For several years I kept a can of Heinz tomato and noodle soup on the kitchen counter. I had bought it in a London supermarket. I don’t know whether Heinz marketed this particular canned recipe around the world or decided it would sell best only in Margaret Thatcher’s Britain. At the time it seemed more Reaganesque than Thatcherist. I was never tempted to eat the contents. I brought it back to Boston in my luggage just so I could keep looking at it, puzzling over its deeper militarized meanings.

The formula was a familiar one. The Heinz chefs had added little pasta bits to the condensed tomato soup. But instead of the usual alphabet letters, the soup designers had cut their pastas into the shape of Star Wars satellites.

One can only conjecture about the conversation at the Heinz headquarters when this innovative soup design was first proposed. Since marketing specialists know that women do most of the food shopping, they must have imagined that Star Wars noodles floating in a tomato liquid would be appealing to women. Why? What would catch a double-burdened woman’s attention, what would “speak to her,” as she moved purposefully along her local grocery store aisles on the way to or from her paid job? The designers and dietitians sitting around the corporate table probably tried to imagine a typical mealtime in the household of a busy woman. Tomato soup is healthy. But a mother has to get a child to eat the healthy meal she has prepared. Sometimes that
can be a challenge. Little a, b, and c’s might not be sufficiently enticing to a frenchfriesandcoke-lusting child. But add little space weapons. Maybe that would get the young diner to dig the spoon down deep into the mealtime soup bowl. Everyone would be happy—the vitamins-phobic child, the harried mother, and the soup company.

Militarization, therefore, affects not just the executives and factory floor workers who make fighter planes, land mines, and intercontinental missiles but also the employees of food companies, toy companies, clothing companies, film studios, stock brokerages, and advertising agencies. Any company’s employees are militarized insofar as they take their customers’ fascination with militarized products as natural, as unproblematic. Employees are militarized also insofar as they imagine that promoting military ends serves the general welfare. Such employees may go further than just taking these militarized values as a given; they may start to define these values as a corporate resource, something to be reinforced and exploited. Latex condoms designed to look like army camouflage, films that equate action with war, fashions that celebrate brass buttons and epaulettes—each has been consciously designed by someone.¹

In the Star Wars soup scenario a lot of people have become militarized—corporate marketers, dietitians, mothers, and children. They may not run out to enlist in the army as soon as they have finished their lunch, but militarization is progressing nonetheless. Militarization never is simply about joining a military. It is a far more subtle process. And it sprawls over far more of the gendered social landscape than merely those peaks clearly painted a telltale khaki.

THE MILITARIZATION OF CARMEN MIRANDA

The pervasiveness of militarized values is a principal reason for the student of militarization not to become fixated on men or women as soldiers. True, militarization does make us pay more attention to people inside the military. Still, many people can become militarized in their thinking, in how they live their daily lives, in what they aspire to for their children or their society, without ever wielding a rifle or donning a helmet.

Militarization does not always take on the guise of war. Much discussion of women and militarism occurs in times of open warfare—women in the Kosovo or Chechnyan wars, women during World War II, women in the American Civil War. As a result, even though the best
of this research does indeed shed light on the home front's transformation—and resistance to that transformation—it is easy to slip into imagining that militarization is always accompanied by government-directed overt violence, by war. Yet what the exploration of the lives of military wives and of women working as military prostitutes reveals for us is that militarization creeps into ordinary daily routines; it threads its way amid memos, laundry, lovemaking, and the clinking of frosted beer glasses. Militarization is such a pervasive process, and thus so hard to uproot, precisely because in its everyday forms it scarcely looks life threatening.

It is by taking women's experiences of militarization seriously, I think, that we are most likely to understand it fully. The militarization of women has been crucial for the militarization of governments and of international relations. The militarization of women has been necessary for the militarization of men. And because the militarization of women takes such humdrum forms, because it tends to insinuate itself into ordinary daily routines where it is rarely heralded or even deemed noteworthy, investigating the militarization of women can sharpen our sometimes dulled analytical skills.

