



# Visual Representations of Women

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Scan for all postcard findings:



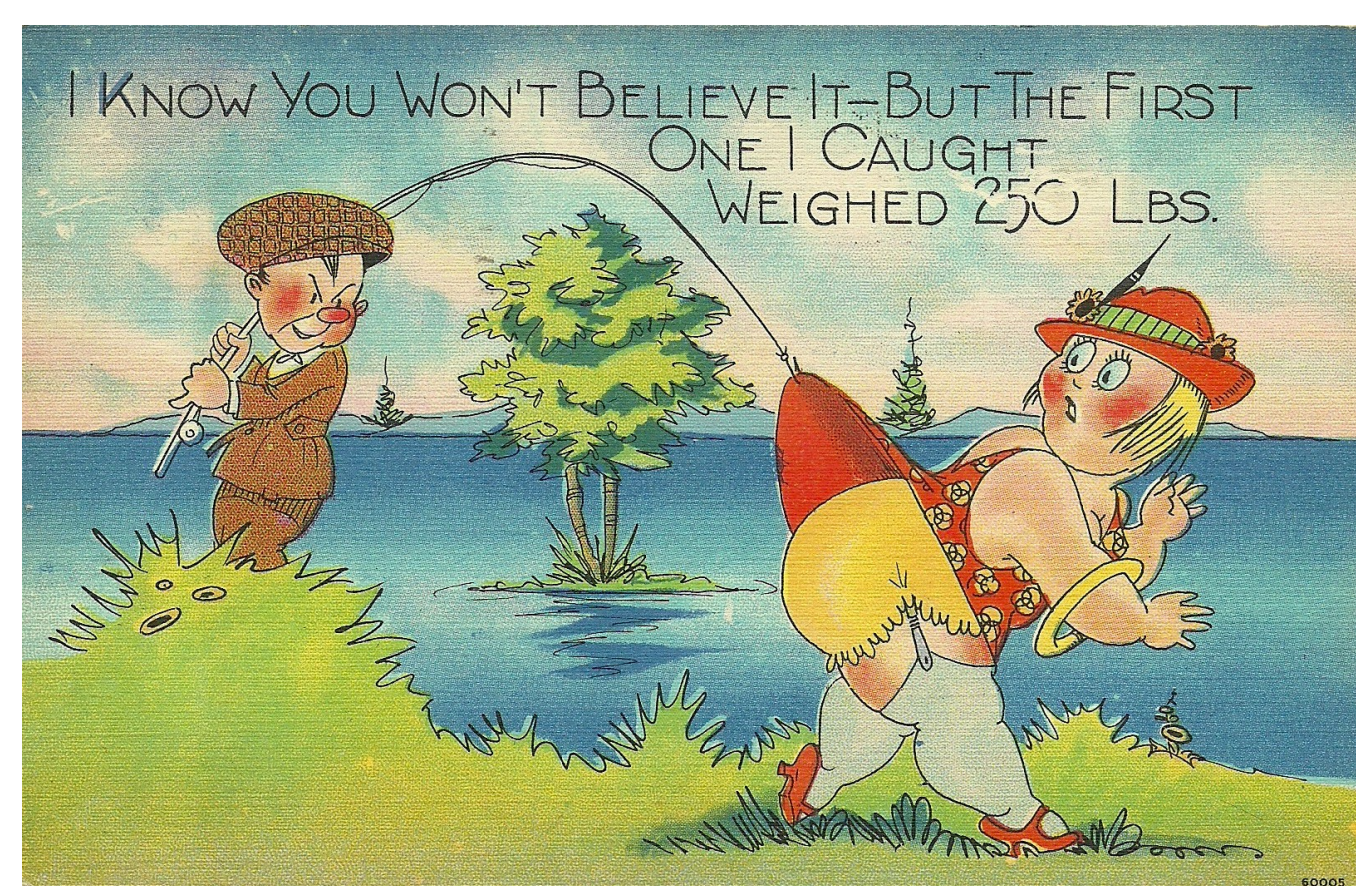
## Abstract

My study is a descriptive analysis of negative visual representations of women in postcards. I specifically focused on cards with cartoon drawings because, in them, artists made specific choices about how to visually represent women to exaggerate features that lead to objectification and body shaming. I began by identifying a range of cards in which women's bodies were represented by an artist. Through an inductive coding scheme, I developed categories around the themes of objectification and body shaming. The cards could be coded as one of these, as both, or as neither. Overall, I coded 18 cards. I conclude that through humor and exaggeration, postcard artists engaged in these sexist practices in a way that was socially acceptable despite the negative social consequences of these visual representations.

