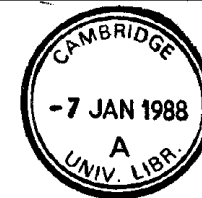


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WOMEN AND WAR

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senses, in pacifist movements and as followers of charismatic male pacifist leaders. These women, too, are greatly outnumbered by the majority of their gender who do not enter into pacifist construals as a chosen identification; indeed, women in overwhelming numbers have supported their state's wars in the modern West. The historic representation that invigorates women's collective self-recognition as essentially caring, concerned, nonviolent beings who can, however, be mobilized as wartime civic cheerleaders and home-front helpmeets—"Women of Britain Say—GO!" was the most famous and effective First World War recruitment poster—is the Just Warrior's better half, the Beautiful Soul.*

Female Privatization: The Beautiful Soul

Beautiful Souls are too good for the world yet absolutely necessary to it. Like Aristotle's female householders, they are a necessary condition for, though not an integral part of, the world of free citizens. The narrative of the Beautiful Soul goes like this: insulated through dense historic and social repetitions from the bruising realities of the "actual world" (Hegel's locution), the Beautiful Soul serves as a repository of innocent convictions and self-definitions. Although individual men and women can be Beautiful Souls as discrete individuals—Hegel does not have women as a constituted group in mind when he unfolds the historic consciousness of beautiful souls—women in the West *have* been cast as a collective Beautiful Soul.

* The locutions I deploy here, which somewhat mock what mobilized women were and did, are intended to defamiliarize collective identities, removing them from their usual surround and relocating them through redescription. This is a strategy not unlike that of the disillusioned poets of the First World War who mocked received notions of honor and heroism: "What passing bells for those who die as cattle?" asked Wilfred Owen.²⁴ To call women's flat-out efforts on the home front to sustain the war effort "civic cheerleading" locates these activities as another way for women to exhort and shore up men from the sidelines, no longer with high-school war cries and pompom waving but with grown-up locutions and actions. This takes nothing away from the importance of such experiences to women themselves, any more than does Owen's poem from the transformative dislocations of soldiering and battle to soldiers themselves.

The coming together of Beautiful Souls (as a form of group identity) frequently yields "rejoicing over . . . mutual purity, mutual assurance of their conscientiousness" together with expressions of yearnings ardently cast but insufficiently realized to take this collective "her" beyond the need to "preserve the purity" of her heart.²⁵* This construction got solidified, as ambiguities and alternatives fell away, by the late eighteenth century when, as Natalie Zemon Davis points out, "absolute distinctions between men and women in regard to violence" had come to prevail.²⁶ I explore the ongoing entanglement of contrasting feminisms with this cluster of culturally sanctioned identities.

The feminization of particular areas of social life and concern both constrained women *and* empowered them. Women not only played a part in this outcome, but they were, and are, required to affirm it ongoingly (if unreflectively) as social definition gets fleshed out in self-understanding. Embodying ethical aspirations but denying women a place in the corridors of power; recapitulating aesthetic visions of the "lady" unbesmirched by the sordid wheelings and dealings of commercial society, but insulating her from the nameless perils of uncharted social waters, by lodging women solidly in the domain of *Privatrecht*, or "private right," a sphere that persists in tension with the *Kriegstaat*, or "war state"—the Beautiful Soul constellation of enshrined ideas dooms women to lose certain battles over and over again. Pellucid neither to herself nor to others, the Beautiful Soul is custodian and conservator of elemental chords of human memory whose echoes are foreordained to be drowned out by the guns of war, she and others to be temporarily or permanently blinded by the state as an "Apollonian *Lichtgott*, 'the Light-god' who must find fulfilment and self-renewal in war."²⁷†

Certain social divisions got sealed as historical preliminaries to bourgeois beautiful souldom: between home life and public life; peace and war; family and state; the immediacy of desire ("the law of the Family is an implicit inner essence which is not exposed to the daylight of consciousness but remains an inner feeling") and the self-conscious power of universal life ("ethical life that is conscious of itself and

* This is a bit much, but it speaks to *tendencies*, to *temptations* inherent in the Beautiful Soul's sense of herself. The Just Warrior is subject to similar deformations.

