these brilliant organizers "adopted a private industrial complex to the needs of public enterprise" (Schwarz 3). These adept managers and organizers created a "great advertising campaign," which became successful because "like all good salesmen, they sold themselves to the public" (Schwarz 3).

## Whom Did They Recruit?

As the rich collection of World War I propaganda posters demonstrate, rhetorical representations occur not only in verbal and textual communication, but also embody visual imagery or a combination of persuasive images and text. A close examination of the World War I era posters reveals that the propaganda rhetoric was not simply to recruit willing participants into the military effort, but it was to recruit the entire American public into the war. “Posters commonly urged wartime thrift, and were vocal in seeking funds from the general public via subscription to various war bond schemes (usually with great success)” (Duffy Propaganda Posters ¶4). This effort was often a collaboration of the American government, military, and business enterprises to promote and sell a distant and unpopular war. This collaborative effort to sell the war depicted, in an often celebratory manner, the significance of the individual’s contribution to the war effort. However, it also subliminally embodies the notion that each individual citizen is the core of a larger collective endeavor of winning the war. One innocuous harmonious axiom represented the individual as the core of a true democracy where American society works together for the common good. All were encouraged to join the war to end all wars to make the world safe for America’s hallmark: democracy, freedom, and egalitarianism.

These posters were important in meeting the most pressing needs of the country at war. They served as propaganda to rally support for the war, mobilizing huge numbers of women to fill traditionally male jobs as volunteers, technicians, drivers, and telephone operators and to raise money and promote the conservation of food and other resources. Rawls discusses the United War Work Campaign, where DPP artists developed posters for a variety of organizations, among them YMCA, Salvation Army, Jewish Welfare Board,

and Knights of Columbus, to support the war effort and elicit civilian engagement. (165). Even the American Library Association developed posters asking for book donations for the men on the front lines. “The United War Work campaign encouraged Americans to support organizations that provided services to war workers” (Brown 121). Everyone could do something! A man could join his nation on the battlefield; a woman could flood the factories and make sure our boys had what they needed to fight the war; a mother could make the supreme sacrifice and send her sons off to battle.

The war propaganda poster represented the ideals of the American family; using pathos they depicted the delight of a soldier’s wife and child as he returned from war or interjecting fear of the enemy, who posed an eminent threat to the American way of life. Not only did these poster campaigns suggest one must engage in battle or work in factories, but they also suggested that good Americans buy liberty bonds to support their government or join an organization dedicated to the war effort. “The Red Cross alone raised well over four hundred million dollars in wartime donations and membership fees, and posters were a large part of its campaigns” (Wilkerson 104). These posters of the Great War linked America’s battlefield with the home front. And sold the fact that every contributor to the war effort—man, woman, or child—joined the battle to protect American democracy and freedom. Every citizen counted! The dramatic World War I propaganda posters evoked citizens to provide both emotional and financial civilian support for the war effort through a variety of rhetorical strategies.

### What Story Did Christy’s Posters Tell?

When discussing the effectiveness of posters, the American illustrator and poster artist, Edward Penfield (1866-1925), offered his observation: “A poster should tell its story

at once. A design that needs study is not a poster. No matter how well it is executed” (Penfield qtd. in Weitenkampf 278). Howard Chandler Christy’s work tells the story he earned his living depicting during the war: your country needs you! He was the most prolific and celebrated poster artist of this period. Christy’s posters were printed in great quantities; his naval recruiting poster, *Gee I Wish I Were A Man*, reached over 100,000 by 1918 (Rawls 80).

### Images of Women and the War Effort

The early twentieth century represents the influence and power of the poster as a propaganda tool. As previously discussed, Woodrow Wilson established the CPI, a bureaucratic committee system, with the formidable task of publicizing and building national support for an unpopular war. Even though the United States entered the war relatively late (April 1917), their propaganda rhetoricians generated more posters than any other nation at war (Duffy Feature Article ¶5). In tackling neutrality of the American people and addressing their commitment to pacifism, the DPP was the most effective weapon in the CPI’s arsenal. They not only redefined American women, but also pioneered unparalleled use of posters during World War I, harnessing this popular form of mass media and using the power of the poster to mobilize a resistant nation.

### Fight or Buy Bonds

Christy’s 1917 *Fight or Buy Bonds* represents a remarkable accomplishment to recruit and entice a resistant nation into the war effort with the third liberty loan drive. A beautiful seductive young woman with appealing features—long lush eye lashes, gorgeous silky black hair blowing in the wind, thin wine-colored, beautiful lips, a statuesque, full-bosomed body—beckoning the viewer to buy liberty bonds. Our Christy girl looks like a

Greek goddess leading her comrades into battle. As in many of Christy's posters, her attire looks more like a negligee than a dress. In this poster she wears a silky white drapery style dress fitting in a way that hugs her body and she carries an American flag; she represents the American ideals of freedom, democracy, and patriotism. Below her is a group of blood-thirsty charging, ferocious-looking, fired-up marines. She looks like a seductress who is not part of the poster scene, but rather on a different realm than the rest of the images; she is gesturing and tempting the viewer to join in the quest.



**Figure 5: Fight or Buy Bonds, 1917**

Christy's rhetoric gives the viewer a choice: fight or buy bonds to protect American values and way of life. He creates a definite spatial separation of the raven-haired young woman from the charging marines. Although surrounded by combative marines, she is not part of the battle; she clearly drifts overhead. Christy positions her well above the men as they skirmish off to battle; she does not even look at the marines she simply leads them. The subliminal desire is for the young woman to lead the viewer to support the war. These posters depict brave and able-bodied men actively engaging in the war effort. What about

the women? Floating overhead allows the viewer to remove the woman's image from the ghastly business of going to combat. Men fought to protect women from the evils of the world; they protected them from the ugliness of war. They certainly did not see them as part of the war, but rather as representing a higher moral being—an ideal to protect.

According to Kitch, women were ideals, cherished virtues personified: compassion, mercy, justice, loyalty, and patriotism. Propaganda rhetoric of the era presented women as altruistic nurses and angels. And occasionally, as Christy captured in his *Gee I Wish I Were a Man* poster, they were spunky little tomboys (113). World War I poster metaphorically presented “a rejuvenated American masculinity while naturalizing various ideals for womanhood through exaggerations of them: beckoning beauty, angelic healer, avenging warrior, sacrificing mother, supporting wife” (Kitch 120).

Regardless of the symbolic staging on Christy's posters, his model engages the viewer and seeks to create an imaginary relationship between her image and the American public. The poster girl stares directly at the viewer. Kress and Van Leeuwen would call her a represented participant who has entered into a demand relationship with the viewers, who become interactive participants (119). Kress and van Leeuwen suggest the image depicts what they call the represented participant and they call the viewer or producer the interactive participant—those who communicate through the images. In other words, by directly addressing the audience, our Christy girl is “demanding an imaginary social response” (124) from them. Indeed, in this poster she does more than simply demand—she implores, seduces, and even desires the viewer's empathy, active support, and help. Christy's propaganda posters create a visual communication by directly addressing the viewer. Clearly, without the interactive participant—the individual viewer—the represented participant—the seductive pouting girl—there is no call to arms.



## Christy's American Girl and Delacroix's Liberty

The resemblance between Christy's 1917 *Fight or Buy Bonds* poster and Delacroix's 1830 *La Liberté Guidant le Peuple* (known as *Liberty Leading the People*) painting are curiously similar. It would be remiss not mention the apparent likeness. The founding tenets of the American Republic were modeled after those of the French Republic.



**Figure 6: La Liberté Guidant le Peuple, Delacroix 1830**

Delacroix created Liberty as a political statement to commemorate the July Revolution, an uprising of liberals, bourgeoisie, and laborers, ending the reign of the House of Bourbons with the overthrow of Charles X and ascension to the throne of the Duc d'Orléans, Louis Philippe. Delacroix's Liberty leads a group of Parisians into battle against a corrupt the throne of the Duc d'Orléans, Louis Philippe. Delacroix's Liberty leads a group of Parisians into battle against a corrupt monarchy (Pioch ed. "Delacroix" ¶ 1).

