The War in American Culture

SOCIETY AND CONSCIOUSNESS DURING WORLD WAR II

EDITED BY
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Swing Goes to War: Glenn Miller and the Popular Music of World War II

In September 1942, thirty-eight-year-old Glenn Miller disbanded his successful swing orchestra to enlist in the army. "I, like every patriotic American," he declared, "have an obligation to fulfill. That obligation is to lend as much support as I can to winning the war." Having lived and worked as "a free man," he would use his music to defend "the freedom and the democratic way of life we have that enabled me to make strides in the right direction." In doing so, Miller embodied the wartime ideal of sacrifice for a nation that allowed individuals to succeed and prosper. Besides lifting morale and recruiting GIs, he created a model of patriotic duty and a web of connections between military obligation and an American way of life known by millions of young people.[1]

His sacrifice was real: in giving up the nation's most lucrative band Miller lost millions. The orchestra had broadcast three nights a week on the prestigious Chesterfield Hour, set theater, hotel, and ballroom attendance records, and produced a string of hit records. His Army Air Force (AAF) Orchestra, however, soon surpassed its civilian predecessor. Under Captain (then Major) Miller's command, the AAF Orchestra's forty-two-man marching band, nineteen-person dance unit, radio outfit, string ensemble, and small jazz combo engaged in bond drives, made Victory Discs for the troops, and entertained them at home and abroad. Miller's disappearance in a small plane over the English Channel on 15 December 1944—his ultimate sacrifice—made him a national icon. His story highlights the powerful role that swing played in World War II and helps explain what American soldiers were fighting for.[2]

In going to war, Miller infused the depression's popular music with national purpose. As swing became enmeshed in the conflict, it signified

that the defense of popular values nurtured during the depression and imbued with particular conceptions of American life—rather than an ideological or militaristic crusade—would be the basis of the war effort. Indeed, the music played by popular bands was the conflict's music, although the Office of War Information and Tin Pan Alley wanted to produce patriotic songs like those of World War I. Except for "Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer" and "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition," few tunes met the test of popularity. With unity relatively easy to attain because of the unprovoked attack and a clearly defined enemy, it was possible to ideologize the war as a defense of a superior American culture embedded in everyday life. As Miller saw it, GIs wanted "as narrow a chasm as possible between martial and civilian life." Radio, films, records, and big bands made popular music "a great new factor in the American way of life." To the young, listening and dancing to popular bands was "almost as important a part of its daily habits as eating and sleeping," as vital "as food and ammunition." Part of dating, personal freedom, and consumption as well as a measure of ethnic cosmopolitanism, in the minds of young people big band music was firmly associated with the benefits of American life. Hence Miller's proposal to streamline military music and lift morale with swing met with conditional government acceptance.[3]

Big band swing heralded the triumph of modern urban culture during the 1930s as jazz-inflected dance music appealed to a mass audience composed of black and white middle- and working-class college and high-school students. As first played by King of Swing Benny Goodman, the music made the rhythm and soloing of black jazz palatable for whites. Arrangers provided for jazz solos and individual players improvised, but with the power of the group behind them. Audiences did hot jitterbug steps that freed their bodies, and flew through the air transcending earthly reality. Or they listened intently as each soloist acted as an agent of his own fate while the band took them to new levels of ecstatic release from the demands of organized society and of families worried about the depression. In relations between the sexes, swing offered sensuous movements, and the band singers expressed an ironic rather than a sentimental approach to love. As utopian alternatives to the world around them, the bands of Count Basie, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, and Charlie Barnet held out a more inclusive vision of American culture. Created largely by urban blacks and the children of immigrants, the

bands were exciting examples of big city music and ethnic pluralism. And despite a segregated music business, Goodman pioneered the integration of black musicians in white bands ten years before organized baseball hired African Americans.[4]

Miller's achievement lay in taking the safest parts of this youth culture to the war. His military career lay atop his civilian accomplishments, which had codified swing, polished its jazz elements, and used it to paint an idealized picture of American life. In his person and his art, Miller blended swing with more traditional conceptions of national life and made it acceptable to a vast audience. Unlike most other swing band leaders, Alton Glenn Miller had roots in the "typically American" farms and small towns of the West and Midwest. Born in Clarinda, Iowa, in 1904, he grew up in Fort Morgan, Colorado, where his itinerant handyman father and prohibitionist mother, head of a WCTU chapter, instilled in him values of self-control, persistence, and success. Miller's heroes were Horatio Alger and Theodore Roosevelt, and he hungered for musical and commercial success. He took up the trombone as a youngster, and after two years at the University of Colorado he left to turn professional. Discovering jazz in the 1920s, he played with the best white musicians in the Ben Pollack Orchestra. When his career took him east in 1928, he became an enthusiastic New Yorker. There he played in top bands, freelanced in radio and recording studios, and enjoyed big city life. A midwesterner who achieved his musical identity in New York, Miller fused disparate traditions to create a type of swing that had national appeal.[5]

Miller made swing all-American by merging the two popular music strains of the 1930s—adventurous swing and romantic, more melodic sweet music—into a powerful amalgam. Once he decided he would never outswing Goodman, Shaw, or Count Basie or best Tommy Dorsey on the trombone, Miller went on to his strength—arranging and organizing the talents of others into a more unified, romantic sound. The result was a synthesis: "sweet swing," a clean-cut version of jive suitable for expansion into the nation's heartland via jukeboxes and radio. Tex Beneke, the band's singer-saxophonist, noted that Miller was successful because the public "liked sweet ballads, reminiscent melodies, sentimental words. He found that it liked new pleasant sounds which did not clash." Miller succeeded by taking the standard swing motif—setting brass against reeds over a four-four rhythm section—and using clarinet-

ist Willie Schwartz to play lead melody over the other reeds. These woodwinds smoothed out the sound, giving a "silvery," romantic context to the swing beat. Uniting adventure and security, the Miller style took the edge off the hard-charging Goodman approach and made it comfortable for less experienced dancers.[6]

