



# Juxtaposing Symbols in Civil Religion: The Lady and the Flag

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## Introduction

Those working in vexillology continue to focus overwhelmingly on the description, categorization, and historical verification of flags. These three types of image identification are very important, and should certainly—when merited—be applauded and welcomed as intellectual contributions. I believe, however, that the study of flags is even more pertinent and rewarding when it leads to greater insights or deeper understandings of the complex processes of social behavior and cultural systems. Much more could and should be done to link vexillology to cultural and social studies, to how flags influence human actions and responses—particularly in those instances where historical bursts of nationalism or heightened group identification come into play as a result of flag representation or manipulation.<sup>1</sup>

As an example of just one of the many ways we might look for connecting vexillology to meaningful current or past cultural analysis, I suggest we pay more attention to how national or political flags, as visual elements within larger paradigmatic constructs of multilayered belief and value systems, are combined with other potent symbols as a strategy to enhance or disseminate adherence to a cause, as a means to procuring or protecting power within a society. Some combinations of symbols, in certain or particular contexts, can achieve a far greater or more significant effect than either of those symbols working alone. Since the Civil War, the semiotic power of the American flag continues its pre-eminence in civil religious activities and political demonstrations in the United States. Let us reflect



Figure 1. Mother Russia. Monument to the Battle of Stalingrad. Source: <http://www.volgoservis.ru/foto2/1mk.htm>.



Figure 2. Boadicea or Mother England. c. 1880, photographer unknown. Source: Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, Australia.



Figure 3. Bust of Marianne. Artist unknown, displayed in the corridors of the Luxembourg Palace, seat of the French Senate. Source: Wikipedia, public domain.

some upon that symbol's connection to the conceptual category of the female (as opposed to the male) and then examine more closely a specific dynamic that has been occurring with this particular juxtaposition of two symbolic elements in the past two years.

Symbols of nationalism have long been connected to symbols of femininity, particularly in those cultures and societies where the homeland is not thought of as the fatherland (use of the Latin *patria* would fit here) but rather as a motherland. Three very basic European examples are Mother Russia (Figure 1), Mother England, who sometimes goes by "Britannia" (Figure 2), and Mother France, some-

times represented as the spirited maiden “Marianne” (Figure 3). A Russian poster from early World War I shows this trio of feminine national representations (Figure 4). Other nations with a strong tradition of allegorical representation in female form include Switzerland, Sweden, Finland, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Brazil, India, and—yes—the United States.

When the Europeans first became interested in the exploration and exploitation of what was, for them, the newly discovered America, they depicted the exotic land as a voluptuous Indian Queen (Figure 5). When the rumblings of rebellion of the thirteen British colonies challenged the authority of Mother



Figure 4. World War I: Triple Entente, France-Russia-England (Russian illustration). Source: Wikipedia, public domain.



Figure 5. Personification of America. Source: Adrien Collaert II after Marten de Vos. Europe. 1765–1775, engraving. The Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, from Nancy Jo Fox, *Liberties with Liberty*, New York: E. P. Dutton, 1986, p. 3.





Figure 6. *The Reconciliation Between Britannia and Her Daughter America*. Source: Thomas Colley, London, 1782, engraving. New York Public Library, from Fox, p. 3.

England, the adult Queen image of the continent changed to a teen-aged Indian Princess (Figure 6). After the creation of the new republic, and with it a new flag, a new seal, and a host of other civil religious symbols to represent the United States as an independent nation, the Indian Princess gave way to images of the Goddess of Liberty (Figure 7), a logical reference point for America in the Federalist period when political systems



Figure 7a (far left). *Liberty*. Artist unknown, early nineteenth century. Source: National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC, from Fox, p. 20.

Figure 7b. *Miss Liberty*. Artist unknown, Tilton, New Hampshire, 1850–1860, sculpture.