Both Christy's propaganda poster and Delacroix's propaganda painting unite a patriotic call to arms with sexual attraction. While there are similarities within the pictorializations in these images, there are many complexities and significant differences

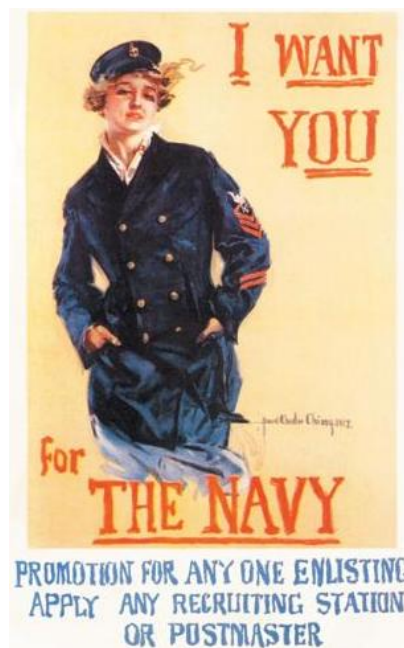
between them. Delacroix's Liberty calls attention to woman's bravery during the insurgence; she occupies the same sphere as those she leads, fighting the battle with the French revolutionaries; whereas, the Christy girl does not actually lead the troops, nor is she part of them. She floats in a separate dimension above them; she inspires them, she leads them, she is their reward. The combatants fight for her, not with her. Liberty is aggressive and brave—she goes into battle with her people. Liberty is not a “conciliatory peacemaker but,” as Nochlin asserts, “even more significantly, of those threatening slatterns who strutted atop the bodies of fallen aristocrats in popular counter-Revolutionary imagery” (49). Interestingly, Delacroix's Liberty is not engaged in uniting opposing groups of men; she, however, is engaged in “leading a differentiated, but unified, masculine group forward with her dramatic energy and conviction” (Nochlin 49). The Christy girl is more tempting than strong. However, both metaphorically depict female images as representations of the viewer values. “Allegory helps achieve universality in the painting: Liberty is not a woman; she is an abstract force” (Jacobus 354). The Christy girl is not a woman; she too is a conceptual figure. Both images are powerful figures that represent the feminine embodiment of human values—truth, justice, righteousness—in an allegorical figure, instead of a realistic woman. Delacroix's Liberty and Christy's girl offer their audience messages about women as well as persuasive political propaganda that represent the existing sentiments of their contemporaries.

### I Want You

Christy's 1917 Navy recruitment poster, *I Want You for the Navy*, takes a different approach at persuading the audience. The image not only depicts one woman issuing call to arms for men to join in war effort, but it also beckons them for carnal pleasures. In this

poster Christy's girl wears a Navy officer's uniform and looks at the viewer with a smug facial expression, making direct eye contact with the viewer.

There is less activity in this poster; it is a one-on-one relationship between the woman in the poster and the viewer. Interestingly, the woman in this poster was a civilian employee for the office of the secretary of the Navy. According to Williams, her name was Helen O'Neill.



**Figure 7: I want you for the Navy, 1917**

When the Navy began accepting women among its ranks, O'Neill enlisted as a yeoman, working as an aide in the ship procurement department. When the Marines began accepting women recruits, O'Neill accepted a commission as a deputy director of women Marines, where she remained until she retired as a lieutenant colonel (¶7).

The verbal rhetoric in Christy's poster and Flagg's work is both explicit and implicit. It clearly states: "I want you for the Navy." It does not indicate that the Navy wants him or that Uncle Sam wants him although the implication is there. Additionally, the

words “I want you” are double-underlined and the line is broken between the words, subliminally highlighting the presumed intent of her message and intertwining the possibility of sex into the message. Joining the Navy will not only enable the participant to defend the land he loves, but it will also satisfy his sexual desires. Women on World War I recruitment posters were designed to recruit men: sex sells!

One of the most recognizable recruitment posters of the twentieth century is James Montgomery Flagg’s 1917 *I Want You* poster, which was part of American recruitment efforts in both World War I and World War II.



**Figure 8: I Want You, Flagg, 1917**

Uncle Sam, according to Rawls, is a self-portrait of James Montgomery Flagg (12). As with some of Christy’s propaganda posters, there have been numerous variations of Flagg’s famous poster. Uncle Sam, wearing red, white, blue attire that represents the American flag, sternly and commandingly makes eye contact with the viewer and points directly at his audience. This masculine image commands a response in a more authoritarian way than Christy’s posters. The Christy girl entices the viewer and provokes a response with a more coy, but seductive, come-hither look. Uncle Sam demands the viewer’s attention and response.

However, the Christy girl is more alluring. Christy's and Flagg's allegorized war posters "constructed ideals of femininity" and, Bogart suggests, "created fantasies of worldliness, sensuousness, and physical vitality, sometimes aggressively enticing, sometimes threateningly domineering, larger than life" (106). Christy's version of *I Want You* poses a sensuously enticing young woman to beckon the viewer to join the effort. Flagg's version poses a threateningly domineering ultimate authority figure—Uncle Sam—to demand the viewer to join. Both posters are effective.

Flagg and Christy created their *I Want You* posters in 1917, both based on the famous 1914 *Your Country Needs You* poster by British Illustrator Alfred Lette.



**Figure 9: I Want You, Lette, 1914**

The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, as discussed in Rawls, commissioned *Your Country Needs You*, which depicts the Secretary of State for war, Lord Kitchener, posed similarly to Flagg's poster image (12).

Kitchener, looking stern and ominous, points his finger directly at the viewer and the text declares: "Your Country Needs You." Of all the World War I poster images, other artists have repeatedly imitated and parodied the 1914 British and the 1917 American versions with many different variations.

## I Wish I Were a Man

Christy created his poster *Gee!! I Wish I Were a Man. I'd Join The Navy* in 1917; the small print, placed above the recruiting station address, read *Be A Man And Do It*. This became one of the most popular recruiting posters during the war. Another interesting note about this poster relates to the model again. Christy was at a recruiting station and overheard a spunky young girl exclaim to the recruiter: “Gee! I wish I were a man. I’d join the Navy.”



**Figure 10: Navy Recruitment Poster, Christy, 1917**

President of the Women’s Memorial Foundation and retired Air Force Brigadier General Wilma Vaught told the story of Beatrice Smith, a World War I “poster girl.” When Christy heard 20 year old Beatrice in the recruiting station that day, he decided she would be perfect for a poster. He dressed her in Navy blues and used her statement as a tagline for his poster. Ten days after posing, Smith enlisted as a Navy yeoman for three years and made the rank of chief yeoman (Williams ¶5). Two decades later “when the Navy said she was too old to enlist in World War II, she joined the Army,” Vaught stated (qtd. in Williams ¶6).

The United States Navy commissioned this poster for recruitment purposes and in 1918 they wanted to use it for a separate conscription campaign. Using the same image, Christy created, *Gee I Wish I Were a Man I'd Join the Navy Naval Reserve or Coast Guard*. He used the same images, but changed the promoting entity and removed the recruiting station address and the small print "Be a Man And Do It" to make room for the Naval Reserve and Coast Guard. To make her statement emphatic, Christy underlined Gee and A Man in this poster. The word *Gee* also evokes images of a carefree, modern woman.

The Christy girl in this poster wears the uniform of an enlisted man. While she coyly looks toward the viewer, this image appears a little younger and far more playful than the images on Christy's other posters. However, this poster indicates that girls can only hope, dream, or, more importantly, simply *wish* for the adventures that men were able to experience. "By putting young women into men's clothes," Kitch speculates, "the artist suggested the boldness of the modern woman, while also making reference to the gender-identity anxieties in popular culture before the war" (113).