## Methods

For this project, I conducted searches of the FSU Card Archive to determine a range of available topics for research. After some initial searches, I narrowed in on visual representations of women using key terms such as travel and woman. I found about twenty cards and used an inductive coding scheme to categorize them. The two categories that emerged from the process were objectification and body shaming of women. After narrowing my focus down to these two categories, I noticed that many of the cards were cartoon drawings, which interested me because in them, the artist made the choice of how to represent women's bodies. Since none of the cartoon cards have a date, I cannot separate the cards chronologically, but many of these cards appear to be within 50-100 years old, which shows how pervasive negative representations of women have been.

## Both Objectification and Body Shaming Findings



### “I Know You Won't Believe It—But The First One I Caught Weighed 250 Lbs”

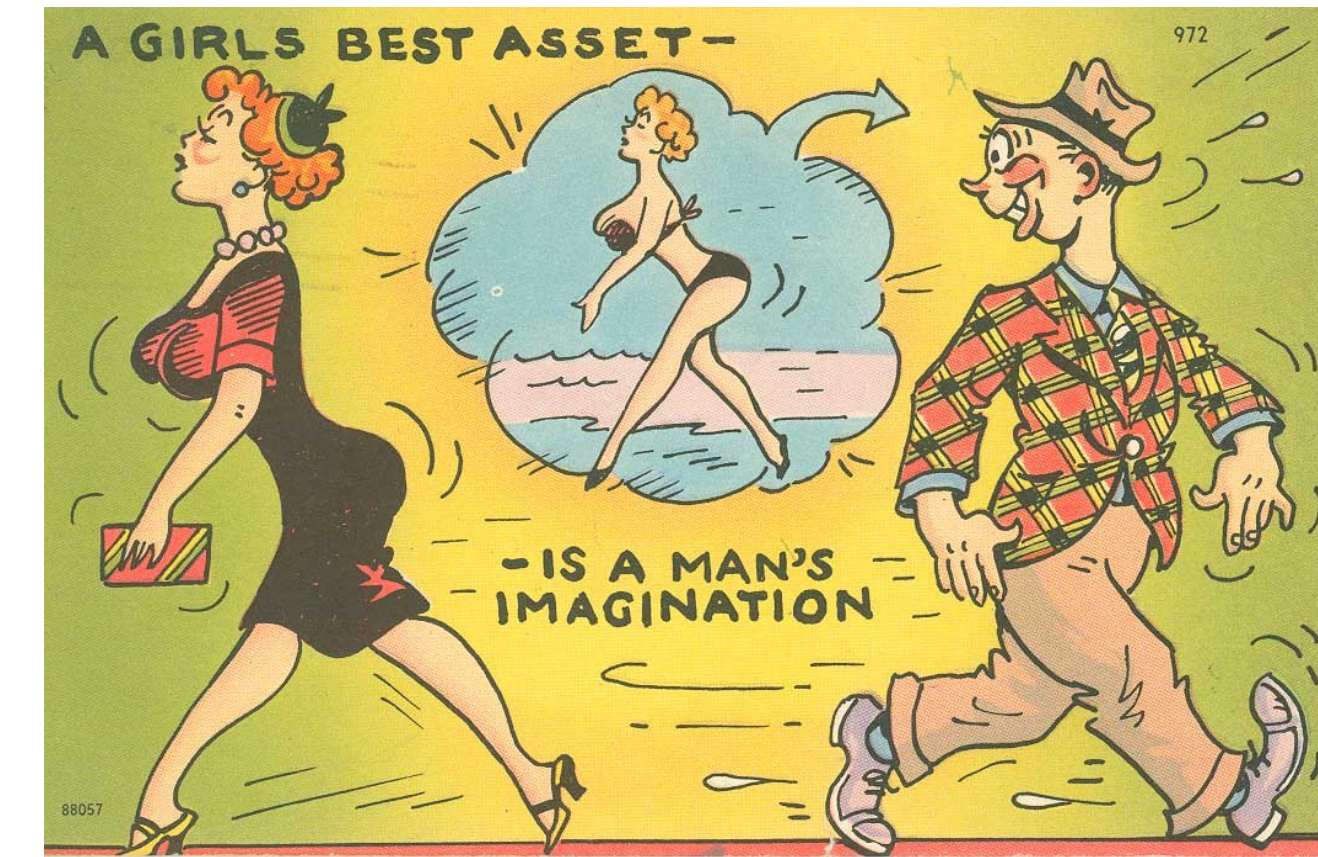
Comparing women to animals is a pattern within these cards. The way in which the artist chose to exaggerate certain body parts of the woman is a form of objectification. Also, by referring to the woman as a 250-pound fish, can be seen as body shaming.