Figure 8 (left). *Memorial to General Washington*. Artist unknown, United States c. 1815. Source: Philadelphia Museum of Art, from Fox, p. 26. Figure 9a (right). *Columbia Prepares for War*. James Montgomery Flagg, 1918. Lithograph. Source: Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

and architecture also made obvious and direct references to Greco-Roman antecedents. In this transition phase, during the late eighteenth to early nineteenth century, just as specific and particular designs for the banner of the nation had not been adopted in common practice and a wide range of variants appeared in popular usage,<sup>2</sup> so, too, in the allegorical representation of a female America we see the Indian Princess (her usage on the way out), the plumed Greek Goddess (an obvious transition) (Figure 8), the female form of America identified as “Columbia” (who got a university, a river, some battleships, and a federal district named after her) (Figure 9), and the emergent dominant image of Lady Liberty,



Figure 9b. *The well-known Columbia Pictures logo*. Source: fair use logo from [http://pixs.media.miy.edu/picture/image/8078/columbia\\_pictures\\_logo\\_520jpg](http://pixs.media.miy.edu/picture/image/8078/columbia_pictures_logo_520jpg).



more particularly distinguished by the Statue of Liberty in the later nineteenth century. Images of this female personification of America from these earlier periods abound, and many appeared in a successful 1986 art exhibition sponsored by the Museum of American Folk Art and the Xerox Corporation celebrating the Statue of Liberty's centennial.<sup>3</sup>

In the early nineteenth century the Uncle Sam figure (in his familiar top hat and costume that is itself a direct parsing of the national flag) began to replace the earlier more Yankee-region-related symbol of Brother Jonathan, and fairly rapidly became the internationally recognized male symbolic representation of the United States.<sup>4</sup> In Independence Day ceremonies and festive performances, when a male/female coupling was often called for in song, dance, or ritual ceremony, it became an accepted practice to couple



Figure 10. Uncle Sam with Columbia. No artist given. Vintage postcard from a series. Source: Diane C. Arkins, *The Glorious Fourth of July*, Gretna, Pelican Publishing Company, Inc. (pub. in Singapore), 2009, p. 15. Used by permission of the publisher.

Uncle Sam with Lady Liberty (Figures 10, 11)<sup>5</sup>. Although someone like seamstress Betsy Ross could arguably be cast as the embodiment of the feminine quality in the cosmology of American civil religion (given her mythological function of being mother to the sacred national banner) (Figure 12), since the American Civil War, it is Lady Liberty, in her many varied forms, who is probably the main conveyor of this patriotic gender-essence reduced to a single symbol. She might be overlaid with a complex of other symbols, such as in a 1985 greeting card (Figure 13), or be surrounded by them, to emphasize her own containment of American motherhood, as in another 1985 greeting card (Figure 14). The female essence of America could also be conveyed in a play-



Figure 11. Pint-sized Miss Columbia and Uncle Sam. Vintage photograph stamped “K&E Photo-Kraft”, 1910. Source: Diane C. Arkins, *The Glorious Fourth of July*, Gretna, Pelican Publishing Company, Inc. (pub. in Singapore), 2009, p. 39. Used by permission of the publisher.

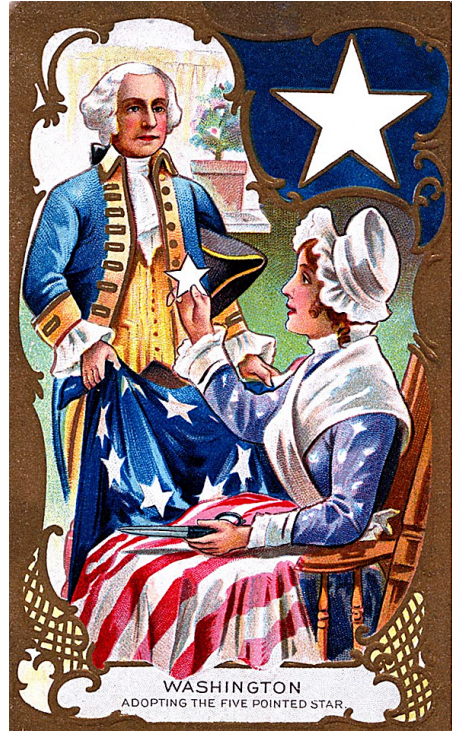


Figure 12 (right). Betsy Ross vintage postcard. Source: Northern Neck of Virginia Postcards Page, [ragerlaw.com](http://ragerlaw.com).