As social norms began to change in the first two decades of the twentieth century and the pendulum began to swing from the Victorian era woman toward a more liberated modern woman, perhaps these erotically charming images offered American women fantasies of illicit sexuality and offered the male recruit sexual fantasies of adventure. "Yet these images did nothing to contradict the wartime norms that placed women in inspirational and supporting roles" (Kitch 113). Throughout the propaganda rhetoric of recruitment posters, stereotyped images of women's traditional beauty were seemingly irresistible across the spectrum. However, in moments when artists depicted a woman acting unconventionally, other aspects of representation put her back in her place.

### Join The Marines

Christy's 1915 poster *If You Want to Fight Join The Marines* portrays another Christy girl in uniform—this time she is a Marine officer. The two words Christy emphasizes in this poster are Fight and Marines! Unlike the previous images, this poster displays a raven hair beauty prominently standing as a huge presence in the poster. Once again she is not part of the assault regiment; Christy places her on a different sphere than the marine troop.



**Figure 11: If You Want to Fight, 1915**

The model is dressed in an officer's uniform; however, she also carries a sword over her hip and supply bags strapped over her shoulder. As the sword rests on her hip, her fist wrapped around the handle indicating she is prepared to fight. In her other hand, she carries a small pouch that may contain binoculars or a spyglass. In this poster, she is the prominent image, smiling confidently at the viewer in a proud, but nonchalant stance. The men are in the distance with their backs to the Christy girl. Each marine, carrying a bayonet and marching off to battle, follows the regiment into the horizon.



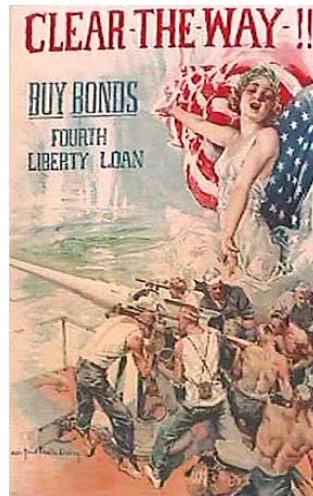
While it is not prominently displayed, the American flag is leading the way; directly behind the American flag is the United States Marine Corps flag. Old Glory is easily recognized and positioned above the Marine Corps flag; however, she is not notably represented in the poster. The Marine Corps flag seems to hold a more significant role in this image. The woman in this poster stands proudly as if to say, “I am proud to be an American.” As one watches the troops marching off to war to fight like marines, one can envision the Marching King—John Philip Sousa—leading the Marine Corps Band in *Semper Fidelis* as the troops follow majestically into the horizon.

### Clear The Way: The Yanks Are Coming

Christy’s 1918 Liberty Bond poster, *Clear The Way*, represents men harmoniously working together to load artillery into a cannon. Young muscular attractive men in various stages of dress—from full uniform to barefooted in tee-shirts and bell-bottomed denim navy blues to shirtless—work together to make the world a better place to live. The individual features of each man are undistinguishable; the group of men looks almost identical with the same body types.

Suspended above the ship’s deck is a beautiful Christy girl with her eyes squinted and her lips somewhat parted; she is not only in a separate sphere from the men, but her presence is also much larger than theirs. Resembling a Greek goddess, she wears a flowing transparent clinging white gown and a laurel wreath in her hair, representing power, victory, and success. This image may also suggest the possible carnal pleasures that may be available after joining the military and likely traveling to far away exotic places. It is possible that she could represent both their dreams and goals, leading their quest to win the war.

It is apparent that a successful effort to protect the home front depends on teamwork and commitment. Loading the arsenal in the cannon seems to require the efforts of the entire group.



**Figure 12: Clear The Way, 1918**

Looking at *Clear The Way*, these efforts become apparent to the viewer. A group of sailors stand on the ship's deck where one man opens the loading barrel, while two other men lift the heavy artillery into the cannon. A fourth man stands behind those loading the cannon; he carries the second torpedo-shaped artillery and waits to load it. A fifth man in full uniform is walking up from a deck below. Additional sixth and seventh men look through sights and align parts of the cannon, while an eighth man seems to be checking a cannon part with an audio device. And, finally, an officer is looking through binoculars toward the ocean in the same direction that both the cannon and girl are facing. *Clear The Way* represents men working together in combat being led by and fighting for their homeland and all women—mothers, wives, sisters, daughters. The message is clear: we need each person to do their part, but it takes teamwork to defeat the enemy!

Another obvious image frequently represented in propaganda rhetoric is the American flag. In *Clear The Way*, the flag, placed behind the girl, freely waves in the wind. The flag and the girl's white gown are gently blowing in the wind in the same direction out over the ocean, pointing toward the direction where the arsenal faces and drawing closer to the distant war. The explicit message is to buy into the Fourth Liberty Loan program. Be part of the support team: the general public who purchase government war bonds to subsidize the monetary cost of the war. A strong element in the propaganda was the language. Supporters were not buying into a war; they were securing their liberty.

Christy's image represents the freedom and independence as well as the democracy that American citizens are asked to defend, either by military involvement or sacrifice on the home front; it also represents the both maternal persona of womanhood and the paternal need to protect and defend. She is pointing out over the ocean in the same direction as the cannon that the sailors are struggling to reload points toward. And all the while the figment of this girl's image makes direct eye contact with the audience and urges them to act. The girl in the flowing white garb could be leading the troops, guiding them, protecting them, or driving them. Her image is serious, strong, tough, and capable; she is also vulnerable, sexy, feminine, and maternal.

As one visualizes the muscular sailors meticulously loading the weaponry, a strong connection is made between their intense activity revolving around the phallic shaped war instruments and the unquestionably sexualized woman. Interestingly, the model for *Clear The Way* appeared in Christy's Navy recruitment poster, *I Want You for the Navy*. Why are these images interchangeable? What does it say about the nature of the Christy girl? There is something generic about this image; she is molded in the way that best suits the purpose

of the communication. She serves an allegorical function, while the men have a fighting function and the American citizenry must function as a united front. Much like today's advertising, the pretty face with the trim and beautiful body sells products. In all his recruitment posters, the Christy girl's personas are many and diverse, just as her predecessor: The Girl on the Magazine Cover.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

*You can't have a congress that responds to the needs of the working man when there are practically no people here to represent him. And you're not going to have a society that understands its humanity if you don't have more women in government.*

Bella Abzug, April 1974

### Posters and Political Ideology

As previously discussed, development of and improvement in communication technologies brought about a rapid growth of mass media, which created a wide-ranging audience for and increased the use and effectiveness of political propaganda poster images. These images helped recruit millions of young soldiers, sailors, and marines during the devastation of World War I. Poster images helped establish and promote political ideologies, while they continued to maintain and strengthen existing democracy. Pratkanis and Aronson describe political propaganda as a promotional effort through mass media advertising for the propagation of a political idea or principle: “the goal is to move the masses toward a desired position or point of view” (11). With an ingenious rhetorical strategy and Creel at the helm, these images brought power to the federal government and disseminated the message: your country needs you to save democracy.

The success of any propaganda campaign is contingent on certain guiding principles: with the common goal to manipulate the audience and persuade participants of the benefits of the message. The Sixteenth Century Florentine writer, Niccolò Machiavelli, was an aristocrat whose “fortunes wavered,” Jacoby notes, “between being accepted by the ruling elite and being exiled” (256). In 1513, Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*, a political

tenet in which he considered the question of how to think about political power: “Everyone can see what you appear to be,” Machiavelli observed, “whereas few have direct experience of what you really are” (qtd. in Skinner & Price 63). He insisted on the importance of appropriate appearance for political success. The role of visual design in World War I propaganda posters enacted Machiavelli’s tenets when a visually appealing message was delivered to the audience calling on them to support the war effort as either a military enlistee or civilian volunteer.