In his desire to draw large audiences, Miller codified the major elements of big band performance with taste and ingenuity. When all elements worked, the band was a flexible, exciting, and beautiful soloist. "I haven't a great jazz band, and I don't want one," Miller told *Down Beat.* "Our band stresses harmony." Years of legitimate study "finally is enabling me to write arrangements employing unusual, rich harmonies, many never before used in dance bands." At the same time, he organized his band according to a "formula" or, in Gunther Schuller's words, a "sound world." He used his formidable leadership ability and arranging skill to create a totally streamlined sound built on everyone's fitting into an arranged concept. He frowned on long solos, and even hot choruses had to be the same in arrangements imposed from above. He demanded ensemble perfection rather than "one hot soloist jumping up after another to take hot choruses." One critic noted that "the band solos more than any one individual in it." As a result, though, the band suffered from a stiff rhythm section. As trombonist Jimmy Priddy put it, "If you're not going to be a little sloppy, you're bound to be stiff. And that band was stiff!"[7]

Creating a uniform sound required patriarchal authority and discipline. An extremely image-conscious corporate executive, Miller demanded perfect deportment and perfect notes. Musicians had to have everything "just right," recalled trumpeter Billy May, uniform, neckties, socks, handkerchiefs, "or else you'd be fined." This fit the music too. "He would hit on a formula and then he would try to fit everything into it. There was no room for inventiveness. Even the hot choruses were supposed to be the same. [Arranger] Jerry Gray was perfect for the band. He followed the patterns exactly." His insistence on band uniformity and his "sharply disciplined routines bugged many of the musicians." According to singer Chuck Goldstein, Miller "was always the General. Everybody knows what a disciplinarian he was."[8]

Although his commanding style angered some musicians, many players and fans appreciated his authority and patriarchal air, which later enhanced his stature as an air force officer. His aura of fatherly reassurance

and authority was heightened by modesty and stoicism that helped him overcome the many problems that plagued traveling bands. He was a confident model of masculinity, capable of meeting any uncertainty. Tall, "bespectacled and scholarly looking," he "was a commanding guy, youthful but mature," according to his press agent, Howard Richmond. As he noted, Miller "looked like security, like all the things I'd never found in a band leader." True, "Mickey Mouse band leaders looked like security. I'm talking about jazz leaders. To me they always looked like they didn't know where they were going to sleep the next night." Seventeen-year-old singer Marion Hutton concurred. As her legal guardian, "he was like a father. . . . He represented a source of strength. . . . He fulfilled the image of what a father ought to be." As a leader and organizer he brought these same traits to jazz, making it clean-cut and respectable, less a challenge to society than one of its commodities.[9]

Similarly, Miller's hits combined big city swing with the currents of a more stable and conservative Midwest. Music critic Irving Kolodin noted that Miller had "a kind of inland sentiment that differed considerably from the 'big town' aura that pulses in Ellington or Goodman." For example, his best-known swing numbers like "In the Mood," "Tuxedo Junction," "String of Pearls," and "Pennsylvania 6-5000" reveled in big city excitement and sophistication. At the same time, the band was known for music about distinctively American regions and symbols: "Dreamsville, Ohio," the folksy "Little Brown Jug," "[I got a gal in] Kalamazoo," and "Boulder Buff." In 1941 "Chattanooga Choo-Choo" became the first song to sell a million records by combining a thrusting train imagery and a "carry me home" theme. In fact, "Chattanooga" was the first popular song hit since 1935 to yearn for the old hometown. "Don't Sit under the Apple Tree" also conjured up a small-town couple hugging in the backyard. In Miller's music, the romantic context and the small-town imagery made freedom less open-ended and more the product of typical American places and settings, found somewhere in a harmonious past. During the war, audiences could defend those real places, not just some abstract ideal.[10]

Besides merging swing and sweet, city and town, Miller consciously sought to build an all-American team that fused the ethnic big city and the Protestant heartland. A New Yorker with a midwestern face, glasses, and a folksy tinge to his voice, he recruited clean-cut all-American musicians and singers like Tex Beneke and Marion Hutton. Initially Miller