Militarization is a step-by-step process by which a person or a thing gradually comes to be controlled by the military or comes to depend for its well-being on militaristic ideas. The more militarization transforms an individual or a society, the more that individual or society comes to imagine military needs and militaristic presumptions to be not only valuable but also normal. Militarization, that is, involves cultural as well as institutional, ideological, and economic transformations. To chart the spread of militarization, then, requires a host of skills: the ability to read budgets and interpret bureaucratic euphemisms, of course, but also the ability to understand the dynamics of memory, marriage, hero-worship, cinematic imagery, and the economies of commercialized sex.

Militarization, on the other hand, doesn't shape everything all the time. If it did, it would be impossible to distinguish. For instance, even a gun can be militarized or unmilitarized. If the gun, an instrument designed to inflict pain and harm, is used to hunt rabbits by a person for whom eating rabbits is necessary for his or her diet, that gun and its user are not very usefully thought of as militarized. The gun's use may still be controversial, of course, igniting useful debates about cruelty to animals, about public safety. But if this gun begins to be seen by its owner not only as a tool for obtaining an essential food but also as an
instrument to ensure the security of the society against diffusely imagined enemies, or as a symbol of manly self-expression or masculinized citizenship dependent on the superior control of violence, then that gun and its owner—and anyone who admires or abets the owner—are cruising down the ramp onto the militarization highway.

It is precisely because guns are so easily converted from unmilitarized to militarized instruments that they and their suppliers and wielders are worthy of close attention. For instance, the South African sociologist Jacklyn Cock urges her fellow citizens to pay close attention to the spread of guns in post-apartheid South Africa. She argues that the proponents of demilitarization must look beyond the country’s reorganized defense force. Cock understands that the diffusion of guns—many distributed by newly decommissioned soldiers—to private armies, bandits, and tourist-luring hunting companies needs to be monitored today if South Africans’ hopes for thoroughgoing demilitarization are not to be dashed.³

Today in the United States there is considerable concern about the seeming assimilation of military gear, tactics, and cultures into such supposedly nonmilitary departments as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (BATF).⁴ Paradoxically, some of those Americans who have sounded the loudest alarms about the FBI and BATF’s militarization have themselves adopted hypermilitarizing modes of protest, organizing themselves into what they call “patriotic militias.”⁵ Without a self-conscious avoidance of militarized forms of public action, the militarization of one sector of public life can generate an equally militarized response, apparently based on the assumption that the only effective response to official militarism is the militarization of dissent. This assumption may prove to be a tragic failure of political imagination. There is an alternative response: the demilitarization—in equipment and mind-set—of both the civilian agency’s personnel and the forms of dissent developed by its critics. As feminists in Okinawa, Northern Ireland, and Serbia have noted, opposing militarization must be done in ways that avoid privileging masculinity. Militarization, as we will see, whether it occurs in the corridors of a government or on the streets during a protest, requires both women’s and men’s acquiescence, but it privileges masculinity.

Militarization is a specific sort of transforming process, but the list of what can be militarized is virtually endless: toys, jobs, the profession of psychology, fashion, faith, voting, local economies, condoms, and
movie stars.\textsuperscript{6} Thus, for example, the Brazilian singer and comedian Carmen Miranda was militarized by her Hollywood studio employers during World War II. Eager to cooperate with the Roosevelt administration's wartime effort to keep Latin American governments friendly to Washington, her Hollywood employers launched Carmen Miranda into film roles as the all-purpose Latina, building bridges between north and south while simultaneously entertaining U.S. troops.\textsuperscript{7} The militarization of Carmen Miranda also played a part in enhancing the masculinization of public life insofar as Miranda was turned into a tool for building an alliance between the men running Hollywood studios, the men making policy in Washington, and the men determining foreign policy in the capital cities of Latin America. That is, Miranda's feminized place in the center of the militarized movie screen served to camouflage men's place in the center of the political stage.\textsuperscript{8}
Cabaret singers, stand-up comics, dancers—any entertainer can be militarized, often quite willingly, if she or he converts performance talent into the means for sustaining the morale of soldiers. Morale. Masculinized, militarized morale. A great deal of official energy is invested in mobilizing women in particular to sustain the morale of male soldiers. Women who are the targets of these official efforts have to make decisions about whose morale and for what ends they are willing to sing.