### Multimodal Text

According to Kress and van Leeuwen, a multimodal text is a composite text from which one can analyze and extrapolate meaning through more than one semiotic code. They argue that multimodality is a characteristic of many kinds of text in today’s world. Kress and van Leeuwen suggest that visual composition connects to the “representational and interactive meaning” of the text through information value, salience, and framing. All three elements work to create a concrete, cohesive, and coherent whole. Placement of the elements determines the informational value for each zone of the image. The various zones include left and right, top and bottom, and center and margin. When factoring image placement—background, foreground, tonal contrasts, relative sizing—that indicate the elements belong or do not belong together, the element becomes what attracts the viewer; it is the most salient component. When a text uses framing devices or when it does not use framing devices, such as divisions or lines, framing connects or disconnects the elements. Framing suggests that elements belong or do not belong together. The framing technique indicates whether the element should be read as a unit or as a separate entity. Although these three elements function individually and one can analyze them separately or as an

integrated whole, their fundamental concern lies with "the composition of the whole, the way in which the representational and interactive elements are made to relate to each other, the way they are integrated into a meaningful whole"(181). As noted in our previous discussion, a composite design can integrate images and words to create the perception by which the visual expresses a threat or a promise.

In multimodal visuals, there is a strong correlation between images and text as represented in semiotics, where there is a significant relationship of symbols to one another. Earlier semiotic theories, as Kress and van Leeuwen posit: "apply ideas from the domain of linguistics to other, non-linguistic modes of communication" (5). While there is a theoretical importance of the relationship between and among isolated signs within visual communication, the one aspect these earlier theorists, including de Saussure, is discourse. Focusing on a linguist-based system, rather than the use of signs as driven by the modes of discourse, is a simplistic view. Kress and van Leeuwen base their work on the major concept in semiotics: the sign. However, they see symbolic "representation as a process," that is "focused by the specific context in which the sign is produced" (6).

Kress and van Leeuwen suggest there are two categories of participants in every visual communication; they refer to these participants as interactive and represented. Interactive participants are those who actively engage in the act of communication. Represented participants are the subject of the communication; these images are people, places, or objects (abstract or concrete) represented in the communication; they are the subject of the act of communication (46). It is important to reiterate that Kress and van Leeuwen suggest those images with represented participants gazing directly at the viewer function as a *demand* image that establishes contact with the interactive participant. The

dynamic of the *demand* gaze is that it acknowledges the viewers and invites them to become involved in the communication; the participant becomes actively involved. Images that look away from the viewer function as an *offer* image that has an indirect gaze, which provides a more passive relationship between image and viewer. The dynamics of the *offer* gaze is that it provides the prospect of the imagery for observation; the participant examines and considers the prospect. “Interactive participants are therefore real people who produce and make sense of images in the context of social institutions which, to different degrees and in different ways, regulate what may be ‘said’ with images, and how it should be said, and how images should be interpreted” (Kress and van Leeuwen 119). In other words, the gaze provides insight into the power relationship between the participants. Represented participants who engage in a demand gaze where they make direct eye contact with the viewer command the viewer’s attention and place the viewer in the least powerful position. Additionally, the meaning of the communication relates directly to the social discourse and the targeted audience.

Consider, for example, the most famous recruiting poster of the American World War I era, Flagg’s *I Want You*, as shown in *Appendix E*. It would not have become as memorable without illustrating Uncle Sam as a finger-pointing authoritarian figure with a direct gaze, looking dictatorial and demanding the attention of every viewer. The demand gaze appealed to patriotism and at the same time induced feelings of guilt for those sitting on the fence. Looking closely, Uncle Sam, centered in the upper half of the visual, is the most salient element in this poster. The framing technique within this image uses white space and the poster’s edge to crop Uncle Sam. The top and sides form a linear frame with the edge of the poster and at the bottom using the textual elements. Uncle Sam is the represented participant in this communication; the viewer is the interactive participant.



Uncle Sam, an older figure dressed in his patriotic garb, represents the country. Uncle Sam is America; he is democracy; he is the homeland; he represents both the forefathers and the future generations of Americans. Flagg's poster is more of a demanding presence than a guilt-invoking image rather than saying "I Need You," Uncle Sam issues a command: "I Want You." If the interactive participants truly love the American way of life, they will heed his command. Flagg's poster is more than simply a request or even a command; it uses fear tactics. Flagg's poster emits a visual warning, which, according to Kress and van Leeuwen, is indicated by "a demand picture with a raised forefinger and a stern expression" (129). Uncle Sam is the dominant figure in this poster—there is no doubt who wants you or for what reason.

Instead of saying, Your country needs you, as Lette's poster does as shown in *Appendix F*, Uncle Sam demands the viewers' attention in an attempt to scare them into compliance. Lette's poster depicts a demand gaze; however, he evokes more guilt than Flagg because Lette's image is Lord Kitchener who directly gazes into the viewers' eyes and implores them: Your **Country** Needs You. There is no room for assumption.

Additionally, this is a European War, so they do not have to wait for the enemy to cross the Atlantic Ocean. The need is more evident to the English. The United States involvement in to war needs a diverse marketing strategy, resulting in a different advertising package. In Flagg's poster, there is immediate and direct involvement of the viewer because Uncle Sam speaks directly to every citizen; he represents a country in need, but certainly does not come across as groveling for help. He is in full command! Uncle Sam is a large and salient figure. Even without the text, the image is directly addressing the viewer.

In contrast, look at Christy's *I Want You* poster as shown in *Appendix D*. The salient image is the Christy girl in the naval uniform. And, yes, she gazes directly at the viewer as she exclaims "I want you." Her gaze is also a demand; however, it is not as commanding as those represented by male images; it is more of a come-hither stare because her eyes are not as wide open as Uncle Sam's or Lord Kitchener's eyes in the previously discussed posters. The Christy girl gently smiles at the viewer. These poster images represent gendered poses. In *Ways of Seeing*, Berger looks at the symbolism of the female image as the external object of the male gaze. Berger observes that the "social presence of a woman is different in kind from that of a man" (45). Berger claims that a man's presence is dictated by the power relationship. "A man's presence suggests what he is capable of doing to you or for you" (Berger 46). The male image is in command and depicts the "power which he exercises on others" (46). Berger establishes that there are gendered ways of seeing and that men examine women before dealing with them. Accordingly, "how a woman appears to a man," Berger suggests, "can determine how she will be treated." (46). "One might simplify this by saying: *men act* and *women appear*" (Berger 47). The gendered space is restrictive where women learn to gaze more seductively attracting men because she is the object of his vision, not necessarily one who is outwardly controlling the communication.

Both Flagg and Lette present their image with more serious facial expressions. The Christy girl is not a representation of authority; she is, rather, the reward for his commitment to the effort and his bravery in doing his part. Additionally, unlike her male counterparts, the Christy girl's hands are in her pockets, as if she has a secret to keep, indicating there may be more to her promise than meets the eye. Although her gaze is not as intense as the commanding stare portrayed by both Flagg and Lette, she gazes

seductively at the viewer. It is important to note that even the seductress is demanding. Kress and van Leeuwen discuss the way in which represented participants gaze at the viewer and make a connection: “contact is established if even on an imaginary level” (122). From the viewer’s perspective the implicit promise in this poster is sex and adventure.

### Informational Value of Left and Right: Given and New

According to Kress and van Leeuwen, the information value of the left and right structure of an image falls under the theoretical framework of the given and the new. The visual information in the left side of the composite is the given; that which the viewer already knows. This could be common knowledge of the culture or society of the particular discourse community. The given information could be common knowledge, common sense, self-evident, or the existing condition. The visual information on the right side of the composite is the new; that which “is presented as something that is not yet known, or perhaps not agreed upon by the viewer,” an element, according to Kress and van Leeuwen, to which “the viewer must pay special attention” (187). The new information often challenges the status quo. The meaning of the new element can be ‘problematic’, ‘contestable’, or suggest that ‘the information is “at issue.”’ (188). The concept of given and new one can also correlate with before and after. In the given element one can extrapolate meaning from prior knowledge or understanding, while analyzing the new element in context of the given.

In many of Christy’s posters, the information value of left and right is given and new correspondingly. For example, in his 1917 Navy recruitment poster, *Gee I Wish I Were a Man*, as shown in *Appendix A*, Christy places his spunky little sailor girl on the left side of his poster. This is definitely a given because the Christy girl had been around for

nearly two decades, gracing magazine covers, books, and an array of other illustrations; she had also appeared on his 1915 Marine recruitment poster. The American audience was not only familiar with the Christy girl, but also accustomed to seeing her in a variety of activities. The information on the left of these posters suggests new opportunities or endeavors for which women can participate or a contestable terrain such as a world war.