Figure 13 (left). *American Gothic Christmas*. Hudson Talbott for Bloomingdale's. Greeting card, 1982. Source: Fox, p. 71.



Figure 14 (right). *Apple Pie*. Hudson Talbott for Ruby, Inc. Greeting card, 1982. Source: Fox, p. 72.





Figure 15. Female Uncle Sam. Source: Tartuffe's Folly site on Facebook.

ful cross-dressing inversion of masculine America (Figure 15). By the way, because the United States was and essentially remains a patriarchal culture, I would like to suggest that if a male were to be dressed as Lady Liberty, it would be to convey a comedic sort of drag, a loss of power, while if the female form is represented in the garb of Uncle Sam, it is to convey her as a sexual object for the male gaze, which is still considered the more powerful and controlling perspective in our patriotic culture.



Figure 16. Pinup Girl as Liberty. Artist unknown, c. 1940. Source: Fox, p. 69.

And it is not only dressed as Uncle Sam that women clothed with American flag outfits tended to be conveyed as sexual objects; we can find evidence of women in sexy flag swimsuits becoming increasingly popular posing motifs in the period since the lead-up to World War II (Figure 16). Laura Kidd, in a recent *Raven* article, has done an excellent job of summarizing flag garb appearing in early twentieth-century America, and she points out that although there was a powerful flag protection movement to curtail what were seen as commercial and crass uses of the national banner in the early years of the





Figure 17a (left). Patriotic Betty Boop in a Martini Glass. Source: <http://media.bigoo.ws/content/79/287879/Betty-Boop-American-Flag.gif>.

Figure 17b (middle). Inflatable Patriotic Betty Boop. Source: [www.giftcorners.com](http://www.giftcorners.com).

Figure 17c (right). Statuette of Patriotic Betty. Source: [www.giftcorners.com](http://www.giftcorners.com).

twentieth century, the public seemed to accept some limited use of special flag costumes “as a fad” to express patriotism on Independence Day and other such national holidays.<sup>6</sup> Kidd does not, however, develop much of a focus on how the American flag as apparel comes to be attached to imagery of women that presents them first and foremost as attractive and sexually charged beings, usually gazing out invitingly for presumed male viewers.

Powerful images of femininity helped spread this practice. Betty Boop became a popular animated image of playful feminine sexuality in the 1930s. She has a long and significant history of appearing not only with the American flag, but also on different series of her own flags and windsocks, which some specialized collectors might find an intriguing if admittedly arcane field of sub-study (Figure 17). Wonder Woman first appeared in 1941, as the United States was about to enter World War II and patriotic anxieties and concerns increased. She resurfaced to some acclaim on television in 1975-79; actress Lynda Carter conveyed a blend of sex appeal with second-wave feminism’s challenge to patriarchal traditions (Figure 18). The 1970 film



Figure 18. Lynda Carter as Wonder Woman. Source: Katherine Thomson, “American Flag Bikini Moments: What’s Your Favorite?” at [Huffingtonpost.com](http://Huffingtonpost.com), 4 July 2009.



Figure 19 (left). Raquel Welch as Myra Breckinridge. Source: Katherine Thomson, "American Flag Bikini Moments: What's Your Favorite?" at *Huffingtonpost.com*, 4 July 2009. Figure 20 (above). Pamela Anderson. Source: Katherine Thomson, "American Flag Bikini Moments: What's Your Favorite?" at *Huffingtonpost.com*, 4 July 2009.

adaptation of Gore Vidal's controversial novel *Myra Breckinridge* included a classic image of reigning sex symbol Raquel Welch in flag attire (Figure 19). This famous image would often be re-evoked by other beauty queens later, such as Canadian-born Pamela Anderson (herself chosen to represent the early 21<sup>st</sup>-century American Dream in the 2006 film *Borat*) (Figure 20).