† George Steiner is here discussing Hegel's treatment of the Antigone myth.

actual").²⁸ Too tidy by far, these formulations reflect and invoke bourgeois society's self-definitions and vehement urgencies, an unstable combination of universalist pretensions and privatizing keenings.

That "real men and women" have never been Beautiful Souls and Just Warriors turned out to meet the abstract specifications of Hegel's systematic philosophy is beside the point. Hegel abstracted from social and cultural forces at work, honing them into dense grandiosities. What he captured was an epoch—the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries—in which woman as Beautiful Soul became a constitutive myth explaining, justifying, perhaps even serving as consolation for, women's retreat from sites she once routinely occupied.

Whether as agricultural laborer, tradeswoman, estate manager, sometimes working alongside her husband or her children, sometimes alone or with other women, a medieval woman, for example, held a "full share in . . . private rights and duties" and lived a life that "gave her a great deal of scope, since . . . the home of this period was a very wide sphere."²⁹ Medieval men and women inhabited a structured but loose-fitting *saeculum* in which distinctions between war and peace, reason and emotion, nature and culture, science and faith, domestic and civil, proper and uncouth, even male and female were, to many intents and purposes, blurred. Involved in nearly all the trades guilds, women worked, marketed, hunted and tended animals, and went on pilgrimage. As there was no separate civic or public sphere as a distinct social form, hence no *citizen* in the modern sense, sharp cleavages between civic and private persons had not yet appeared.

These categories congealed over time with the rise of nation-states, markets and capitalism, the construction of peoples as mobilizable populations.* I shall look briefly at just one important discursive influence: Luther's masculinization of theology and privatization of the self, male and female.

Women are not, in Luther's thought, a special "target of opportunity" for privatization. Instead, the overall effect of his political theology is to strip individuals of involvement in the world of "externals," ines-

* I am not here suggesting that we would be well advised to medievalize ourselves—an impossibility in any case. Rather, I am challenging those fond myths that make it possible at this late date for people to believe in History and Progress, grand teleologies deeply entangled in ongoing legitimations of collective violence.

sential—in his view—to the faith of the Christian. What is vital is inner freedom, a continually scrutinized *inner life*. The Christian (Protestant) family as the only secure locus of earthly human hopes was valorized as an arena of compassion, concern, and kindness. But it was also imbued with political definition as the place children learn obedience to authority. Given Luther's strict injunctions to obey secular rule—such obedience cannot compromise the inner freedom of the Christian—his stress on parental authority is an urgent necessity. If the child does not learn obedience in the home, the temporal order will be threatened. Not yet the Puritan's "little commonwealth," Luther's family is unmistakably laced through with politicized imperatives.

Perhaps even more significant in the long run, to a consideration of culturally sanctified semiotics of womanhood, is Luther's deconstruction of potent and authoritative female images. He assaulted the Madonna repeatedly, blasting exaltation of Mary as "one of the chief sins of the Romanists."³⁰ Female saints (and their male colleagues) were collective casualties of this cultural and political war on the medieval tradition, as was the feminized construction of *mater ecclesiae* herself. Promulgating a theology from which the dominant female symbol had been expunged, Luther set in motion, and was himself enmeshed in, that concatenation of forces that gave rise to secular male dominance. His masculinization of theology played an important role as the opening salvo in securing the political theology of the Protestant nation-state.