In Christy's 1915 Marine recruitment poster, *If You Want to Fight*, as show in *Appendix G*, the information on the left is a given: men participate in war battles, but Marines lead the way in the fight. On the right is the ideal—the new information where the new American woman dresses as a battle commander, but she is, as in the other posters, the salient larger than life image. Although she is dressed in an officer's uniform with one hand on her binocular pouch and the other on her battle sword, the Christy girl is not leading her troops as a commander. Her men are fighting to protect this raven-haired beauty and all things American.

As previously discussed, Christy originally portrays his girl as a soldier's dream and as a young woman who evolves from the constraints of the reserved Victorian age to a new American woman able to take chances. Early twentieth century America knows the Christy girl! On the same poster, Christy places textual elements on the right side. The upper portion of this side reads GEE!! I Wish I Were A Man followed by I'd Join The Navy directly under the previous text, representing what Kress and van Leeuwen discuss as the new. The new information here is on two levels. First the suffrage movement had become powerful, consuming American news, dinner discussions, as well as controversial and heated discussions in Washington's political arena. Women had gained momentum and demanded the right to vote. Radicals such as Alice Paul and Lucy Burns took the women's

movement by storm and brought it to a new level. They branched out from the more conservative base and became more vocal about securing women's rights; they picketed the White House and even wound up in jail. Women were accused of trying to enter a societal realm that was traditionally and customarily reserved for men: the voting booth. They wanted equal rights, but many Americans believed that women did not need equal rights because they had their fathers or husbands to watch out for their interests. The upper portion of this poster represents the new issues confronting an evolving society.

To the dismay of many Americans, Christy's girl now wanted to join the Navy. This certainly falls under problematic and contestable information. And to make matters more controversial, on March 21, 1917 "radio stations all across the country and in U.S. possessions startled listeners with the announcement," according to Ebbert and Hall, "that the U.S. Navy was now enrolling women" (1). This was a cold reality of the 'manpower' shortage during a war. Women were needed to fill positions so Uncle Sam could send his sons off to battle. Women officially entering the United States military services had become an unprecedented and a controversial event. The information presented on the right side of Christy's poster was most certainly a huge issue where many viewers did not agree with this policy.

### Informational Value of Top and Bottom: Ideal and Real

According to Kress and van Leeuwen, the information value of the top and bottom structure of an image falls under the theoretical framework of the ideal and real. Their argument is that the visual elements placed in the upper portion of the image represent the ideal or 'what might be' essence of the message; top represented the lofty, above the fray idyllic situation or desire. "The upper section tends to make an emotive appeal and show us

‘what might be’; the lower section tends to be more informative and practical, showing us ‘what is’” (Kress and van Leeuwen 193). Christy represents a subtle associative element between the ideal and real or there can be a sharp division separating them.

In Christy’s posters, the information value of top and bottom is ideal and real respectively. In looking at the poster addressed in the given and new discussion, as shown in *Appendix A*, we can look at the top and bottom values. From this perspective, the Christy girl is symmetrically centered and balanced in the upper portion of the poster with the text beside her image. However, text that expands the poster’s width follows just below her image and the shocking revelation that she would join the Navy if she were a man. If we look at these elements, the Christy girl image with her assertion about joining the Navy becomes ideal. This section makes an emotional appeal and shows both supporters and foes alike what life could be. Women could possibly gain equal rights and enter a new world order. This could change society as the viewer knows it. Depending on one’s perspective, the ideal could be a positive or negative force. The way in which the bottom text is positioned seems to draw a division between the top and bottom information. This text reads, *Be a Man and Do It*, followed by *United States Navy Recruiting Station*. This was real. Men had always been able to exercise the right to serve in the military. This particular poster contains a multiplicity of messages, representing Kress’ and van Leeuwen’s ideal and real relationship. The poster clearly substantiates the argument that the upper section presents an image of promise of equality and opportunity for women. The text indicates a wish because equality is not the standard at this time. However, she may have hoped for it to become a reality. The girl reveals to the viewer the barrier: her gender. The text indicates an ideal feeling of hope and desire: if she had been a man (or at least had the same rights as a man), she then would have had more choices in her life.

Another perspective addresses fear of or concern for changing times; it is easier and often more comfortable to maintain the status quo. The poster also substantiates the argument for such a perspective where the upper section presents an image of what may have happened without constant vigilance: women could gain power and create a change in societal norms. The image and text in the top section poses a warning of what could occur. The bottom section of the poster also supports Kress' and van Leeuwen's contention. While there are no defining or distinct divisional lines between top and bottom, the colors and sharpness dominate the portrayal of the images. Additionally, the placement of the text in the bottom has more spacing between it and the girl with the text next to her image. This spacing appears to separate the upper and lower elements although the real takes up less space than the ideal. The text, *Be A Man And Do It...*, remains unwaveringly in the realm of the real. This text conveys the view that only men are able to serve their country in such a way; it could also empower the observer so he could run to his nearest recruiter and join the Navy just to keep the girls out of the old boys club.

One final perspective on this poster reverts to Christy's Army and Navy toast, as previously mentioned, "to the 'Sweethearts and Wives' who are the inspiration and the reward of valor" (Christy 9). The top images—the Christy girl and her words wishing to join the Navy—represents the ideal; she is the promise to the young men who fight for their country. She is worth fighting for and she is the reward for his patriotism and valor. The bottom text keeps the viewer grounded in the real because all he has to do is be a man and enlist. He, then, earns his reward: the girl on the recruitment poster. This bottom text, therefore, is the accessible bridge in realizing the ideal fantasy that Christy presents in the upper section.

## Connecting Participants

In their discussion of vectors, Kress and van Leeuwen suggest that “when participants are connected by a vector, they are represented as doing something to or for each other” (56). Christy’s *Clear the Way* poster, as shown in *Appendix H*, best exemplifies Kress’ and van Leeuwen’s ideal real connection. The top of this poster depicts the Christy girl sort of floating in her own realm above the reality of battle. The text at the very top of the poster reads, CLEAR-THE-WAY, in large, red, upper-case lettering. Next to the girl’s image, Christy commands the viewer to BUY BONDS and lists the liberty loan series. Much of this image represents patriotism as it targets loyal Americans. Old Glory waves in a gentle wind; Christy uses red white and blue to elicit a patriotic response. The upper section presents an image that symbolizes the beloved country and the democratic values and principles that red-blooded Americans hold near and dear to their hearts. The bottom of this poster represents the fight that is necessary to protect the American way of life and ideals depicted in the top of the poster. The cannon that the sailors seem to exert such effort to load and position toward the enemy clearly form a distinct divisional line to separate the top and bottom imagery. The sailors working toward their goal appear solidly anchored in the real domain. Once again, the real provides a channel to the ideal so the view can make the connection.

Observe that the horizontal and vertical angles are not neutral elements. Christy angles the girl’s arms and hands to draw in the viewer as an active participant with this poster. Additionally, let us note that everything points toward the positive, proactive interaction with unseen entity: the enemy. The girl’s image and the sailors face the ocean, represented with open space indicating distance. This reiterates that Americans must band



together now to keep the enemy at bay and prevent the elusive adversaries from crossing over to attack our homeland. Her right hand points directly toward the imperative: buy bonds. However, she definitively points out over the ocean toward the distant enemy. This horizontal angle suggests the viewers' involvement with the illusive enemy toward which she points. Her left arm points toward the sailors but her hand position faces the viewer as well. Her open palm indicates a certain trust and openness, perhaps showing the viewer her sincerity. This vertical angle represents both the viewer and the sailors, indicating both are equal in this battle. The sailors fight the enemy with cannons and other war artillery; however, angle indicates that the viewers have equal power in this war because they must supply the money and to support the military efforts. Because of the placement in the foreground, tonal values, and size, the Christy girl is the salient element in this poster. Everyone focuses on the girl who demands a response from the viewer; she elicits a response from the viewer, while she interacts with the enemy. She takes the viewer's money with the left hand and passes it off to support the war and defeat the enemy with her right.