Civilian voters can be militarized. Britons talk, for instance, of certain elections as being “khaki elections.” That is, each rival party’s success in garnering votes in this sort of militarized election depends on their presenting themselves as war victors. A khaki election always favors the party or candidate most enthusiastic about war waging or most intimately associated in voters’ minds with the arts of war. It is assumed in such an election that voters will lean toward the party whose candidates can demonstrate military skills, success in a military organization, or militaristic public attitudes toward outsiders. Not only is it assumed that voters will be convinced that these attributes translate into potential for solving problems facing civilian society, but also it is widely imagined that voters will conclude that those skills and organizational experiences are the most suited for civilian problem solving. Typically, a khaki election—in Britain, the United States, Liberia, Russia, or Serbia—privileges male candidates and masculinized party platforms because in so many societies only masculinized leaders are imagined to be credible wielders of militaristic formulas. On voting day, such an effort to turn an election into a khaki election may provoke a gender gap, women being less inclined than men to vote for the war-enthusiastic party.

But not always, and not always dramatically. The militarized woman voter is not an oxymoron. Some feminists and anti-war activists take heart, however, in the gender gaps when they appear. For instance, in early 1998, when the Clinton administration and the government of Tony Blair joined political hands to build up a military threat in the Persian Gulf in order to compel Iraq’s Saddam Hussein to accept UN weapons inspectors, pollsters revealed that British women were notably less enthusiastic about the Blair policy than were their male counterparts. In early February 1998, 68 percent of the British men surveyed told pollsters that they “supported British involvement in military action, including bombing raids, against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq”; only 45 percent of British women voiced such support. A 23
percent difference is deemed significant by polling experts. But the real
test may come only when a government actually launches a war. As
demonstrated in the United States during the 1990–91 Gulf War, many
women opposed to a war-waging strategy before the fighting begins
may move to a more supportive or at least more ambiguous position
once “their boys” or “their sons and daughters in uniform” are thrust
into immediate danger.13

In April 1999, six weeks into the Belgrade regime’s campaign to dis-
place ethnic Albanians in the Yugoslav province of Kosovo and one
month into the U.S./NATO bombing attacks to stop such ethnic
cleansing, the gender gap between American women and men was nar-
rower than it had been on the eve of the Gulf War. When an NBC/Wall
Street Journal poll asked whether the United States and NATO should
continue bombing or stop to permit negotiations, 59 percent of
men supported continued bombings and 46 percent of women did: a
thirteen-point gap. Reflecting on this seemingly narrowed U.S. gender
gap, one woman analyst suggested that many women had had their
earlier opposition to the use of U.S. military force softened by their ex-
posure to media images of Kosovar women turned into desperate
refugees and victims of wartime rape.14

In recent years my curiosity about suffragists—those women who
campaigned for women’s right to vote—has been rekindled. As I have
delved into the often surprising histories of these campaigners, I have
begun to appreciate more fully just how difficult it was for many of
them to navigate between the rocks of misogyny and the whirlpools of
militarism. Should suffragists see their country’s entrance into a war as
a strategic opportunity to prove women’s value to the governmental
male elite? Is it wise for feminists in the postwar years to hold up
women’s wartime contributions as proof of women’s competency to
act as full citizens?

Both British and American suffragists argued fiercely among them-

selves over these knotty questions during World War I. Although previ-
ously they had disagreed sharply over campaign tactics, leading British
suffragists Millicent Fawcett and Christabel Pankhurst agreed in 1915
that suffragist women’s energies should be devoted to aiding the British
government win the war against the Germans. Many suffragists were
propelled into this political position by the anger they felt upon hear-
ing media stories of German soldiers raping Belgian women. Nonethe-
less, in calling on suffragists to contribute to the war effort, these suf-
frage activists were willing to alienate scores of women within their
respective organizations who were convinced that securing women’s rights and opposing war were inseparable. In April 1915, Pankhurst was among the organizers of a large demonstration in London calling for “women’s right to serve.” Their target audience: the men who owned munitions factories and the men who worked in them, many of whom were reluctant to permit women to take men’s places on the wartime assembly lines. At the same time, however, those advocates of women’s voting rights who believed that the only way to ensure the demise of patriarchy was to create cross-national alliances to oppose jingoist patriotism were taking their own organizing steps. In 1915 these women—among them Jane Addams from the United States and Helena Swanwick from Britain—created the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

The internationalist WILPF campaigner and the suffragist munitions worker were early-twentieth-century women connected to each other by a debate that still goes on today: is women’s liberation advanced or
derailed by women’s active contribution to their own country’s war waging?