To celebrate Independence Day in 2008, the *Huffington Post* website honored the "10 great American flag bikini moments" with images of such sex symbols as Jessica Simpson, Heidi Montag, and Cindy Crawford.<sup>7</sup> Of course, because we are a consumer culture, beauty queens wearing flag bathing suits will spur a rise in sales of flag bathing suits to the public, as in a 21<sup>st</sup>-century advertisement for women's flag bikinis (Figure 21).

Further documentation and evaluation of the relationship between patriotic symbols and women in the worlds of pin-up art and fashion photography both deserve to be explored for what they might teach us about how flags are used as semiotic components. In particular, the 2008 U.S. presidential campaign provides a case study in what happens when American traditions of representing femininity as a national ideal, practices of marketing celebrities using American flag symbology, and national politi-



**D Cup**  
SIZES RUN LARGE

**D.** Classic string triangle top with soft molded cups. Tie neck, back hook closure. Color: Patriot. **Top sizes:** 6-16, 34D, 36D, 38D. **#121242T**  
**Our Price:** \$27.95

Malibu style bikini brief with cut out criss-crossing straps. French cut to lengthen and flatter legs. Color: Patriot. **Bottom Sizes:** 5/6-13/14. **#121104B**  
**Our Price:** \$27.95

**E.** Bra top with full foam-padded cups and underwire. Shirred and knotted in front with back hook closure and adjustable straps. Color: Patriot. **Top sizes:** 5/6-13/14. **#121243T**  
**Our Price:** \$29.95

Basic Malibu style two-lined bikini brief. French cut to lengthen and flatter legs. Color: Patriot. **Bottom Sizes:** 5/6-13/14. **#121212B**  
**Our Price:** \$27.95

**F.** This one-piece swimsuit has the appeal of a two-piece. The top wraps to cover the bustline and criss-crosses at the back. Top and bottom attach at the sides. Full coverage bottom. Color: Patriot. **Sizes:** 5/6-13/14. **#121445**  
**Our Price:** \$49.95

**G.** Strapless tube top detailed with adjustable drawstring front and soft foam cups for support. Color: Patriot. **Top sizes:** 5/6-13/14. **#121244T**  
**Our Price:** \$29.95

Basic Malibu style bikini brief. French cut to lengthen and flatter legs. Color: Patriot. **Bottom Sizes:** 5/6-13/14. **#121206B**  
**Our Price:** \$27.95

**H.** Accessories to match your Patriot swimwear.  
• Visor: One size. **#121503 \$7.95**  
• Saring: One size. **#121630 \$19.95**  
• Scrunchie: One size. **#121506 \$7.95**  
• Thong bottoms: 113-9, 211-151. **#121501, \$15.95**

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Figure 21. Flag bikinis ad. Source: Suzanne Crawford, "A Prime Example of Why I Hate Being Scotch-Irish", [suzannecrawford.blogspot.com](http://suzannecrawford.blogspot.com), 18 June 2008.

cal campaigns all intersect at the same time. This intersection can provide some powerful, sometimes visceral, emotional reactions, especially when the symbol of the American flag is involved.

### **Sarah Palin, the Essence of America, and the American Flag**

When Sarah Palin appeared at the Republican nominating convention in Minneapolis on 3 September 2008 and gave her scripted and well-rehearsed introductory “pitbull” speech before her nomination as the vice-presidential candidate, she transformed from the little-known governor of sparsely populated and remote Alaska to one of the two big media sensations of the year (Democratic presidential candidate Senator Barack Obama being the other). Both Palin and Obama became international celebrities and both took on symbolic significance far greater than the actual reality of their own particular lives.<sup>8</sup> They both became powerful contemporary civil religious symbols in their own right, a pivotal reason why Palin’s star power soon eclipsed the draw and authority of her senior running mate, Republican presidential candidate Senator John McCain of Arizona.