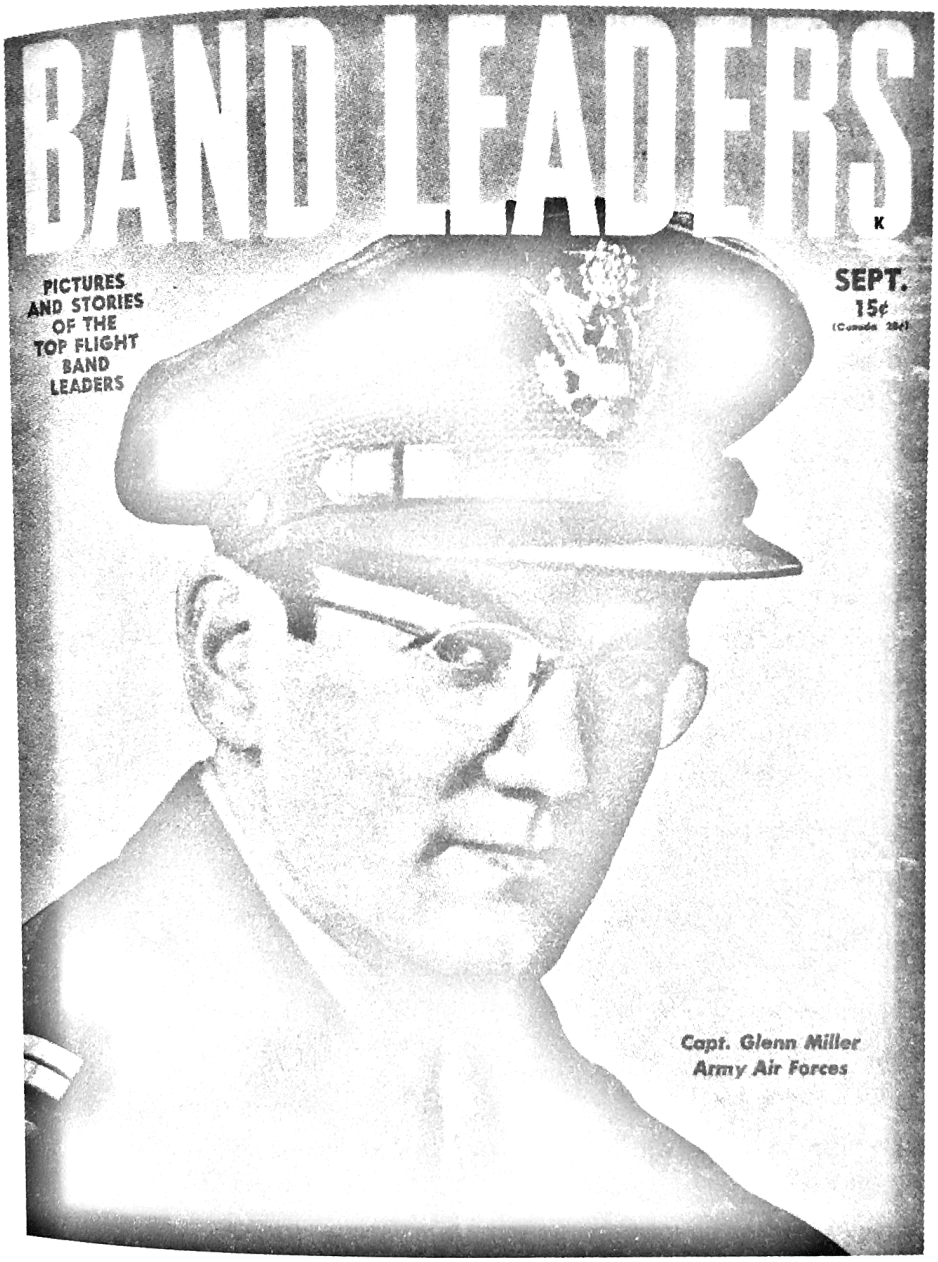

Figure 6.1. Captain Glenn Miller shortly after his enlistment. Courtesy of the Glenn Miller Archives, University of Colorado, Boulder.

introduced Hutton as Sissy Jones, which he felt connoted "apple pie, ice cream and hot dogs better than Marion Hutton did," and dressed her to emphasize her American look. Yet Miller's concept of an orchestra was still a pluralistic vision of an all-American team. The Modernaires, his singing group, included a Jew, a Catholic, a Presbyterian, and a Christian Scientist. This sense of a mixed group applied to the musicians too, whom he stereotyped. "Italian trumpeters," he said, "seldom play good jazz," but they made "great lead men." He also would quote Ben Pollack's remark that "you can't have a good band without at least one Jew in it." Hence the Miller all-American team, like his "sweet swing," included big city ethnics, but in an idealized middle-class depiction of the nation.[11]

Black musicians, however, played no role in this homogenized assemblage. The band used the energy of black jazz but, unlike the harder-swinging Goodman, Shaw, Barnet, or even Jimmy Dorsey, employed no black players. Eddie Durham wrote arrangements for "In the Mood," but Miller never allowed black musicians onstage. His racial conservatism probably derived from his desire to attract the largest possible white audience and his lack of sympathy for rough improvisers and gritty musical expression. Including blacks would have disrupted the band's carefully tended image and total streamlined sound and denied the orchestra bookings at top hotels and ballrooms that were segregated. His personal predilections fit well with army policy, which maintained strict segregation in service bands. In the expanded all-American team, blacks stayed on the bench while a polished black music played a prominent role.

As Miller hoped, the music appealed widely to white teens. Jitterbug dancers loved his medium tempo, which, unlike Goodman's frantic style, allowed them to do lindy hop steps with ease. As a result, jitterbugging spread rapidly in the 1940s. As a reviewer described it, "The frenzy and the ecstasy he created in the auditorium" seemed to be "a case of every emotion for itself and it stirs other emotions as well as other individuals to be up and doing—and shouting." For middle-class youth the music was a romantic backdrop for dating and for establishing independence from one's family. But swing's appeal transcended class lines. As one working-class Polish American noted, his parents did the polka, but "Miller was the music of [his] generation." For him and his ethnic friends swing was the door to new personal and American identities.[12]

The war brought this popular music into the conflict on an unprece-

dented scale as part of the attempt to define national objectives and create national unity around familiar symbols of everyday life. According to Broadway impresario Billy Rose, show business had to "make us love what is good in America and hate what Hitler and the minor thugs around him stand for," including the Nazi suppression of jazz, popular music, and American films created by "inferior" black and Jewish races. In this context, swing symbolized a war to defend an American way of life under attack.[13]

As central figures in the youth culture of swing, Miller and other big band musicians helped make the music of the home front a vital part of the war. Many enlisted or were drafted, and they were permitted to lead or perform in military musical units. Moreover, the government and the army cooperated with the music industry to bring popular music to the troops. Victory Discs, for example, brought together musicians, singers, music publishers, record companies, the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), and radio executives under armed forces leadership to record and distribute popular music overseas. Despite an AFM strike against the recording industry, union musicians were permitted to record for the sole benefit of the troops. "Wherever there are American soldiers with juke box and jazz tastes," declared music critic Barry Ulanov, "there are V Discs to entertain them." The newly created Armed Forces Radio helped spread the word, just as the enemy attempted to compete for the allegiance of the troops with the swing-laced radio propaganda of Tokyo Rose and Axis Sally.[14]

Of all the popular bandleaders, Miller played an especially important role as he created a military version of his sweet swing, all-American band for battle against the Nazis. Under the leadership of a reassuring father figure who had sacrificed profit for duty, the military band smoothly melded civilian values and military goals in a common cause. Miller's swing was capable of turning the rigidly old-fashioned army marching band into a modernized emblem of cosmopolitan American society. "The interest of our boys lies definitely in modern, popular music, as played by an orchestra such as ours," he declared, rather than in their fathers' music, "much of which is still being played by army bands just as it was in World War days." In a letter to Brigadier General Charles D. Young, Miller offered to "do something concrete in the way of setting up a plan that would enable our music to reach our servicemen here and abroad with some degree of regularity." An army band under

his leadership might put "more spring into the feet of our marching men and a little more joy into their hearts."[15]