## Results

### Objectification Findings

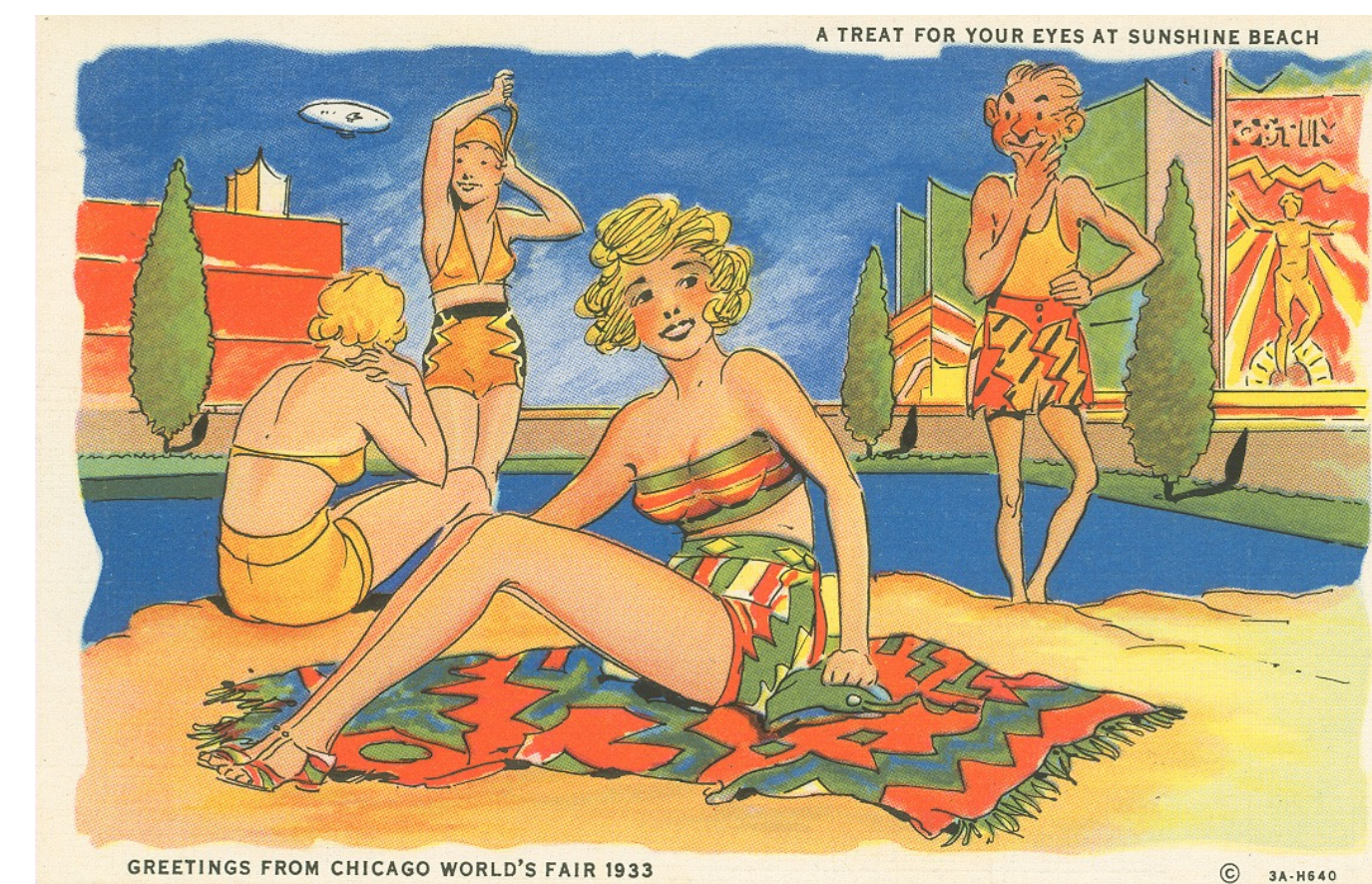
#### “A Girls Best Asset—Is A Man's Imagination”