To negotiate his rise in the pantheon of American civil religion’s icons, Obama at times evoked such iconic figures as John F. Kennedy and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. For many he represented the legacy of Abraham Lincoln; for some he was seen as the fulfillment of Martin Luther King’s “Dream”. He was a complex overlay of all these symbolic referents, while also embodying both Benjamin Franklin’s work ethic and Andrew Jackson’s “Rise of the Common Man”. But counter-myths also arose: he was a secret Muslim; he practiced a virulent anti-white perversion of Christianity; he would not salute the flag, put his hand on his heart during the Pledge of Allegiance, nor ever wear a flag pin; and most recently and incredibly, the belief of the “Birther Movement” that he was actually a Kenyan masquerading as an American, that evidence of his birth in Hawaii had been faked and was part of a master conspiracy by alien forces intent on bringing down America and destroying it from within.

Sarah Palin, as an alternate new symbolic contemporary referent for the meaning of America, challenging ideologically and symbolically the



combination Obama represents, has not surprisingly emerged as “the queen of the Birthers”.<sup>9</sup> According to a poll by Public Policy Polling reported on 21 August 2009, “63% of all Americans with a favorable opinion of Sarah Palin are birthers”, and two-thirds of all Birthers polled select her as their favored choice to be the next president of the United States.<sup>10</sup> Even after she resigned her position as governor of Alaska with a year and a half still left in her first term, she resonates strongly with a group the GOP has long targeted: conservatives with reactionary anxiety, concerned about their loss of identity and power in a rapidly changing world.<sup>11</sup> She continues to resonate and to have such great influence in part because of the powerful and successful juxtapositions that have been made symbolically to convey her as the female essence of America, protecting the sacred flag and the “real America” she was so glad to find at her Republican rallies in 2008.<sup>12</sup>

Palin embodies three variants of the female essence of America: the Good Mother, the Woman Warrior, and the Sex Goddess. In all three avatars she is regularly juxtaposed with the American flag, which is a key referent to identify her, whether it is used by supporters who champion her or opponents who ridicule and vilify her. In all three categories her imagery adopts or adapts earlier American patriotic symbology.

We were presented with Governor Palin as the Good Mother figure from the night her family first walked out on the stage at the Republican national convention (Figure 22). And from that very beginning, standing in front of a gigantic American flag background, we also consumed images of Palin caring for her special-needs baby (Figure 23), often just before or after campaign speeches in front of adoring crowds. She became known early on for wearing a large rhinestone American



*Figure 22 (above). Introducing the Palins. Source: “The 2008 Political Conventions of the United States”, Boston.com, 5 September 2008.*

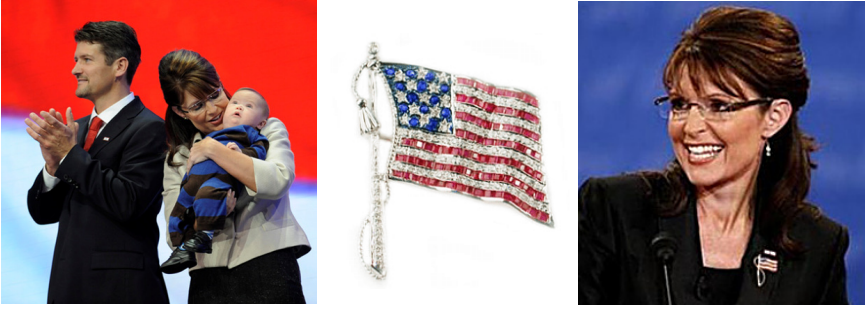


Figure 23 (left). Sarah Palin holds her special-needs child. Source: Steve Marmel, *marmel.com*, 14 July 2009. Figure 24a (middle). Sarah Palin's Rhinestone Flag Pin. Source: posted by Kim, "Sarah Palin Flag Pin", *Stealthstyle.com*, 9 October 2008. Figure 24b (right). Sarah wearing her flag pin. Source: posted by Kim, "Sarah Palin Flag Pin" *Stealthstyle.com*, 9 October 2008.

flag pin (Figure 24) which was subsequently promoted for sale to female followers who might wish to emulate her not only in philosophy but in fashion.<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, in a Fox News survey, taken after Palin resigned as Alaska's governor, Americans were asked the best job for Palin now that she had left office—among seven choices that included "talk show host", "vice president", "president", "college professor", "don't know", and "other", the number one choice was "homemaker", which got 32% of the vote, "talk show host" coming in second at 17%. Among Republicans, "homemaker" came in second, behind "vice president".<sup>14</sup> As a bumper sticker indicates, using the American flag to connect with hockey moms was a given during the campaign (Figure 25).