### Contrasting Approaches

It is important to note that there were many DPP artists, whose goal was to support the CPI committee propaganda efforts to sell the war to the American public. However, there were many approaches to the end result. Christy's posters represented a gentile approach to broadcast wartime propaganda. His emotive appeal targeted patriots and loyalists who did not want to see their American way of life altered and who wanted to both spread and protect the ideals of democracy worldwide. Other poster efforts went beyond the conventional parameters and played on the dark, deeply rooted passions of the

recruit. One such poster, *Destroy This Mad Brute*, created by H R, Hopps ca. 1916, as shown in *Appendix I*, represents a more over the top approach than Christy's work. This poster depicts the enemy as a brutal civilization represented by the ferocious looking primitive wild-eyed ape with fangs and saliva dripping from his mouth, wearing a pickelhaube<sup>4</sup> helmet with the word *militarism* and carrying a bloodied bat in his left hand and a bare-breasted blond white maiden in his right arm. He stares demandinglly at the viewer as he stands on the text that spells America. Hopps' ape depicts a demand gaze since the participants gaze and stance demand a response from the viewer. Typically, specific recruiting stations added their contact and other information to recruitment posters advertising their offices. The Boston Recruiting Station at Tremont Row personalized Hopps' poster adding two informational labels. To the left of the ape's leg the text reads, "If this war is not fought to a finish in Europe, it will be on the soil of the United States. Under the Enlist is a stamp from the recruitment center just above the station's address; this text reads, "If you want to fight for your country and freedom enlist today." This additional text provides a strong explicit warning to supplement the brutal visual images of the poster. The image of the drooling about to ravish and literally devour the beautiful woman is meant to generate anger, rage, and indignation in any American male and fear and trepidation in American woman. On one hand, the poster lured the recruit with the possibility of new adventures, sex, and violence, but on the other hand, it condemned the enemy for partaking in those same passions.

In Hopps' poster, the ape is dark and foreboding and makes direct eye contact with the viewer. Unlike the Flagg and Lette posters, the ape's stare is more of a challenge that

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<sup>4</sup> A Pickelhaube helmet was worn by both Prussian and Russian military during the mid-nineteenth century. The pickelhaube image was often used for propaganda against the Germans during World War I.

foretells of impending doom, rather than evoking and commanding an action because Uncle Sam or one's country needs the viewer. The ape threatens one's entire civilization. The right side of Hopp's poster presents the given. The enemy is ready to inflict pain and suffering to those who get in his way. The left side of Hopp's poster represents the new. If you do not stop him now, he will rape and murder your women, brutally beat anyone who crosses his path, and destroy your homeland. The woman in the ape's arm is helpless and needs to be saved immediately. In contrast, Christy's *Fight or Buy Bonds*, depicted in *Appendix B*, represents the girl as the ideal one must fight for. She leads the way as an allegorical figure, not as a woman in danger. Christy's posters arouse patriotism on a more idealistic level, whereas Hopp's poster arouses a more ruthless and revengeful emotional level.

### Mixed Modalities: Thoughtful Persuasion

As previously discussed, George Creel was the mastermind behind the war propaganda efforts of the World War I era. In addition to his DPP artists, his committee elicited the help of many people and his campaign effort targeted newspapers, films and documentaries, songs, plays, magazines, and State Fair venues that reached every geographic area in America. His CPI committee developed silent newsreels that were shown in nickelodeons. Creel's ideas and advertising efforts helped the United States fight World War I with unprecedented ingenuity and methodical organizational methods. He organized and trained what he called *Four Minute Men*, which was an army of volunteers who gave short, four-minute speeches throughout the country at churches, civic events, rallies, movie theaters, state and county fairs, and anywhere else large crowds of people gathered. Creel's CPI orators incited and rallied crowds. Couple this with the entire

landscape decorated with billboards and posters by over 40 DPP artists and you will create a powerful and persuasive environment to support propaganda efforts.

In addition to the visual effects and the rousing oratory presentations, many of these venues employed marching bands and used patriotic music to incite crowds to donate money, volunteer for the CPI efforts, or enlist in the armed forces. A loyal patriot wrote the definitive World War I patriotic song to the cause and the American way of life. The patriot, of course, was George M. Cohan and the song that led the troops on both the home front and in the European theater was *Over There*. This song played everywhere. Combine the auditory persuasion with visual impact of the propaganda posters and you will certainly generate support for nearly any cause.

Cohan's lyrics<sup>5</sup> and music is the best-known World War I song. In looking at the words, it is easy to envision the posters from this era. The visual and the auditory seem to provide a nice balance and support the propaganda message. The following passage appeals to any young man who, if he enlists, will make his daddy proud of him. It is assumed that the call to arms has gone out to every son of liberty. Not only will the respondent make his daddy and his girl proud, he will make his country proud. Pride for one's country, not necessarily responsibility is the call to arms.

Hear them calling, you and me,  
Every son of liberty.  
Hurry right away,  
No delay, go today,  
Make your daddy glad  
To have had such a lad.

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<sup>5</sup> Information and lyrics from "Over There" comes from the *National Public Radio Milestones of the Millennium* CD produced this installment of The Great War representing classical and popular selections from this era. The recording, "Over There," on this CD recorded in 1719 by vocalist Arthur Fields with orchestral accompaniment. The original producer is not documented.

Tell your sweetheart not to pine,  
To be proud her boy's in line (Cohan, 1917).

The next passage addresses battling and defeating the Hun. Displaying Hopp's poster could add further impetuosity to the second stanza, stirring up hotheaded and red-blooded American boys.

Johnnie, get your gun,  
Get your gun, get your gun,  
Johnnie show the Hun  
Who's a son of a gun.  
Hoist the flag and let her fly,  
Yankee Doodle do or die (Cohan, 1917).

If nothing else works, the final stanza tells our boys to do it for mom.

Pack your little kit,  
Show your grit, do your bit.  
Yankee to the ranks,  
From the towns and the tanks.  
Make your mother proud of you,  
And the old Red, White and Blue (Cohan, 1917).

According to Duffy, shortly after, the United States declared war on Germany, George M. Cohan wrote the lyrics to "Over There" on a train ride from New Rochelle to New York City. The song became an immediate hit and was used to further incite an already enthusiastic crowd to demonstrate their patriotism (¶3).

In his 1920 book, *How We Advertised America*, Creel proudly reveals how he and the CPI used advertising principles to convince Americans to support the war effort and declare war on Germany. His efforts were so successful that many replicated and further expanded Creel's vision. Perhaps his vision did not include capturing a moment in history, but he did. Under Creel's committee, Christy produced, along with so many DPP artists, a rich body of work that represents significant historical as well as cultural artifacts. During

the World War I era, there was a set of values and beliefs Americans possessed that Howard Chandler Christy's and other DPP artists clearly captured in their posters, which reflect the motivation generated and the emotional connection Americans had toward their country and patriotic duty. These posters are not merely a glimpse of a world at war; they provide an historic and kaleidoscopic view into the hearts and minds of millions who fought the Great War on both the battlefields and the home front.

### Concluding Remarks

The most memorable propaganda campaigns often result from social, military, or economic crises. World War I was the first major crisis of the twentieth century. The whole world was at war; nations went to war with each other and their citizens made great sacrifices. An entire generation put their lives on the line to protect their world and their homeland. Many Americans succumbed to the ravages of war and left their lives at Flanders' Field, while others lost their lives to aerial or chemical warfare, and, then, others—military and civilian alike—lost to their battle for life to the Spanish Influenza epidemic.

George Creel's political propaganda machine was the means by which the United States' Government actively promoted the war effort. As we have discussed, propaganda posters proved to be the most effective tool that the CPI had to target the American public with the campaign to enter World War I. The survival of each country at war was at stake and the principles and values of democracy were threatened, so to prevent imminent danger to the United States uncompromising actions and ultimate sacrifices were necessary, or at least that was what the Wilson Administration wanted every American to believe. DPP

artists produced propaganda posters largely with the intent to create and channel national sentiment toward the war effort.