Yet his most ambitious plans clashed with those of the army. Relying on his arranging and organizing skills, Miller initially proposed to transform the entire army band structure with a fourteen-man arranging staff "to provide music for the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command." When army brass vetoed this plan, Miller instead built a modernized super marching band for the Army Air Force Training Corps. Unveiled at the Yale Bowl during a giant bond rally in July 1943, the forty-man band electrified the cadets. Instead of the usual twelve marching snare and bass drums, the band's rhythm derived from two percussionists using complex swing drum kits and two string bass players, who rode in two jeeps that rolled beside the marching orchestra. When they blared Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever"—"in jive tempo," charged *Time*—"sober listeners began to wonder what U.S. brass-band music was coming to. Obviously, there was an Afro-Saxon in the woodpile." Other jazz influences surfaced in the swinging marches created out of blues and swing numbers like "St. Louis Blues," "Blues in the Night," and "Jersey Bounce." Music critic George Simon recalled this fusion of jazz and military music as "the loosest, most swinging marching band we'd ever heard," filled with syncopation. "The horns played with zest and freedom, occasionally bending some notes and anticipating others, the way true jazz musicians do so well."[16] Military brass were aghast at the idea of transforming the military band—and by implication the army itself—into a loose, jazzy organization. As United States Army Bandmaster Franko Goldman put it, "Personally I think it's a disgrace! There isn't any excuse for it. But no one can improve on a Sousa march. . . . My God!" Given official opposition, Miller turned his attention overseas, where his AAF Orchestra raised troop morale with its brand of sweet swing from 1944 to 1946. Although official military march units resisted swing, Miller succeeded in injecting it into the war effort. Few military bands could omit swing entirely, since modern troops demanded the personally freer and more vital music played by cosmopolitan former civilian musicians. As long as they did not threaten military discipline, swing bands were permitted by the army to perform a variety of roles.[17]

At home and abroad, Miller's swing band helped personalize the war for his radio listeners. As early as 1940 his civilian band had broadcast from army camps and dedicated songs to particular units, a practice the

AAF Orchestra continued in England. On a Chesterfield program of 1940, for example, Miller dedicated "Five O'Clock Whistle" to "the boys" in the "New Fighting 69th," from "around New York way," but now at Fort McClellan, Alabama. "They were among the first to leave in service for our country." Other broadcasts featured a "top tune of the week" for soldiers at various bases. Interspersed were references to other aspects of home: Ebbets Field, baseball, and other bandleaders.[18]

His Armed Forces Network broadcasts also included propaganda playlets that dramatized the Four Freedoms, the official goals of the war, and equated American music with free expression and American culture. Just as the AAF Orchestra served as the ethnic platoon writ large underneath the reassuring baton of a good American leader, its novelty tunes hailed America as a cosmopolitan country. "There Are Yanks" (1944) praised the unity of ethnically diverse Americans in the war effort, linking Yanks from "the banks of the Wabash" to "Okies, crackers," and "every color and creed / And they talk the only language the Master race can read." Miller's weekly broadcasts for the Office of War Information's "German Wehrmacht Hour," beamed from England to the German enemy, also equated a cosmopolitan nation and its music. Using "Ilse," a German announcer, Johnny Desmond's vocals, and German dialogue, the show trumpeted the blessings of music and democracy. After the band played the "Volga Boatmen" on one show, for example, Ilse declared that an American could play any music he liked without "barriers," "whether the music is American, German, Russian, Chinese or Jewish." Miller underlined the point: "America means freedom and there's no expression of freedom quite so sincere as music." The band then did a swing tune by Miller, Ellington, or Goodman.[19]

The orchestra became the living embodiment of American culture for troops in the European theater. In England the band endured a grueling schedule to bring American music to GIs away from home. They broadcast thirteen times a week over the Armed Forces Network, flew up and down the British Isles for live concerts, performed for special occasions, and recorded Victory Discs. According to one estimate, the band played seventy-one concerts for 247,500 listeners in England, often on makeshift stages in huge airplane hangars. As drummer Ray McKinley noted, the live performances consisted of a seventy/thirty swing to sweet ratio that included the older hits soldiers demanded and a series of army songs like "Tail-end Charlie," "Snafu Jump," and "G.I. Jive," which

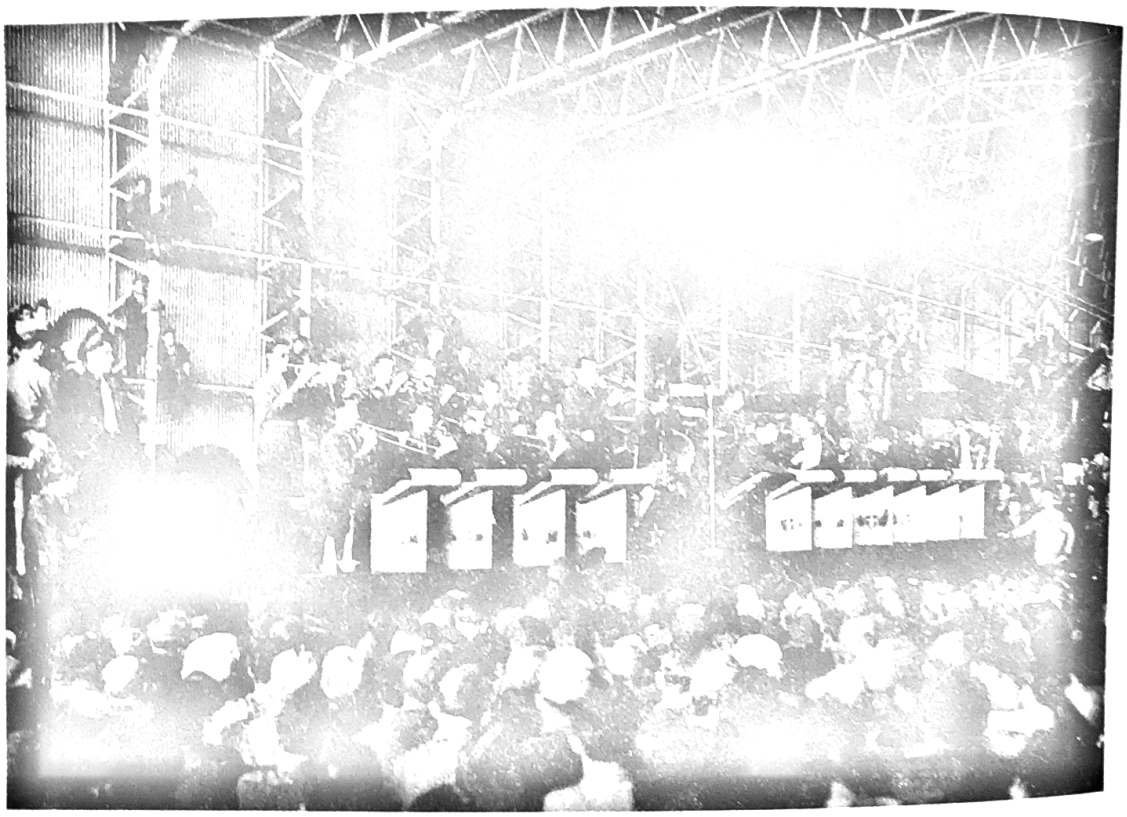

Figure 6.2. Glenn Miller's AAF Orchestra, somewhere in England, performing in an airplane hangar. Note servicemen sitting atop planes and hanging from the rafters. Courtesy of the Glenn Miller Archives, University of Colorado, Boulder.