Palin could aggressively describe herself as a pitbull with lipstick, but if others did, they might find themselves liable to charges of sexism against a lady. Her warrior spirit came across in the way she dealt with the wolf



Figure 25. Bumper sticker. Source: *picture364.bloguez.com*, n.d.





*Figure 26. Sarah Palin Calendar. Source: Judy Patrick, sarahcalendar.com, n.d.*

population in Alaska, in her strong backing of the NRA, and in her personal advocacy for the pastime of wild game hunting. And when it came to support of the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, she was not only the proud mother of a son sent to serve his country, which she conveyed through the service flag hanging in her gubernatorial office in Alaska<sup>15</sup>, but also a sort of woman warrior herself. She posed with rifle over her shoulder on the 2009 calendar she marketed (Figure 26). She ostensibly appeared in a flag bikini in a faked image that gained great popularity as it circulated across the Internet in 2008 (Figure 27) during the campaign. (It was actually based on a flag bikini pose of a younger, playful woman (Figure 28).)



*Figure 27 (far left). Sarah Palin with gun. Source: "Patterico's Pontifications" patterico.com, 2 September 2008.*

*Figure 28. Girl with gun. Source: "Patterico's Pontifications" patterico.com, 2 September 2008.*



Figure 29. Sarah Palin wrapped in a flag.  
Source: Andrew Sullivan, "The Daily Dish"  
blog, *The Atlantic.com*, 1 July 2009.

Certainly a large part of the public's fascination with Sarah Palin came from her use of sex appeal—the direct gaze, the wink, and the sexy smile she artfully employed while looking directly into a broadcast camera. No doubt her early years as a beauty pageant princess and as a broadcasting major in college helped prepare her for this. Direct sex appeal toward men from such a high-ranking political candidate was something fresh for the American audience, and some of Palin's biggest fans, if one checked the blog and online article comments sections, were men who found her "hot". Hustler

mogul Larry Flynt even put out a November 2008 pornographic video, using a "look-alike" actress, entitled *Who's Nailin' Paylin?*<sup>16</sup>

But Palin herself also struck what can be described as "beauty" poses with the flag, in the tradition of the patriotic pin-up girls, as a way of promoting her appeal. Interestingly, in these pictures the flag is not always accorded the respect and reverence that the U.S. Flag Code might call for (and that one would certainly see in uses of the flag with Palin as Good Mother or Palin as Woman Warrior). In such Sex Goddess imagery, the flag takes second place to Palin herself, and its use as a prop can be surprising until one realizes these images follow the rules of beauty poses and not the Flag Code.

In one image Palin wrapped herself in a flag as if it were a beach towel (Figure 29). And after the Republicans lost the election, but while she was still governor of Alaska, Palin did a photo shoot for *Runner's World*, presumably to help keep herself in the national eye.<sup>17</sup> She starts the posed shots of the imaginary run as the Good Mother (Figure 30), she continues with a bit of stretching as the Sex Goddess (Figure 31), and she ends in



Figure 30 (left). Sarah Palin holding her baby. Figure 31 (middle). Sarah Palin stretching. Figure 32 (right). Sarah Palin in Alaska Governor's Office. Source: Brian Adams. "I'm a Runner: Sarah Palin", Runner's World Slideshow, *Runnersworld.com*, August 2009.

the governor's office, with the Service Flag prominently captured behind her and the flag of the United States used as a covering—a drape for her to lean upon in a majestic yet alluring manner (Figure 32).