The visual representations reveal the enormously complex social and cultural issues that shaped and were shaped by the posters. The poster images represent solutions that met the pressing and practical needs of a government on the brink of warfare as they addressed the national anxieties and fears. As we have discussed, World War I propaganda posters displayed a commanding and authoritative Uncle Sam and women were frequently the salient element of the propaganda imagery, presenting sex appeal, glamour, and often allegorical forms of Lady Liberty, Columbia, or Justice. The Great War posters showed realistic representations of human figures either appealing to viewers or accusing them.

Howard Chandler Christy borrowed familiar formulas of male and female roles from popular mass magazine illustrations to publicize a far-away, remote, and largely unpopular war to the American public. Women in pre-World War I, turn-of-the-century America had many existing standards and moral codes to emulate. However, this was a new world and as American women stepped out of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, some ideals were being dreamed up as they went; many women were intoxicated with freedom and the promise of modernity. Banta suggests that between 1899 and 1920 Christy's image of the American girl "claimed a life of her own that had no relation to the existences of actual women" (206). Christy's depiction of masculinity was born of chauvinism and based on the Anglo-Saxon ideal of fierce, determined men prepared to protect and rescue his homeland and his woman.

Additionally, Christy's concept of feminism was also born of chauvinism and based on the assumption that women are defined and valued by their function, which is, naturally,

the service and interests of men as men define them. Christy represents woman as both maternal and the protected; she a motivating force behind the move to war; she is the driving energy of the propaganda. When the Christy girl was born in 1898, *The Soldier's Dream* merged two clear American values: “the brave American serviceman bone weary from serving his country’s cause in alien jungles and the dream image of what he fights to protect” (Banta 209). Clearly, this image replicated these values throughout Christy’s early illustrious career as he posed her as America, Victory, Liberty, Republic, and Columbia representing the allegorical figures embedded in the imaginations of his audience. Banta exclaims that “Christy found a formula he could work for all it was worth in the years ahead” (209).

Banta describes various female types in *Imaging American Women: Ideas and Ideals in Cultural History*, which provides a comprehensive discussion of the late nineteenth/early twentieth century woman. Christy depicted two female types that Banta discusses: Columbia<sup>6</sup> and the American Girl. Christy represented both of these figures in his propaganda poster images. Columbia represents a constant and stabilizing power of a democratic society offered by the United States and an aggressive action of leading her nation into battle for an ideal. The American girl possesses a charm that is both innocent and shrewd. The American girl stands before us as an ethereal beauty in her virginal state. Christy’s images depict a more empowered woman than previous generations. The Christy girl represents a new womanhood, where women sit to ponder or imagine or even dream; his girl stands proudly to lead her nation and protect democracy. “These diverse pictorial

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<sup>6</sup> Columbia is an allegorical figure created to represent the nation. She is also called America, Republic, Liberty, or Victory. Banta discussed this allegorical female type as Columbia, America, and Republic to all represent the United States and elicit patriotism in every red-blooded, flag-waving American.



forms represent ideas on the move—ideas that originated in the way American women were looked at” (Banta 1). The Christy girl represented a new American woman who emerged during this time in history.

Throughout the nineteenth century, domesticity was a romanticized concept. Women's lives centered on domesticity; their household labors, such as cooking, cleaning, sewing, and especially caretaking, positioned them as social reformers. Many progressive thinkers of the era politicized the home by making it central to social action. Women's work in the home became essential to the preservation of morality and culture. From the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century, “the roles and status of American women,” according to Kitch, “underwent widespread discussion and some profound transformations” (8). It was during this time that women, even middle class women, became involved in the progressive movement and women's clubs movements; these activities enabled women to step into the political arena. Kitch, however, indicates that most female reformers at this time were members of various women's clubs, such as the Children's Aid Society, Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Pure Food Association, and the National Congress of Mothers, which later became the PTA (10).

By the early 1900s, industrial society was drawing more and more women out of the home and off of the farm and into the worlds of work and public life. During this time, women's social roles greatly expanded. As previously discussed, women began to enter college and engage in various outdoor activities. Christy reflected these societal changes in many of his magazine drawings. Kitch claims that Christy approved of women going to college. He anticipated college to be a place where women “formed friendships and took up sports that would make them better mothers and wives” (48). In addition to representing

women as wives and mothers, saviors and protectors, daughters and sisters, Christy depicted the All-American girl as an outdoor pal, engaging in all sorts of physical activities. He represented his girl as an educated and athletic new woman who was stepping into a new century and leaving her Victorian image behind.

If we look back a mere seven years and a half ago to the turn of our century, we may remember the widely publicized and long awaited Y2K threat. The excitement and thrill for some to have witnessed the turn of the century. Yes, it certainly was wonderful living through this momentous occasion and being an eyewitness to history. As we passed from December 31, 1999 to January 12, 2000, we passed through this moment in time and moved ahead. With the flip of a calendar page the world entered a new month, new year, a new century—a new millennium. Yet, those changes exist strictly on paper. History gives a date its true meaning, not a calendar, a hand-held PALM, or a pocket organizer. January 1, 1900 is one of those turning points in history. It is often referred to the gateway to the modern era. Realistically, the world of 1900 was archaic and far from modern. The transition—moving from antiquity to modernity—evolved in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Christy's visual and verbal rhetoric helped sell the American entry into World War I and shaped American society and culture as Americans reflected on their world.

APPENDIX A: GEE I WISH I WERE A MAN, CHRISTY, 1917-1918



**Figure 13: Gee I wish I were a man, Christy, 1917-1918**

Source: Christy, Howard Chandler. *Gee!! I Wish I Were A Man I'd Join The Navy Naval Reserve OR Coast Guard*. Poster 27 x 41 in. 1917. Museum of the City of New York. *Wake Up America: World War I and the American Poster*. By Walton Rawls. New York: Abbeville, 1988. 80.

## APPENDIX B: FIGHT OR BUY BONDS, CHRISTY, 1917



**Figure 14: Fight or Buy Bonds, Christy, 1917**

Source: Christy, Howard Chandler. Fight Or Buy Bonds. Poster 20 x 30 in. 1917. Wake Up America: World War I and the American Poster. By Walton Rawls. New York: Abbeville, 1988. 209.

APPENDIX C: LA LIBERTÉ GUIDANT LE PEUPLE, DELACROIX,  
1830



**Figure 15: La Liberté Guidant le Peuple, Delacroix, 1830**

Source: Delacroix, Eugène "La Liberté Guidant le Peuple." *WebMuseum, Paris*. Ed. Nicolas Pioch. 4 Aug. 2002. BMW Foundation. 5 Mar. 2007. <<http://www.ibiblio.org/wm/paint/auth/delacroix/liberte/liberty.jpg>>.