This postcard displays that women are the object of the male gaze and the male imagination



#### “A Treat For Your Eyes At Sunshine Beach...Greetings From Chicago World's Fair 1933”

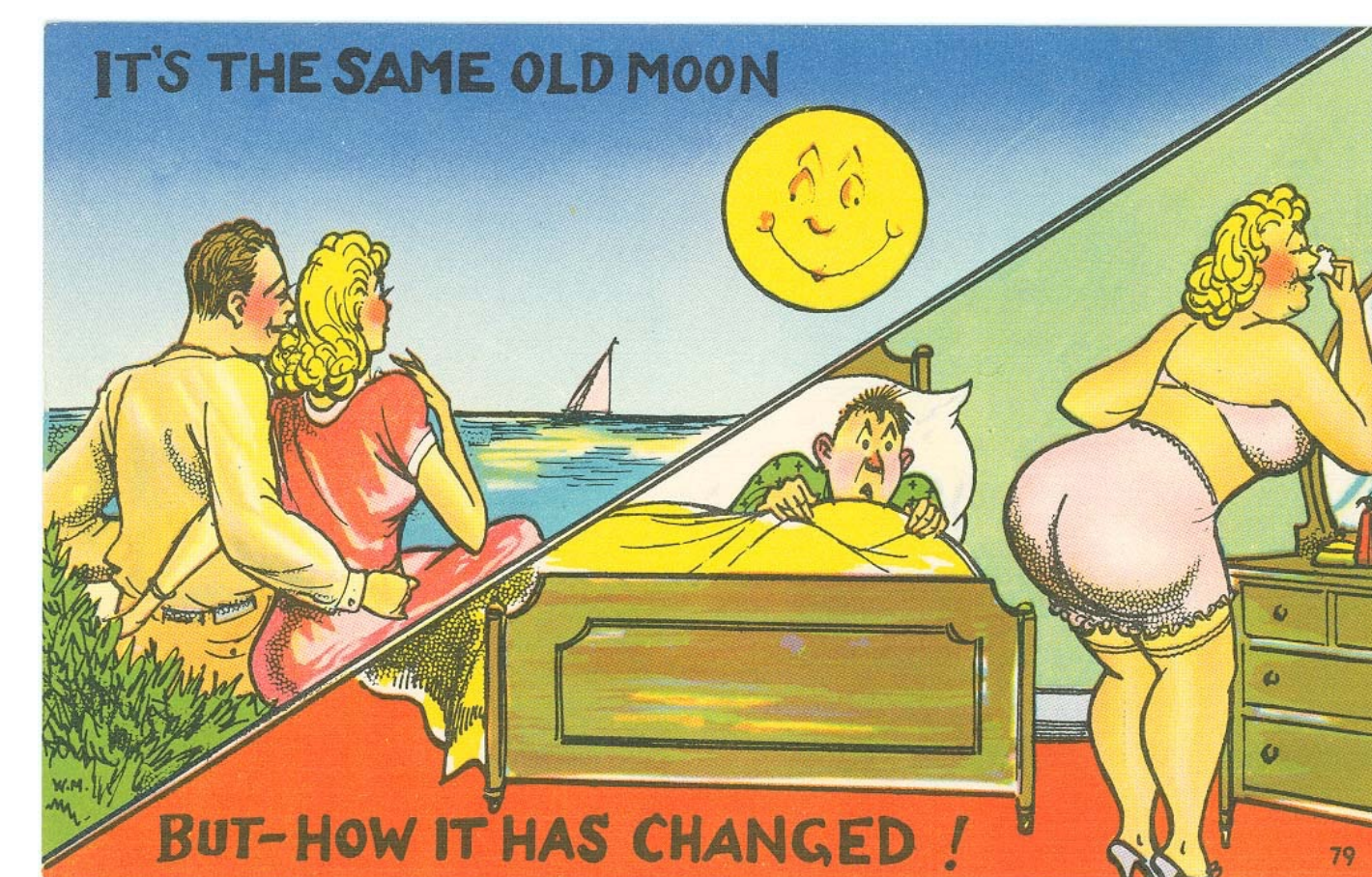
The purpose of the card is to encourage people to visit a location, and they are using women to do so. The card displays women as “a treat.”