The McCain/Palin ticket's motto was "Country First", and the American flag was ubiquitous and prominent at its campaign rallies, where frenzied followers adopted a practice from sporting events of chanting

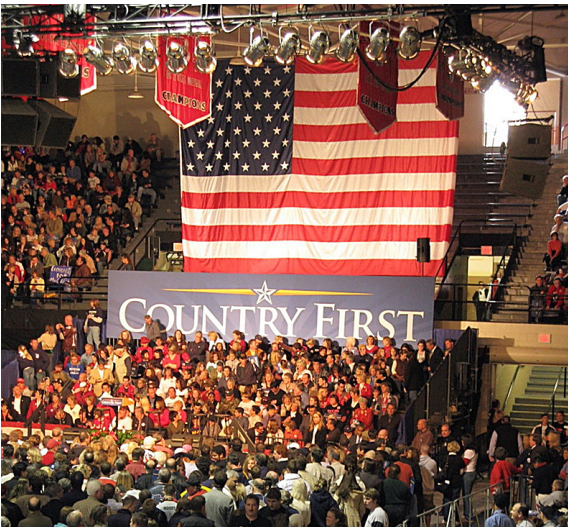


Figure 33. Ready for a Palin Rally. Ohio, November 2008. Source: *palincares4u.org*, September 2009.

"USA, USA, USA" as a means of asserting their party's control over the deep meaning of America (Figure 33). Members of the fervent Republican base love the American flag and nation dearly, and they love Sarah Palin too. A t-shirt concisely illustrates (Figure 34), semiotically and emotionally they often blend these three components





Figure 34. Palin on flag t-shirt. Source: Zazzle.com.

to equate Palin with the female essence of America. And because of this powerful blending, many see anyone who disagrees with their political perspectives as therefore un-American. *Right America: Feeling Wronged—Some Voices from the Campaign Trail* (a 2008 documentary by Alexandra Pelosi) interviews participants at several of these McCain/Palin rallies, letting them explain in their own words their particular vision of America, their love of country,

and their great fear of Barack Obama. The film is replete with ritualistic usage of American flags and patriotic paraphernalia, and a window into the disparate and competing ideas of what America truly is or should be, and therefore worthy of viewing by all interested in how symbols are connected and used in contested struggles for the “real” meaning of America.<sup>18</sup>

The connection of Palin to the American flag is perhaps best finally summed up in a moment caught after an autumn campaign rally (Figure 35): a devoted fan wants Sarah Palin’s autograph. Having no paper handy, Palin takes a moment and signs the stick of the fan’s flag. Through that



Figure 35. Sarah Palin autographs flagstick. Source: Mario Tama, Getty Images, Life.com archives, 29 August 2008.

anointment, for that specific American voter, that particular flag now has become not only a memento of a very special day but a sanctified symbol of America. And these powerful semiotic connections she has made to the flag and the female essence of America suggest that, in one way or another, Sarah Palin will remain a significant symbolic figure, representing a distinct vision of America, in the years ahead.