humorously relieved the pressures of war and reminded GIs that they were defending the nation responsible for such personally liberating music. Audiences wanted familiar music. As Miller put it, "We came here to bring a much-needed touch of home to some lads who have been here a couple of years" and were "starved for real, live American music."[20]

In its ability to recreate familiar and personal ties, Miller's twenty-piece unit became "the most popular band among boys in the service." As a private noted of one concert, "The troops were a cheering mass of swing-hungry GIs. The Joes ate up everything the massive band dished out, most of them in a dream world for an hour or so." But he tired of the repetitious arrangements "that have been played and replayed, all in the same precise, spiritless manner." Miller replied angrily. The musicians might want to experiment, but "we play only the old tunes," because the GIs were away from home and out of touch with current hits, and "know and appreciate only the tunes that were popular before they

left the States." Most GIs agreed. One declared that the band pleased millions "who want to hear things that remind them of home, that bring back something of those days when we were all happy and free." The GI wanted "songs he used to know played as he used to hear them played." He looked to music "strictly for its emotional content." Separated from loved ones, facing death, "your pent-up emotions run for just one avenue of escape, an avenue leading to the thing you want most of all, *your home, and all your loved ones and all that they stood, stand and will stand for.*" Perhaps this explains why GIs created their own nightclubs and swing bands, and at "mission parties," guys who used to go to Roseland or the Paramount "now knock themselves out to the music of GI bands with the English lassies jumping with 'em."[21]

The look homeward was often nostalgic in the face of death and military regimentation. If freedom was to be achieved, it would be either in the past or in a future after the army. Miller himself gazed backward as his presentiments of death rose and his frustrations with army red tape grew. His radio director recalled, "I don't know of anyone who was as homesick as Glenn." The day before he died he envisioned the postwar world as a suburban ranch home, Tuxedo Junction, a balsa replica of which he carried with him, where he planned to get away, relax, play golf, and devote time to his family. The preoccupation with family togetherness and security, removed from bureaucracy and public purpose, surfaced increasingly in the sweeter, more romantic songs played in person and on "I Sustain the Wings," his radio program. With their lush chords and wafting clarinet lead they established a dreamy remembrance of romantic togetherness and security to be found back home. One of his hit songs put it well: "When I hear that Serenade in Blue / I'm somewhere in another world alone with you / Sharing all the joys we used to know / Many moons ago."[22]

At the center of the homeward gaze was the American woman, who embodied the virtues of American civilization and the personal obligation to defend them. Pinups, according to Robert Westbrook, reminded servicemen of their personal ties to the home front, occasioning emotions of love, lust, and longing. The Miller band acknowledged this in novelty tunes such as "Paper Doll" (1943), a hit for the Mills Brothers, and "Peggy, the Pin-up Girl" (1944). The former speaks of a lonely soldier looking for solace, while the latter chronicles innocent "Peggy Jones," "with a chassis that made Lassie come home," whose pictures in *Life*

and *Look* were carried into battle "all over the world" by American soldiers. The song ends with an explicit statement of obligation: "Pilot to Bombardier, Come on boys, let's drop one here, for Peggy the Pin-up Girl." The band experience itself, moreover, evoked in listeners memories of women and the home front. An RAF pilot remembered the Miller outfit in a smoke-hazed English hangar, crowded "to capacity with uniformed boys and girls swaying gently or 'jiving' wildly," with the vocalist "singing of love not war." As the band wove its spell, they "were conscious of the music. . .the exhilarating rhythm and of course, the girl in our arms. . .she was Alice Faye, Betty Grable, Rita Hayworth or whoever our 'pin up' of that particular week may have been." Perhaps it was sweet-voiced Dinah Shore, on a USO tour with the band, who as a living equivalent of the pinups represented the idealized image of girls left behind.[23]

Women singers and sentimental ballads rose in popularity during the war as they personalized American civilization and the anguish that lay behind the war-enforced separation of the sexes. Women dominated the music audience at home, and they wanted ballads that expressed the pain of waiting for their men to return or the normal life of boys and dating to begin. Under these conditions, love flared intensely, in a race with the relentless march of events. Miller's rendition of Kurt Weill's "Speak Low" conveys passion growing under the pressure of time as the vocalist sings, "Our moment is swift / Like ships adrift, we're swept apart, too soon."

Ostensibly, women waited and thereby symbolized home front faithfulness to the war. The anguish of parting became the subject of "dialogue" songs between soldiers at war and the women back home. Miller's version of "Don't Sit under the Apple Tree" (1942), for example, features a soldier and his girl urging each other to remain true. While he tells her, "Don't go walking down lover's lane with anyone else but me," she demands, "Watch the girls on foreign shores / You'll have to report to me." In Ellington's "Don't Get around Much Anymore," also done by Miller, the singer goes out but finds, "It's so different without you." Often loneliness and frustration led to songs like "No Love, No Nothin' [until my baby comes home]," or "Saturday Night Is the Loneliest Night in the Week." Separation and loneliness also produced pledges of faithfulness by women aimed at soldiers far away, as in "I'll Walk Alone," and "I Don't Want to Walk without You," top hits of 1944. These and

many other such songs conveyed the gender disjunctures as girls stayed home and boys went off to war. Both felt the anguish of separation and suspended personal lives.