With veneration of *the* succoring and interceding Mother (rarely thought of as a *wife*) trivialized as "ignorant idolatry," "the female" as a charged repository of *human* hope faded. The medieval Madonna had *not* served primarily as a sign of female privatization; rather, she sanctioned compassion, promised surcease, and dignified earthly sorrow, a routine expectation for human beings living on the edge of mortality in centuries visited by flood, fire, famine, Vikings, and the plague. Neither a sentimental nor a sexless figuration, the Madonna was often portrayed with a breast exposed, being suckled or nuzzled by the Babe. This expression of *maternal* embodiment also retreated into the background, to be superseded by Enlightenment-inspired images of the female (nature) exposed to, and by, the scrutinizing eye of the male (culture). No longer anchored to a semiotics of female power

ARMED CIVIC VIRTUE

and transcendence, increasingly located *out* of the world, "the woman" is deployed as a sign of enshrined conservatism, her consciousness at once entombed *and* incited by bourgeois valorizations—as a brief examination of the ways women marked their identities in and through Beautiful Soul constructions helps make clear.*

Western women have devised various means to *realize* what they in some sense were through cultural definition. Some have sought to bring the ethics of which they were cultural guardians to bear on the bourgeois social and political world. Pictured as frugal, self-sacrificing, at times delicate, the female Beautiful Soul in time of war has been positioned as a mourner, an occasion for war, and a keeper of the flame of nonwarlike values—and has thus been set up as a being, and a whole way of life, men both cherish and seek to flee, both need and despise. For nonwarlike values can take generous forms—sexual love, family devotion, play and contemplation, the aesthetic articulation of a way of life—and constricting ones—moralistic restrictions on simple pleasures, hygienic crusades, rule-bound behavior, insularity of outlook. In peacetime, and through civic action, women may try to make the "outer world" of the *civitas* resemble an image of the perfect home—ordered, healthful, clean, comfortable.†

My argument is *not* that women have set as an explicit, self-conscious task the holding intact of cultural repetitions with which they have been unavoidably entangled. Rather, more subtly, I find fascinating the ways prior constructions have been shored up even when the *explicit* aim of a text, or broadside, or speech, or slogan was to challenge received understandings of woman and her place. During the struggle over women's suffrage, as I indicated in the introduction, suffragists and their opponents often *shared* the same metaphoric and metonymic turf, repeating locutions, reinscribing symbols, evoking tropes that locate men and women in ways that circumscribe rather than enlarge their range of possibility.

Wartime presents many perplexities, for women often engage in tasks recently denied them as they enter occupations previously closed

* Overstated and one-sided, this is a side that needs to be brought out and pinned down in light of the fact that new sightings of the Beautiful Soul can be made even in our very different social world.

† In the United States, several generations of women activists burst out of the house and into urban progressivist reform efforts—a domesticizing strategy that goes back as far as the Greek comedies of "reversal."

The Attempt to Disarm Civic Virtue

to them and take risks from which they have been protected: for example, by becoming teachers (the Civil War gave American women their first real opportunity to teach in large numbers), nurses in dangerous places, industrial laborers, sexual rebels. These social realities, however, need not swamp reigning symbolic constructions that are constitutive features of women's identities.

If one turns to female narratives, one way to expose their repetitions is by interrogating texts, investigating whether Beautiful Soul constructions are being shored up or displaced.* Pertinent questions for such an interrogation would include: (1) Does the author define all women in opposition to all men? (2) Do the author's rhetorical choices invite self-congratulatory responses and lend themselves to sentimentalist reactions? (3) Does the author open or foreclose space for debate and disagreement? Is it possible to challenge her assumptions or conclusions in good faith, or is one required to adopt the voice of an apostate? (4) Does the author compel us to think in the absence of certainty or ensure certainty at the cost of critical reflection? (5) Do the author's formulations *reassure, soothe, bring relief to, reinforce, reaffirm*; or do they *disturb, unsettle, take apart, make ambiguous*? (6) Is the author's voice didactic, ironic, moralistic?

My candidates for this interrogative exercise—to be conducted by the reader, hence presented without interpretation by the writer of this narrative—are texts of various sorts by American and British women, most pirouetting around war:

1916. From a banner hoisted by suffragists on parade before the Republican National Convention

For the Safety of the Nation To the Women Give the Vote
For the Hand that Rocks the Cradle Will Never Rock the Boat!