## End Notes

1. See my summary of what needs to be done in this regard in Peter J. Orenski, "Quo Vadimus?: An Essay on the State and Future of Vexillology", *Flag Bulletin* #200 (July-August 2001), pp. 136–137.
2. See, for example, Boleslaw and Marie-Louise D'Otrange Mastai, *The Stars and the Stripes: The American Flag as Art and as History from the Birth of the Republic to the Present* (Old Saybrook, Conn.: Konecky & Konecky, 1973), pp. 26–67.
3. Nancy Jo Fox, *Liberties with Liberty: The Fascinating History of America's Proudest Symbol* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1986); see also Sarah Bayliss, "The Three Faces, All of Them Female, of Liberty", *New York Times*, 2 July 2000, pp. AR32–AR33.
4. "Uncle Sam," *The Capitol Project*. American Studies at the University of Virginia. Crossroads, <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~CAP/SAM/home.htm>, accessed 22 August 2009.
5. Diane C. Arkins, *The Glorious Fourth of July* (Singapore: Pelican Publishing, 2009), *passim*.
6. Laura K. Kidd, "Wave It or Wear It? The United States Flag as a Fashion Icon", *Raven: A Journal of Vexillology* #14 (2007), pp. 44–49.
7. Katherine Thomson, "American Flag Bikini Moments: What's Your Favorite?" *Huffington Post.com*, 5 July 2009, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/04/american-flag-bikini-mome\\_n\\_225634.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/04/american-flag-bikini-mome_n_225634.html), accessed 22 August 2009.
8. See Max Paul Friedman, "Simulacrobama: The Mediated Election of 2008," *Journal of American Studies* #43:2 (2009), pp. 341–356. Cambridge University Press, available in pdf at <http://journals.cambridge.org/ams/simulacrobama>.
9. Alex Koppelman, "Sarah Palin, Queen of the Birthers", War Room, 21 August 2009 *Salon.com*, [http://www.salon.com/politics/war\\_room/2009/08/21/palin\\_birthers/index.html?source=newsletter](http://www.salon.com/politics/war_room/2009/08/21/palin_birthers/index.html?source=newsletter), accessed 22 August 2009.
10. Koppelman.
11. See Scot M. Guenter, "Culture Wars, Divided Nation: Battles for Semiotic Control of the American Flag in the Twenty-first Century", *Colours of History: Flags and Banners in the World (Proceedings of the XXII. International Vexillological Congress, FlagBerlin 2007)*, vol. 2, p. 667. See also Johann Hari, "The Republican Party Is Turning into a Cult", *Huffington Post*, 19 August 2009, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/johann-hari/the-republican-party-is-t\\_b\\_262594.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/johann-hari/the-republican-party-is-t_b_262594.html), accessed 23 August 2009.
12. Nate Silver, "'Real' America Looks Different to Palin, Obama", Politics Done Right, 18 October 2008: *fivethirtyeight.com*, <http://www.fivethirtyeight.com/2008/10/real-america-looks-different-to-palin.html>, accessed 23 August 2009.



13. Kim, "Sarah Palin's Flag Pin", *StealtheStyle.com*, 9 October 2008, <http://steal-thestyle.com/tag/flag-brooch/>, accessed 23 August 2009.
14. Alex Koppelman, "Poll: Americans Think Palin Should Be a Homemaker", War Room, 30 July 2009, *Salon.com*, [http://www.salon.com/politics/war\\_room/2009/07/30/palin\\_polling/index.html?source=newsletter](http://www.salon.com/politics/war_room/2009/07/30/palin_polling/index.html?source=newsletter), accessed 23 August 2009.
15. "Sarah Palin Violates the U.S. Flag Code", Workbench, 30 June 2008, *Cadenhead.org*, <http://workbench.cadenhead.org/news/3535/sarah-palin-violates-us-flag-code>, accessed 23 August 2009.
16. Colbert Report, "Purchase/Buy Who's Nailin' Paylin DVD", 5 November 2008, *Palinspin.com*, <http://www.palinspin.com/content/purchase-buy-whos-nailin-paylin-dvd-hustlers-larry-flynts-sarah-palin-lisa-ann-serrah-paylin>, accessed 23 August 2009.
17. See the August 2009 issue of *Runner's World* (<http://www.runnersworld.com>) for the complete photo spread. A few weeks after this paper was originally delivered at NAVA 43 in Charleston, South Carolina, the *Runner's World* image of Palin in the governor's office, at the time relatively unknown beyond the magazine's own readers, appeared on the cover of the 23 November 2009 issue of *Newsweek* magazine along with the title story "How Do You Solve a Problem Like Sarah?". (At the time, Palin was launching a national book tour, aggressively promoting her memoir, *Going Rogue*.) This created a national brouhaha, in part because Palin denounced the cover to her loyal Facebook following, writing "the out-of-context Newsweek approach is sexist and oh-so-expected by now" and she shared with interviewer Barbara Walters, on the air, that she found this treatment of her "a wee bit degrading". Copies of the image immediately circulated all over the Internet, reinforcing the power of the energy created by the juxtaposition of two civil religious symbols. For a summary of the incident, see Newsweek's response at Katie Connolly, "Official Statement on NEWSWEEK's Sarah Palin Cover". The Gagger (blog), 17 November 2009 posting to Newsweek.com, accessible in Newsweek.com archives.
18. Alexandra Pelosi, *Right America: Feeling Wronged—Some Voices from the Campaign Trail*. Documentary, HBO, 2008.