As a young American woman, Rose Monroe was discovered by Hollywood in the 1940s while she was working in an aircraft parts factory in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and was turned into the feminized model for the newest world war. Rose Monroe became “Rosie the Riveter,” America’s wartime icon.17 Fifty years later the question that her iconographic symbol prompts is still with us: was Rose/Rosie maneuvered or empowered—or both?

This question is not just about historical interpretation. This question is still a pressing one today when the manufacture of military hardware and software is big business. Despite defense industry layoffs in post–Cold War United States, Canada, Russia, and Britain and despite downturns in sales from the 1997–1999 Asian economic crisis, military weapons contracts remain the objects of intense corporate competition and fierce international trade rivalries: “Over lamb chops and red wine, the Senators heard Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright explain NATO expansion. The guest list included Bernard L. Schwartz, chairman of Loral Space and Communications, a company partly owned by Lockheed Martin. Mr. Schwartz personally donated $601,000 to Democratic politicians for the 1996 election. Lockheed Martin itself gave $2.3 million to Congressional and presidential candidates in the 1996 election.”18

Madeleine Albright, the first woman to hold the post of U.S. Secretary of State, was convinced that bringing countries such as the Czech Republic (her birthplace), Poland, and Hungary into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) would ensure a long-term peace in post–Cold War Europe. But this dinner was not organized by the secretary of state. The lamb-chops-and-wine affair was hosted—in the private, prestigious, and formerly male-only Metropolitan Club—by the U.S. Committee to Expand NATO,19 a group to which many defense manufacturing executives belong. The expansion of NATO, with the accompanying pressures on the new member governments to upgrade their militaries to meet NATO’s high-tech standards, is just one maneuver that is raising defense industry hopes for a profitable future. But how does an expanded NATO affect the future for Rosie’s granddaughters? Will they see a skilled job in the defense industry as a ticket to a better life? Will NATO’s 1999 bombing operations in Serbia and Kosovo make that ticket seem all the more golden in the eyes of North American and European women?
As suggested by new investigations into the complex lives and ideas of both suffrage campaigners and women industrial workers, some maneuvers designed to militarize women succeed because of women's own cooperation. A militarizing maneuver can look like a dance, not a struggle, even though the dance may be among unequal partners.20

Over the centuries, women who are mothers also have found it hard not to succumb to militarizing maneuvers. Yet, when motherhood's militarization is resisted, when mothers refuse to believe that mothering is made easier by their child's fascination with real or make-believe weapons, then militarization within a society becomes very difficult to achieve. For this reason serious students of militarization keep a close watch on toy sales. Researchers seek answers to such questions as: What toys are aggressively marketed by multinational companies such as Mattel and Hasbro? How do giant merchandisers, such as Toys R Us, appeal to girls and to boys by the way they lay out their store displays? How do mothers juggle their own ideas about femininity and masculinity? Do the choices that mothers make about their daughters' and their sons' play determine their children's popularity? The answers at any given moment in any country will affect corporate profits. They also will shape relationships within families. But these answers may also influence an entire society's collective attitudes toward violence, soldiering, and gender. Even the mother who hopes her son will eat tomato soup if it is enhanced with Star Wars pastas may hesitate before fulfilling the boy's wish for a make-believe laser gun.

In 1997, Hasbro, one of the world's toy manufacturing giants and the creator of G.I. Joe, introduced a new toy soldier, G.I. Jane. Hasbro marketing executives preferred to call their newest creation, not a soldier, but a "female action figure."21 On the other hand, these company executives proudly described G.I. Jane as a doll "portrayed in authentic military gear," that is, helmet, boots, pistol, and other equipment of an army helicopter pilot. Hasbro actually created four G.I. Janes—one blonde, one brunette, a third redheaded, and a fourth doll whose skin was darker than that of the other Janes and whose hair was black. The 1990s G.I. Jane was not Hasbro's first female military doll. Back in 1967, on the eve of the U.S. war-making escalation in Vietnam, when women were only 2 percent of the total American military's personnel and most served in the nursing corps, Hasbro had introduced G.I. Joe Nurse. But the doll was soon withdrawn from the market because, as a corporate spokeswoman explained, "boys didn't want to play with a nurse." On the brink of a new century, the market may prove friendlier. Thousands of American women are serving or have served in the