Sweeter bands and singers able to express the pain of separation and the dream of future togetherness increased in popularity. Harry James's Orchestra, for example, shot to the top in 1942 with a string section, a syrupy trumpet style, and beautiful ballads. One reviewer caught the appeal to an unhappy seventeen-year-old out with a soldier: "Tomorrow he will have gone back to duty and you to the dull, lonely routine of your life without him—waiting, waiting for the day of his return." While James played, "her innermost feelings were taking shape and finding expression, almost as if she had never thought them until that moment." Helen Forrest helped James's rise with increasingly romantic songs of loss and parting. They both had "the same feeling for a song," and her longing for James meshed with the feelings of millions of women. As Forrest put it, her songs "aimed at wives and lovers separated by the war from their men in the service." In a war that set the sexes apart for long periods, women vowed to wait, as in "If That's the Way You Want It Baby," and be the idealization of stability and civilization that men were fighting for. Male singers idealized the "true" woman, as in the Ink Spots' "I'll Get By [as long as I have you]" and the Mills Brothers' "Please wait for me / Till then." In the face of death, both sexes sought peace and security in small pleasures: "I'll Buy That Dream" and when daddy returns, "Shoo, Shoo, Baby" asserts, "we'll live a life of ease."[24]

Under the surface, however, songs of home front devotion and unity contained deep anxieties about sexuality. "Don't Sit under the Apple Tree" and "Everybody Loves My Baby" expressed jealousy and fears about women's sexual activity at home and the lack of home front support for the war. Frank Sinatra brought these concerns to a head as a bobby-soxers' idol who made adolescent girls scream and swoon with sexual fervor. "I looked around at the faces of the girls," noted the narrator of Frederick Wakeman's *Shore Leave*. "It was mass hysteria, all right. Those kids were having a mass affair with Sinatra." In an era of loneliness he gave young girls a vulnerable, dark boy next door as a sex object who expressed their desires. Ballads like "I'll Never Smile Again" and "All or Nothing at All," sung in bel canto style, stretched the emotions to the breaking point and made girls think of clinging forever to their partners. At the same time, as a figure of female desire with a medical

exemption from service, Sinatra challenged wartime images of male toughness. He was narrow shouldered and frail, but his appeal to women of all ages was strong. As one girl told *Time*, "My sister saw him twice and she was afraid to go again because she's engaged." Sinatra's songs expressed the hopes of a generation for pure love in a mad world, but his strong sex appeal for women of all ages underscored the fragility of those dreams of home. Moreover, at the USOs and canteens where true women served the cause, they danced with strange men and tested the limits of their faithfulness.[25]

Although sexual tensions remained an undercurrent, it was in the area of race that musical tensions reached their height. Miller's orchestra fed both government purpose and popular desire for unity between home front and war effort, but it was undeniable that for most listeners his home front was white. As part of the goal of including blacks in a unified war effort, the orchestra continued to incorporate elements of black swing, and even particular songs—doses of Ellington, Basie, Fats Waller—into its national musical repertoire. Yet Miller's musical preferences for a clean-cut version of American jive and a sanitized conception of American culture worked with the government policy of military segregation and its desire not to disturb deeply held racial values. As a result, the AAF Orchestra was all-white rather than all-American. Black players remained excluded, relegated to performing in second-class military bands under segregated conditions. By playing black music, however, Miller brought race to the surface of national musical identity.

During the war racial tensions increased in the music world over the meaning of American "home" values. At its simplest, black musicians encountered increasing racial conflict as southern white soldiers and civilians hassled black musicians and entertainers for "race mixing" in the clubs and ballrooms where they played. Black bands, moreover, had problems getting buses, gas, and tires for their tours. Dependent on endless one-night engagements in the South, black bands were forced to abandon their buses and ride segregated trains in which they encountered an endless series of racial humiliations. They no longer reacted quietly. Increasingly, they viewed American society, engaged in a war for democracy, as a hypocritical white supremacist nation. Having ridden the segregated trains and heard tales of black soldiers on leave from fighting for their country who also had had to face discrimination, trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie forcefully expressed his hostility toward white soci-

ety at his draft hearing and was exempted as psychologically unfit. He refused to accept "racism, poverty, or economic exploitation."[26]

At the same time, the conflicts engendered by a segregated society fighting against a white supremacist enemy heightened the elements in swing that were favorable to racial integration. Black and white radicals and many swing musicians and fans believed that swing carried a vision of democratic community rooted in ethnic and racial pluralism. The war sent conflicting messages to black and white jazz fans about the meaning of American culture. For example, although USO canteens and entertainment units generally were segregated as a matter of government policy, civil rights organizations and white and black progressives in the music and entertainment community established racially integrated Hollywood and Broadway canteens where top bands, among them Benny Goodman's and Count Basie's, entertained free and couples could dance together regardless of race. According to Margaret Halsey, the racially liberal manager of the Stage Door Canteen, the policy was designed "to close the unseemly gap between our democratic protestations and our actual behavior." As a result, she employed black and white hostesses who were instructed to dance with GIs regardless of color. Whereas southern whites often protested, black GIs wrote to her that "we had given them hope for the first time in their lives." Some white servicemen also wrote that "we were the kind of people they were glad to go overseas and fight for."[27]

The discrepancy between defending democracy and the racial realities of American life intensified black attacks on segregation at home. As the *Pittsburgh Courier* put it when Ellington's orchestra was denied hotel accommodations, "It didn't happen in Tokio or Berlin, but right here in the good American city of Moline, Illinois, U.S.A." Music magazines joined the black press in a campaign to recognize Ellington as America's top bandleader and composer and pointed out that he was denied his own radio show and lucrative bookings because of racism. Indeed, the jazz, black, and Left press now protested segregated music venues and audiences as officially un-American.[28]

The black press and African American entertainers did the most to challenge the definition of the home Americans were defending. The *Pittsburgh Courier*, for instance, launched the Double V Campaign for Victory Abroad and Victory at Home and, as part of their efforts, focused on how black entertainers fared at home and abroad in the face of

segregation. Black entertainers participated by actively supporting the war effort and openly protesting the segregation and discrimination they encountered. They toured segregated army bases in separate USO troupes, for instance, but objected to performing before segregated audiences. Black bands also appeared in benefits for black soldiers victimized by violence and discrimination. Singer Lena Horne played a special role. Because black troops could not have white pinups, she became the unofficial African American pinup queen, who represented what they were fighting for. As part of that mutual obligation, she vociferously refused to perform before segregated army audiences and objected strongly to the army's policy of giving German POWs front-row seats at shows for black soldiers. In many ways, then, black activists, white radicals, and sympathetic black entertainers saw themselves in a fight for a new national identity. It was in this spirit that Duke Ellington launched his Carnegie Hall concerts with "Black, Brown, and Beige," which memorialized black military contributions in the past, and in "New World a'Comin'" held out hope for cultural pluralism and racial democracy as the definition of American freedom in the near future. As the *Amsterdam News* declared, "To accept half a loaf as better than none is silly in the light of what a war is being fought over."[29]