1916. Countess of Warwick, *A Woman and the War*

Of late years a certain number of women of all classes have been drinking more than is good for them, and since the war broke out the working women's temptations in this direction and the opportunity to indulge them

* One does not ask the author's *real* intentions—a concern irrelevant to the task of determining whether the discursive trail markers erected by a particular author take one back, repeatedly, to the "same" place, especially if she is self-defined as a social critic.

ARMED CIVIC VIRTUE

have grown side by side. . . . The majority of working women are as sober as the majority of every class, but . . . they are matched by thousands of intemperate ones . . . and I feel they should be saved from themselves. . . . The intemperate classes may resent restrictions, but it remains necessary in their own interests. . . . It is her [woman's] mission in this world to sacrifice herself, from the hour when she accepts motherhood until the end. . . . She has found the uses of adversity, she has accepted self-sacrifice for the sake of those who will be the better able to enjoy the rich fruits of life. . . . Motherhood enforces the qualifications of women, justifies their claims and provides them with the material to train for future triumphs. . . . At no period in the history of Western civilisation, has it been more necessary for the women who count as factors in world progress to consider their duty and fulfil it to the extreme limit of their power. . . . Black and yellow races alike are extraordinarily prolific; there is among their women no shirking of duty in that regard.³¹

1918. "The Ten Commandments of Womanhood," "Prepared by the President of the Connecticut Congress of Mothers" (see facing page).

1918. Mrs. F. S. Hallows, *Mothers of Men and Militarism*

Women equally with men have a passionate love of mother-country. . . . Though we loathe slaughter we find that after men have done their best to kill and wound, women are ever ready to mend the broken bodies, soothe the dying, and weep over nameless graves! . . . God made two, a man and a woman, to rule the home—the state is but a larger home. . . . A mother's love is at its best the most *selfless* love of humanity. . . . If all the school histories were collected and cremated, and replaced by a series of international text books compiled under the direction of an international committee, a great forward step would be taken in the direction of decency and true education.³²

1982. Barbara Zanotti, "Patriarchy: A State of War"

Why weren't we prepared for this?—the imminence of nuclear holocaust; the final silencing of life; the brutal extinction of the planet. . . . We have lived with violence so long. We have lived under the rule of the fathers so long. Violence and patriarchy: mirror images. An ethic of destruction as normative. Diminished love of life, a numbing to real events as the final consequence. We are not even prepared. . . . Wars are nothing short of rituals of organized killing presided over by men deemed "the best." The

The Ten Commandments of Womanhood

NINETEEN HUNDRED AND EIGHTEEN

Thou Shalt Not Waste Time, for idleness is shame and sloth a mockery; and lo! the day cometh when thy men shall be called from the harvest and their workshops stand empty and silent.

Thou Shalt Not Waste Substance, for once, thrice and ten times shall thy country call upon thine household for gold, and woe betide the land if at the last thy purses be found bare.

Thou Shalt Not Waste Bread, for every fragment that falls idly from thy board is withheld from the mouths of thine allies' children, and the kits of thy sons and brothers in the trenches.

Thou Shalt Not Bedeck Thyself Lavishly, for the silk upon thy back and the jewel upon thy breast are symbols of dishonor in the hour of Earth's agony and thy nation's peril.

Thou Shalt Not Be Vain and Self-Seeking, for the froward and jealous heart judgeth itself in the sight of the Lord; and in the time of world travail who shall say to her sister, "I did it and thou didst it not."

Hearten Thy Men and Weep Not, for a strong woman begetteth a strong man, and the blasts of adversity blow hard and swift across the world.

Bind Up the Wounds of Thy Men and Soften Their Pain, for thy presence by the light of their campfires is sweet and grateful, and the touch of thy hand deft in the hour of need.

Keep Thou the Faith of Thy Mothers, for in the years of thy country's sacrifice for Independence and Union they served valiantly and quailed not.

Keep Thou the Family Fruitful and Holy, for upon it the Lord shall rebuild His broken peoples.

