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*The Girls Next Door: Bringing the Home Front to the Front
Lines* by Kara Dixon Vuic (review)

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***The Girls Next Door: Bringing the Home Front to the Front Lines.* By Kara Dixon Vuic. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019. 392 pp.**

Contributing a new dimension to military and gender history, Kara Dixon Vuic explores the recreation and entertainment programs sponsored by the US military for its troops deployed in foreign conflicts from World War I to the 1990–91 Persian Gulf War. Beyond describing the activities, which were operated at varying times by the YMCA, the Salvation Army, the USO, the Red Cross, and, after World War II, the US Army's Special Services, she analyzes what the military wanted to accomplish, the motivations and experiences of civilian volunteers, and how military entertainment shifted in response to changes in sexual and gender norms, battle locations, and military demographics.

In each conflict from WWI through the Vietnam War, the military deployed civilians, primarily young, attractive women, as a means to promote morale, demonstrate civilian concern and support for the warriors, and control soldiers' sexuality. American civilians were most familiar with pop icons like Marlene Dietrich, who performed in WWII, or Marilyn Monroe, who performed in Korea, but most of the performers in USO shows were amateurs. Moreover, most of the volunteers staffed canteens and other recreation centers, often in rugged conditions, where soldiers could go for conversation, snacks, amateur entertainment, or dancing.

During WWI, military authorities saw these activities as a weapon in their crackdown on prostitution. Contact with wholesome young women, they believed, would remind soldiers of their mothers, sisters, or girlfriends back home and help them practice sexual continence. Officials in WWII took a more pragmatic approach to soldiers' sexuality, but although they countenanced prostitution in some areas, they counted on volunteer women to reinforce heterosexuality, remind soldiers of what awaited them at home, and keep them away from "immoral" women. As military operations expanded to Korea and Vietnam, the goal of curtailing prostitution among soldiers grew in importance, as it now complicated relationships between the United States and those countries' governments.

Only a handful of African American women served as volunteers in WWI, but by the end of WWII, two hundred of them were working for the Red Cross. While the Red Cross and USO professed racial equality, both organizations cooperated with segregation when the military demanded it. There were some integrated clubs for soldiers, offering many volunteers their first interracial experiences, but military officials took pains to conceal images of White women mixing with Black soldiers. After President Harry Truman's 1948 executive order to desegregate the military, service organizations fitfully moved toward the assignment of volunteers in a race-blind manner. Yet during the Vietnam War, the Red Cross, and to a lesser extent the USO, struggled to recruit African American volunteers in sufficient numbers to mirror the characteristics of the soldiers they entertained.

After the institution of the all-volunteer military in 1973, the demographics of fighting forces shifted dramatically, prompting sweeping changes in recreation programs. Increasing numbers of women, minority, and older, married soldiers led to a new emphasis on serving military families and enlisted women. Moreover, most of the activities formerly sponsored by the Red Cross and other organizations shifted to the military itself, centralized under the office of Morale, Welfare, and Recreation.

Relying on memoirs, diaries, letters, and interviews, in addition to military and service organization records, Vuic explores thoroughly the experiences of the women who served as volunteers. Most women appreciated the opportunities for adventure, independence, travel, learning their strengths, and mixing with men outside their class or ethnic group. They felt gratification in being a part of a larger purpose and pride in their contributions to the war effort. Many found husbands among the soldiers they encountered. At the same time, they were called upon to provide demanding physical labor, and they frequently coped with harsh living conditions. Above all, they struggled with the need to be appealing and yet deter sexual advances, to toe a fine line between wholesome flirtations and improper relationships.

The Girls Next Door provides an outstanding example of the intersections of gender history, the history of sexuality, and military history as well the connections between the home front and the bat-

tlefront. Its lucid and engaging style, careful analysis, and thorough documentation will appeal to scholars and lay readers alike.

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***The Sacking of Fallujah: A People's History.* By Ross Caputi, Richard Hil, and Donna Mulhearn. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2019. 232 pp.**

In the conclusion of *The Sacking of Fallujah: A People's History*, Ross Caputi, Richard Hil, and Donna Mulhearn briefly mention the 2016 film *War Dogs*, a flippant and forgettable dark comedy that follows two men eager to set ethics and legality aside to make big money acting as gunrunners in Iraq. Played by Miles Teller and Jonah Hill, they agree to transport a cache of weapons from Jordan to Baghdad, stopping for gas along the way. After they complete the delivery, they are aghast to discover that they just unwittingly drove through the notorious Triangle of Death and that their gas stop was in Fallujah. “Are you kidding me?” one of them gasps. “We stopped for gas in *Fallujah*?”

Fallujah here works as shorthand for *awful, dangerous place*, a place, as the authors note, “composed of barbarians intent on death and destruction and, according to some, a place beyond salvation” (p. 165). That shorthand is common in many American representations, fictional and nonfictional, about the Iraq War, particularly after four contractors working for the security company Blackwater were killed there in March 2004, and their bodies hung from a bridge over the Euphrates. *The Sacking of Fallujah* aims to expose that shorthand as propaganda, part of a story told by the mainstream media of “the heroic efforts of U.S. soldiers to vanquish an evil enemy and liberate helpless civilians,” which had the effect of “pacify[ing] Western—and particularly U.S.—audiences so that Coalition forces could crush the resistance movement in Fallujah, unencumbered by the constraints of the Geneva Conventions” (p. 163).

To that end, the authors offer detailed accounts of what they call the three sieges of Fallujah, officially referred to as Operation Vig-