As the realities of war undercut the perfect dreams of racial and gender unity on the home front, the epitome of American culture, the swing band, began to lose its energy. Sweet music enjoyed an upsurge, and the highly organized war effort altered swing. In a total war dominated by large-scale bureaucracy and rigid military hierarchy, swing was no longer an outsider to the establishment. Following Miller's lead, other bands became more organized, arranged, and sentimental, adding string sections to play sweet songs. Miller became an officer, his band a military unit, and his style even more arranged, laid out from on high with less room for invention. The result was a subtle taming of the musical and utopian vision of swing. Ironically, Miller himself resented the struggle he waged with the military brass over the type of band he wanted, and many of his players felt alienated from him as a rigid authority figure who demanded full military discipline. Wary of military distrust of jazz musicians, he wanted his men to conform to military standards. His demand that they shave off mustaches proved the last straw, especially for horn players, who considered this hard on their embouchures. Many other musicians found the military intolerable and turned to more spon-

taneous traditional jazz as the voice of improvisatory individualism and organic music making. As one observed, "The individuality of a hot musician became a liability when orchestrators, who are the draftsmen of the music business, started to devise arrangements of popular music for bands of twenty or thirty men." In jazz, fans and creators were on the verge of revolt. Hence, although Glenn Miller and his AAF Orchestra conveyed important conceptions about the American way of life, that vision of the home front was a matter of much contention and debate.[30]

Yet Miller's music lived on, rooted in the personal memories of wartime experiences and the collective memory of sacrifice and national unity. Conveying hopes of personal freedom, ethnic assimilation, and security, his band symbolized an American dream of freer lives made possible by American culture. Moreover, his death elevated his personal sacrifice to mythic status. Given the mystery surrounding it, his death became a metaphor for the lost lives and interrupted careers of all GIs. In fact, a year after he disappeared many theaters observed "Glenn Miller Day," the first such tribute accorded a bandleader. Swing remained a symbol of victory too. After his death the orchestra performed a concert for 40,000 allied troops in Nuremberg Stadium on 1 July 1945, marking a victory over Hitler's belief that jazz was a decadent example of a "mongrelized" society and making a statement of the personal and musical freedom accorded by a nation devoted to cultural pluralism. At the National Press Club in Washington, moreover, the country's highest political and military leaders saluted Miller. After the opening bars of "Moonlight Serenade," President Truman and Generals Dwight Eisenhower and Hap Arnold led the assembled dignitaries in a standing ovation for a man who "felt an intense obligation to serve his country" and "made the supreme sacrifice."[31]

Critic George Simon declared that Miller's band was "the greatest gift from home" GIs had "known in all their Army days, a living symbol of what America meant to them, of what they were fighting for." A GI correspondent agreed. Listening to a Miller memorial in an army recreation center in Britain, he "saw men openly crying." The music was "tied up with individual memories, girls, hopes, schools. It's a tangible tie to what we are fighting to get back to." But the message was ambiguous. "We haven't forgotten, nor can we ever. You owe these guys when they get back, not so much money or gadgets, but a shot at the way of life that many of them have been dreaming about." Given a war fought

for personal obligation, many soldiers expected a national commitment to their own personal enjoyment of that life in the future. For soldier boys and the girls they left behind, the attempt to capture and define the American way of life would dominate the late 1940s. For many it represented personal dreams and family security removed from public life and bureaucracy; for others it meant opportunities for young ethnic boys and girls to have a place in American life; for many blacks it meant "victory at home" or rejection of that way of life as racially restrictive. These conflicting themes would shape the postwar jazz scene, which became a battle for America's musical soul at the very time the nation embarked on "a sentimental journey home."[32]

Notes

1. Miller quoted in Frank Stacy, "Glenn Miller Day Boosts Bond Sale," *Down Beat*, 15 May 1945, 14.

2. George Simon, *Glenn Miller and His Orchestra* (New York, 1974), covers Miller's career. See also *Current Biography*, 1942, 597–99. On his music, see Gunther Schuller, *The Swing Era* (New York, 1989), 661–77. On political obligation linked to personal ties and consumption, see Robert B. Westbrook, "'I Want a Girl, Just Like the Girl That Married Harry James': American Women and the Problem of Political Obligation in World War II," *American Quarterly* 42 (1990): 587–614. For the strongest statement of this, see John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory* (New York, 1976).

3. Glenn Miller, "Travel's Tough but the Jazzmen Hit the Road for Army Camps," *Daily Worker*, 3 July 1942, 7. On the Office of War Information's campaign for "war songs," see John Costello, *Virtue under Fire* (Boston, 1985), 120–21. For Tin Pan Alley, see *Variety*, 5 January 1944, 187.

4. James Lincoln Collier, *Benny Goodman and the Swing Era* (New York, 1989), and Benny Goodman with Irving Kolodin, *The Kingdom of Swing* (New York, 1939), cover Goodman's career. Lewis A. Erenberg, "Things to Come: Swing Bands, Bebop, and the Rise of a Postwar Jazz Scene," in *Recasting America*, ed. Lary May (Chicago, 1989), 221–45, examines the utopian side of swing in greater depth.

5. The phrase "typically American" is in "Glenn Miller," *Current Biography*, 1942, 597.

6. "New King," *Time,* 27 November 1939, 56; Barry Ulanov, "The Jukes Take over Swing," *American Mercury,* October 1940, 172–77, details the jukebox's role in Miller's rise. Tex Beneke, "Swing Was Never Really King," *Metronome,* February 1947, 20–21.

7. For "King of Swing," see "Room at the Top," *Time,* 8 January 1945, 76; Dave Dexter Jr. " 'I Don't Want a Jazz Band,' " *Down Beat,* 1 February 1940, 8; Irving Kolodin, "A Tonefile of Glenn Miller," *Saturday Review of Literature,* 1953, 63, in Miller file, Institute of Jazz Studies, Rutgers, Newark. *Current Biography,* 1942, 597, and Simon, *Glenn Miller,* 238, 246, for discipline. Priddy is quoted in Simon, 219.