APPENDIX D: I WANT YOU FOR THE NAVY, CHRISTY, 1917

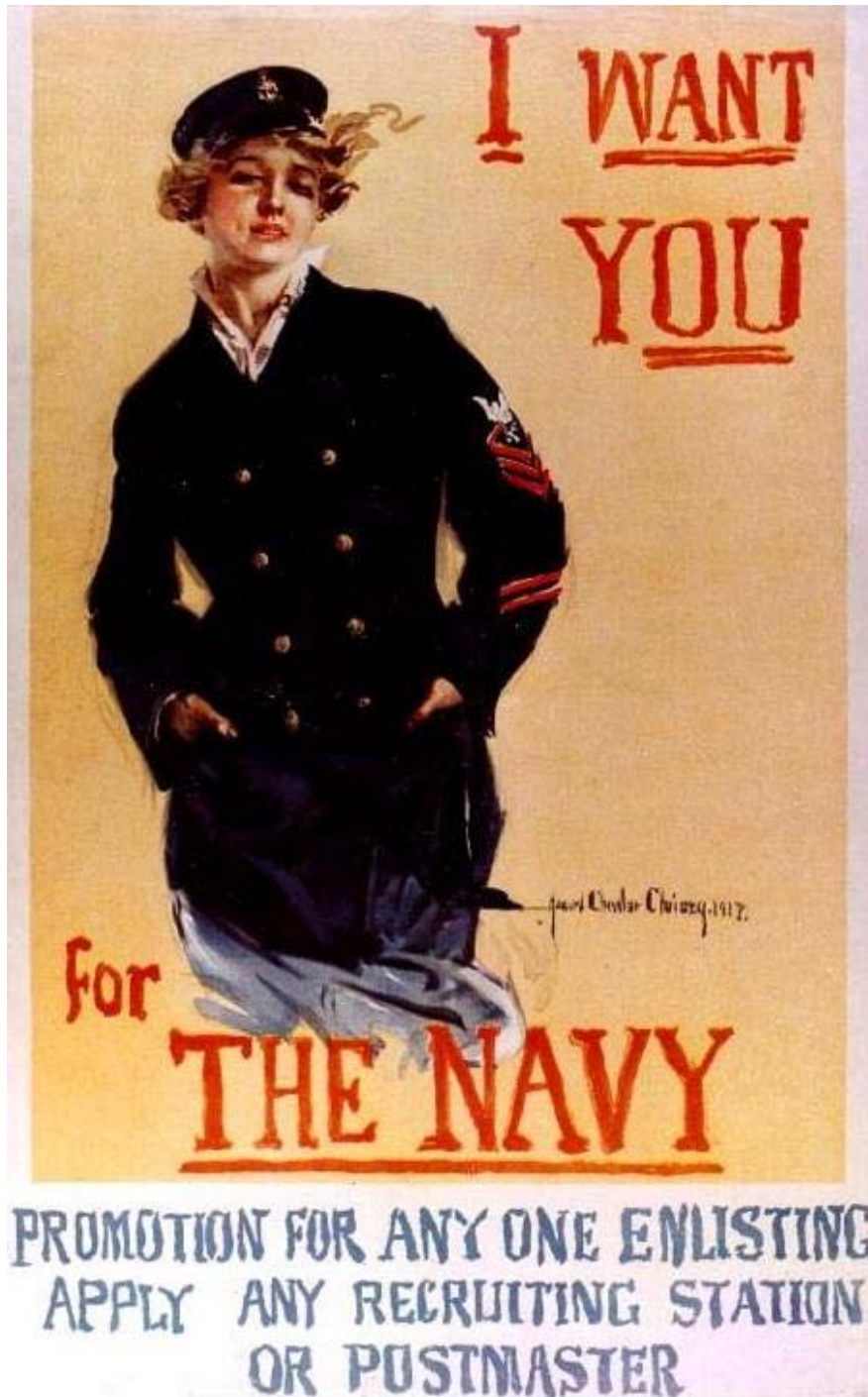


Figure 16: I Want You For The Navy, Christy, 1917

Source: Christy, Howard Chandler. *I Want You for The Navy* Poster 27 x 41½ in. 1917. Museum of the City of New York. *Wake Up America: World War I and the American Poster*. By Walton Rawls. New York: Abbeville, 1988. 78.

APPENDIX E: I WANT YOU FOR U. S. ARMY, FLAGG, 1917



**Figure 17: I Want You For the U. S. Army, Flagg, 1917**

Source: Flagg, James Montgomery. *I Want You For The U. S. Army*. Poster 39 1/2 x 2 3/4 in. 1917. *The First World War in Posters*. By Joseph Darracott. New York: Dover, 1974. 13.

## APPENDIX F: YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU, LETTE, 1914



**Figure 18: Your Country Needs You, Lette, 1914**

Source: Lette, Alfred. *Your Country Needs You*. Poster 20 x 29½ in. 1914. Imperial War Museum. *Wake Up America: World War I and the American Poster*. By Walton Rawls. New York: Abbeville, 1988. 12.

APPENDIX G: IF YOU WANT TO FIGHT, CHRISTY, 1915



**Figure 19: If You Want To Fight Join The Marines, Christy, 1915**

Source: Christy, Howard Chandler. *If You Want To Fight! Join The Marines*. Poster 30 x 40 in. Meehan Military Posters. 1915. *Posters of World Wars I and II*. New York: Dover. 009. CD-ROM.



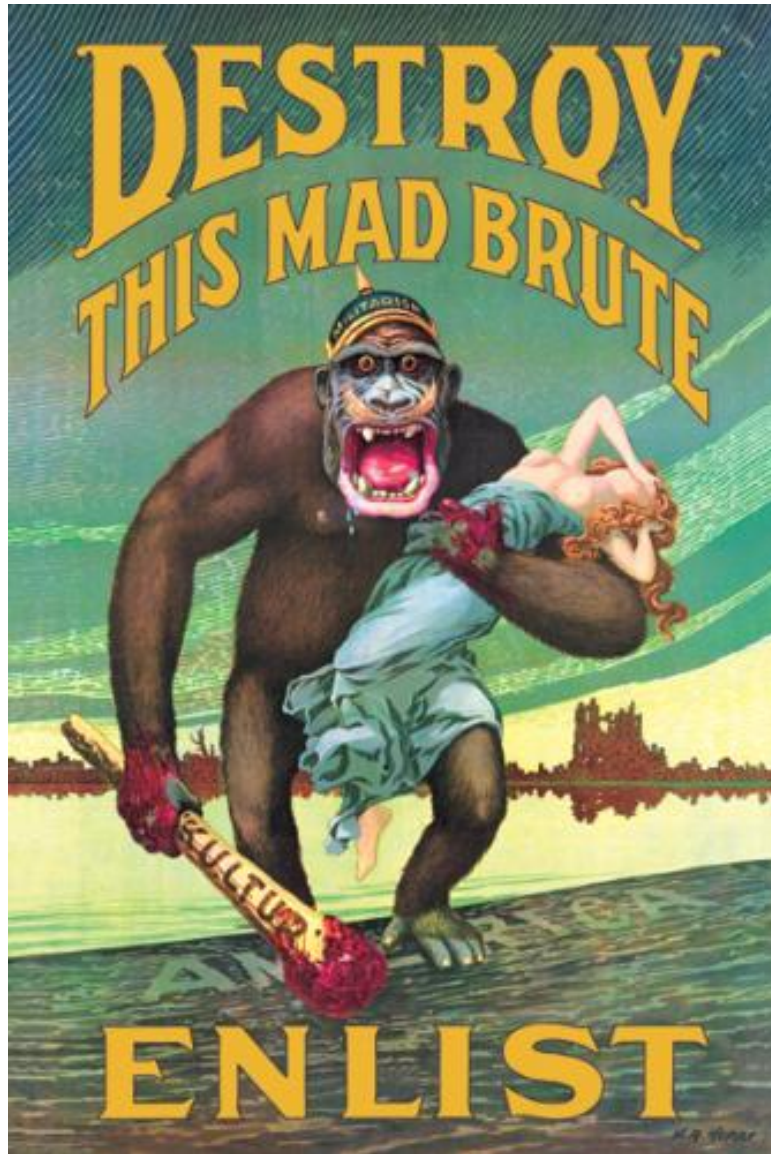
## APPENDIX H: CLEAR THE WAY, CHRISTY, 1918



**Figure 20: Clear The Way, Christy, 1918**

Source: Christy, Howard Chandler. *Clear The Way!!* Poster 20 x 30 in. 1918. Museum of the City of New York. *Wake Up America: World War I and the American Poster*. By Walton Rawls. New York: Abbeville, 1988. 223.

APPENDIX I: DESTROY THIS MAD BRUTE, HOPPS CA. 1916



**Figure 21: Destroy This Mad Brute, Hopps ca. 1916**

Source: Hopps, H. R. *Destroy This Mad Brute*. Poster 28 x 41 in. ca. 1916. *Wake Up America: World War I and the American Poster*. By Walton Rawls. New York: Abbeville, 1988. 67.

## APPENDIX J: LIST OF IMAGE SOURCES

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