Serve Thou the Lord Thy God with Diligence, for His houses of worship shall not be empty nor His altars unvisited, in the years of His mighty chastening.

*Prepared by the President of the Connecticut Congress of Mothers
Issued by the Connecticut State Council of Defense*

fact is—they are. They have absorbed in the most complete way the violent character of their own ethos. . . . Women know and feel the lies that maintain nuclear technology because we have been lied to before. We are the victims of patriotical lies. . . . To end the state of war, to halt the momentum toward death, passion for life must flourish. Women are the bearers of lifeloving energy. Ours is the task of deepening that passion for life and separating from all that threatens life, all that diminishes life; becoming who we are as women.³³

1985. Barbara L. Baer, "Apart to the End?"

Male writers view technology and weapons in a way women do not. . . . Men have had a relationship with weapons over the centuries that women have not. . . . The history and technology of its weaponry still fascinate him. I say this not to condemn the male writer but to show how he takes part of a masculine point of view. Women, on the other hand, tend to ignore weapons and even leave out description of war itself. . . . And while men write about the effects of war, they intellectualize them in a way women do not.^{34*}

These excerpts, though selected for the purpose of interrogation, are not unrepresentative. Examples abound, from suffrage leader Carrie Chapman Catt's declaration on the eve of the Second World War that women are "devoid of the war spirit" and men "have made all the wars in history,"† to the militant Alice Paul's insistence, in 1941, that war springs from man's nature, for "women's instincts are constructive. . . . [The guilt of war can be] laid wholly on men."³⁶

Beautiful Souls and Just Warriors, though knocked about, continue (in and through rhetoric brought up to date) as ready-made identities which become particularly compelling, or are made possible only for men, in time of war. And many human beings yearn, secretly and silently, perhaps unaware, for a "war." I mean, that is, they dream dreams of a period of individual and collective testing and *esprit*. In the throes of war, the individual is taken over by a *force majeure*, drawn

* Unable to resist altogether the siren call, I offer the suggestion that Baer alone locates her discussion in a way that, although it makes contact with, it does not get stuck within, the Beautiful Soul labyrinth.

† Mary Beard commented acerbically, with reference to Catt: "In eight words" she rhetorically cleared "women of all war guilt. . . . With that innocence it appeared logical that women . . . were inclined to peace by their very make-up."³⁵

out of the daily grind, absorbed within a wider, swifter stream, does something that "really counts," finds out if he or she has what it takes to fight (or to refuse to fight), to sacrifice, to endure, to triumph, or to survive defeat.

That this *isn't* what it would *really* be like scarcely matters: it would, or has been, enough like that to keep the dream alive, and stubbornly resists dissolution in light of nuclear realities, "home front" vulnerabilities, Vietnam dislocations. "History teaches" us (the collective female "we") that Beautiful Souls have not only not succeeded in stopping the wounding and slaughter of sons, brothers, husbands, fathers, but have more often exhorted men to the task, sustained their efforts, honored their deeds, mourned their loss. But history does not teach; rather, we "teach" *it* by making it "speak" to us in various ways, by remembering this and forgetting that. One form this attempt to teach history currently takes is revitalized just-war thinking.

Implications of the Just-War Tradition

Christians, even as they strive to resist and prevent every form of warfare, have no hesitation in recalling that, in the name of an elementary requirement of justice, peoples have a right and even a duty to protect their existence and freedom by proportionate means against an unjust aggressor.

—*Gaudium et Spes* (the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, a Vatican II document)

Given the view of Nazism that I am assuming, the issue takes this form: should I wager this determinate crime (the killing of innocent people) against that immeasurable evil (a Nazi triumph)?

—MICHAEL WALZER, *Just and Unjust Wars*

One way to tell the story of just-war discourse is to treat it as an authoritative tradition dotted with its own sacred texts, offering a canonical alternative to realism as received truth. Rather than beginning with Machiavelli (or, reaching further back, Thucydides), just war as continuous narrative starts with Augustine; takes up a smattering of medieval canonists; plunges into the sixteenth century with Luther as