8. Billy May quoted in Simon, *Glenn Miller,* 232; Chuck Goldstein quoted in Simon, 245-46. Tommy Mace, in Mort Good, liner notes to *The Complete Glenn Miller,* 3 (1939–40) (RCA-Bluebird Records, 1976), recalled that musicians considered Miller "a boy-scout leader" and noted Glenn's desire to be called " 'Skipper' or 'Captain' or something like that. And that was before the war. Discipline was terrible in that outfit. Rough." See Schuller, *Swing Era,* 671–73, for more on the Miller sound world.

9. For Richmond, see Simon, *Glenn Miller,* 135; for Hutton, Simon, 139.

10. Kolodin, "Tonefile of Glenn Miller," 63. "Choo Chugs to Million Mark," *Metronome,* February 1942, 11. Norman Charles, "Social Values in American Popular Song" (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1958), 77–78, notes the homeward direction of songs of the 1940s.

11. Simon, *Glenn Miller,* 184.

12. For Cleveland theater, W. Ward Marsh, *Cleveland Plain Dealer,* 10 January 1942, n.p., as quoted in John Flowers, *Moonlight Serenade, a Bio-discography of the Glenn Miller Civilian Band* (New Rochelle, N.Y., 1972), 404. Interviews with Theodore Karamanski, "Big Ray" Murray, Trudy Faso, Lawrence McCaffrey, all in author's possession.

13. Billy Rose, " 'Escapology' Not the Answer, Showmen Must Sell Americanism to Everybody," *Variety,* 7 November 1942, 28.

14. "Pacific Tour for Bob," *Metronome,* October 1944, 9; Barry Ulanov, "The Air Force Jumps!" *Metronome,* May 1944, 15. See also Harry Jaeger, "Buzz Bombs and Boogie Woogie," *Metronome,* May 1945, 11, for bands in England. Frank Mathias, *G.I. Jive: An Army Bandsmen in World War II* (Louisville, Ky., 1982), for a swing musician in the army. Barry Ulanov, "V Discs," *Metronome,* May 1944, 20–21. Bob Klein, who

soldiered in New Guinea, told me about Tokyo Rose. For Axis Sally see Robert and Jane Easton, *Love and War* (Norman, Okla., 1991), 243.

15. Miller to Brigadier General Charles D. Young, 12 August 1942, quoted in Simon, *Glenn Miller,* 311–12.

16. Miller to Jerry Gray, quoted in Simon, 324; for the marching band, 311–12; Simon's reaction, 337–38, 349–52. *Time,* 6 September 1943, 48–49.

17. Goldman quoted in "Sousa with a Floy Floy," *Time,* 6 September 1943, 48–49. See also "Letters," *Time,* 27 September 1943, 4.

18. For broadcasts, see Edward Polic, *The Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band, Sustineo Alas/I Sustain the Wings* (Metuchen, N.J., 1989), 1:3, 714.

19. Polic, *Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band,* 1:51; 2:1027. Examples of the "Wehrmacht Hour" can be heard at the Glenn Miller Archives, University of Colorado, Boulder.

20. For number of performances, Simon, *Glenn Miller,* 369. Miller to Simon, quoted in Simon, 361. On the repertoire, Ray McKinley, "Ooh, What You Said Tex!" *Metronome,* March 1947, 19, 39–41.

21. Pfc. David B. Bittan, "Miller over There," *Metronome,* September 1944, 26–27; Miller to Simon, September 1944, quoted in Simon, 384–87; a GI, "Miller a Killer," *Metronome,* November 1944, 15. Pvt. William Piatt to *Metronome,* April 1945, 4–5, also extolled Miller's ties to home. Jaeger, "Buzz Bombs and Boogie Woogie," 11, for mission parties. For nightclubs on North African bases, see *Depot Dope,* 29 September 1945, 1.

22. Don Haynes, *Diary,* quoted in Simon, 406–7; discussion of Tuxedo Junction, 375–76. For radio repertoire, Polic, *Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band.*

23. RAF pilot quoted in Costello, *Virtue under Fire,* 130–31. Westbrook, "I Want a Girl."

24. Helen Forrest with Bill Libby, *I Had the Craziest Dream* (New York, 1982), 128–37. Richard Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?* (New York, 1970), 210–21, for World War II songs.

25. David Ewen, *All the Years of American Popular Music* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1977), 430–65, for ballads and singers during the war. Gene Lees, "The Sinatra Effect," in *Singers and the Song* (New York, 1987), 101–15, analyzes Sinatra. Dana Polan, *Power and Paranoia* (New York, 1986), 124–127, explores the sexual tensions around Sinatra. "That

Old Sweet Song," *Time*, 5 July 1943, quoted in Polan, 126–27; Frederick Wakeman, *Shore Leave*, quoted in Polan, 125. For more on sexual conflicts, see Elaine T. May, *Homeward Bound* (New York, 1988), and her chapter in this volume.

26. Dizzy Gillespie, *To Be, or Not . . . to Bop* (Garden City, N.Y., 1979), 119–20.

27. Margaret Halsey, *Color Blind: A White Woman Looks at the Negro* (New York, 1946), 11–13, 31, 33–34. For USO policy, *Amsterdam News*, 22 May 1943, 14. For more on this, see Bruce Tyler, *From Harlem to Hollywood* (New York, 1992), 137–70.

28. "It Happened to the Duke," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 April 1942, 21; "'Hurricane' Target for Welter of Criticism," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 12 June 1943, 21; and "To Help Woodard," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 August 1946, 18, offer examples of the black press's growing militance and the role of entertainment. For the music press, see editorials "Why?" *Metronome*, March 1943, 34; "Because," *Metronome*, April 1943, 5; and "Bouquets," *Metronome*, July 1943, 5.

29. For "half a loaf," see "Billie Holiday and the 'St. Louis Incident,'" *Amsterdam News*, 23 December 1944, 9. See also Tyler, *From Harlem to Hollywood*, 171–98.

30. Rogers E. M. Whitaker, "Eddie Condon," *New Yorker*, 28 April 1945, 30.

31. On Nuremberg, Simon, *Glenn Miller*, 423; Press Club, 427–31.

32. Simon, "Glenn Miller Lives On," *Metronome*, March 1946, 14–15; Mike Levin, "When Johnny Comes Marching Home," *Down Beat*, 15 June 1945, 1, 4.