### Body Shaming Findings

#### “It's The Same Old Moon But—How It Has Changed”

This postcard shames women for weight gain, and possibly even aging.



#### “Madam, Won't You Take Our Seat?”

By underlining the word “our,” this card is shaming the woman for being larger, implying that she is as big as the men combined.



## Conclusion

These cards represent visual evidence of the objectification and body shaming of women. Though, I found little to no indication of dates on which these cards were produced, it is safe to assume that objectification and body shaming of women are not limited to historic moments but rather persist across time. A majority of these cards are meant to be humorous, and clearly, people think that they are since they were published and purchased. Yet, humor can be used as an excuse or rationale to do social harm. By asking why we as a society find objectification and shaming humorous, we can begin to understand the social consequences of visuals that might otherwise be dismissed as “just a joke.” These cards encourage the public to objectify and shame women, whether this is the main goal of the card or not. They show people that the negative ways in which women are represented are funny and could be considered acceptable because of the widespread acceptance of such visuals within a culture.

## References

- A Girls Best Asset – Is a Man's Imagination.* Tichnor Bros., Inc., Boston, Mass. Postcard.
- A Treat For Your Eyes at Sunshine Beach, 1933.* Postcard.
- Madam, won't you take our seat?* Roth & Langley, NY, 1910. Postcard.
- It's The Same Old Mood But – How It Has Changed!* Asheville Post Card Co. Postcard.
- I Know You Won't Believe It – But the First One I Caught Weighed 250 Lbs.* Tichnor Bros, Inc. Postcard.
- I might be touching at some more points of interest at Coolangatta.* Murray Views, Gympie Q'ld. Postcard.
- There are some things coming off here we're staying to see at Coolangatta.* Murray Views, Gympie Q'ld. Postcard.
- It's not what you are—but what you wear.* Postcard.
- There's No Better Scenery.* Bamforth Comic. Postcard.
- Some Interesting Scenery Here.* C.T. Art. Colortone. Postcard.
- Two of a Kind.* C.T. Pickaninny Comics. Postcard.
- I'm Not the Only Jackass to Support a Woman.* Curteichcolor
- Don't Waste a Second—Come Just as You Are.* Touring Comics, 1936. Postcard.
- This Vacation Business.* Dade County Newsdealers Supply Co. Postcard.
- Travel-Body Image.* Maxtone. Postcard.
- If I can manage to get round.* Bamforth & Co. Publishers (England) and New York, 1908. Postcard.
- We are having tons of fun.* Photo Arts Inc. Postcard.
- He Told Me I Got The Job!* Postcard.