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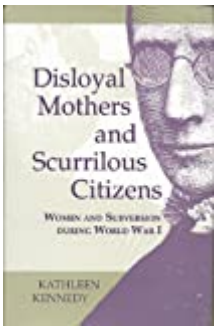

Kathleen Kennedy. *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens: Women and Subversion During World War I.* Bloomington, Ind: Indiana University Press, 1999. 190 pp. $27.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-253-33565-4.

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Women, War and the Meanings of Citizenship

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According to Kennedy, while literature on the World War I-era suppression of dissent in the US is extensive, little attention has been paid to how gender issues affected war-related politics, or women's political speech in general during this period. How the Great War affected the evolution of women's citizenship issues has been studied in Europe, and this project hopes to redress what she believes to be a lack of comparable attention in the US. Her study focuses on "how the wartime legal system and its attendant definitions of loyalty, patriotism and subversion gendered citizenship" and evaluates how the wartime suppression of dissent can be viewed as an "event of gender politics," instrumental in forging the definition of women's citizenship that emerged from the "statebuilding" period of the Progressive Era through the end of the First War.

Mainstream views of the repressive politics of this era evolved from regarding it rather simply as a manifestation of wartime hysteria to placing its seeming aberrations into their larger context of nativism and cultural politics. Following this general approach, the author first presents a concise overview of the current scholarship on the complex cultural, political, and legal context of wartime political repression. Kennedy interweaves concrete examples of ideological conflicts between individuals in "progressive" political movements to illuminate the profound and difficult divisions generated by the Great War, America's response to this human catastrophe, and the complex interplay between women's nascent political speech and the controversies of the time. This study focuses on women's roles in leftist and "protest" speech of the time, and only indirectly on those in rightist or conservative, pro-war political activity.

A major strength of her book is the coherent, clearly organized background she provides for the focus of her study, summarizing complex issues with a minimum of "jargon," and showing how "women's" issues were connected with all aspects of national political and cultural debate. It is apparent how little these political/cultural arguments could fit easily into the familiar political spectrum of later decades. "Progressive" women's rights activists who promoted public policy and state power to bridle the excesses of laissez faire capitalism found com-

mon cause with socially conservative nationalists as both sought to increase the role of government in American life, while a significant peace movement grounded itself in the same "maternalist" ideology that was used by others to glorify women's sacrifice of their sons and husbands to war. But in addition to these various aspects of "social feminism," which saw women's primary worth as actual or potential mothers, there was a current of "equity feminism," which saw women's worth in their status as sentient individuals-an argument for political equality located in the tradition of civic liberties.

Kennedy notes that war is conventionally described as "gendering," tending to reinforce traditional sex roles and in particular privilege men's social roles and conventionally masculine attitudes and values, while in fact its effects on society are far more complex. The stress of threatened war resulted in sometimes intense attention to "social reproduction," the multitude of ways, often outside the monetary economy, that women contribute to the commonweath including the critical socialization of the young and enabling the "paid" work of others. Its value seemed mostly explicated by the pro-military, pro-war and nationalist community –and it sometimes took the form of advocating the state have much more direct control over the socialization of youth, that is, to usurp women's traditional authority in this area. This fear that women were becoming too powerful in their social reproduction roles focused specifically on their presumed ability to create loyal male citizen/soldiers-or to fail to do so by adherence to "other" beliefs and purposes. By contrast, those who based either their activism for voting rights, or opposition to the war, in the civil liberties tradition seemed to pay little attention to this issue.

Kennedy locates the source of this nationalist view of women's roles in the same maternalism that underlay the "progressive" social policies of preceding decades, which sought to elevate motherhood's social standing and ameliorate the effects of laissez-faire capitalism on women and the poor. But this intrusion of the state into the realm of the family affected the state in turn – creating a "domestication of politics," the identification of the welfare of women and children, the "sanctity" of the home and the female body, as legitimate areas of concern to the state, a cultural development clearly apparent in popular media of the time.

The recognition of women's entry into the realm of formal politics is clearly apparent as advocates of all political stripes tried to attach the idea of women's "natural interests" to their favored course of state policy. But in the end women could not be exclusively identified with any one response to the Great War.

As reformers and radicals raised questions about women's role in the political commonwealth, so did their political opponents. The author sets the stage for her examination of individual cases by dissecting the idea of the female citizen as developed by the nationalist, "pro-war" political community, against which these "scurrilous citizens" spoke and acted–the ideology of "patriotic motherhood." Kennedy applies this term to a view of women that defines their highest and most essential social role as the production of responsible male citizens, especially soldiers, who know their duty. Finally, she analyses in detail a cross-section of cases against women who were charged with disloyalty or subversion in some capacity. She examines "celebrity" national political leaders, women whose conflicts arose out of local leadership in labor or schools, and finally women who ran afoul of authority through their professional acts or personal beliefs.

The outbreak of war in Europe turned Americans' attention from domestic concerns to an international world more profoundly destabilized than they had known for generations. Kennedy's review of the war controversy shows not merely a debate over America's defense and role in the world, but also on questions of what duties the citizen owed the commonwealth in exchange for its protection and participation in public life. Ongoing debates over the philosophical justification for women's rights and women's citizenship reflected differing concepts of the meaning of citizenship itself–is it earned by service to the state or commonwealth or an innate and inalienable right of the rational individual? Can loyalty or "citizenship" be to a transnational class or ideal, rather than to the nation-state?

These often bitter divisions became dramatically overt at the 1917 Socialist Party convention in St. Louis, where a majority resolution endorsed active interference in the war effort, a policy platform that would be defined as disloyal under any accepted norms for the modern nation state. (While a minority third party, it should be noted that the Socialist Party was by no means a political nonentity during this period.) Those who defined themselves as progressive/leftist/radical were forced to choose between, or struggle to reconcile, their adherence to ideology of the time and their loyalty to their nation, and this issue is central to how their conflicts with authority both developed and were perceived by the public.

Kennedy's study of women's political reaction to the

Great War shows how the relationship of women to war became critical to how activists sought to justify and define their citizenship, and suggests that it was ultimately also critical to how American society came to value military service to the state in defining the citizenship and social roles of men.

The author summarizes the varied aspects of the well-studied "virility impulse" and masculinist politics that colored the nationalist ideologies and the preparedness movement, including its multiple linkages with issues of gender and race. While there were obviously rational national security concerns behind the "preparedness" issue, public debate gave a large place to ideological and psychosocial issues. Advocates of "preparedness" and the draft emphasized not only the concepts of manliness and duty, but (here as later) its desirable social engineering effects. Nationalist discourse strongly interwove family life, military/civic virtues, and national strength, and some striking examples were articulated by Theodore Roosevelt, who condemned pacifist women for betraying other women by exposing them to sexual predation, just as men who refused to defend the nation betrayed their families by exposing them to violence.

This advocacy of the many supposed moral and social benefits of war also appealed to many female activists, who expected it to produce the stronger state, more controlled economy, and more duty-based public culture that would further their concept of women's interests. These pro-war expectations fit within the framework of "progressive" goals and further within a particular realm of ideas and programs, the "female dominion" of expertise and legitimate but limited public authority that Kennedy notes women had created by this time.

But "preparedness" was not the only possible reaction to the European war and potential threats to US prosperity and security. Unlike pre-war peace/disarmament movements, which were mostly legalistic or business-based, the women's peace movement based its pacifism in the argument that women's natural interests were opposed to war. And unlike the "pro-war progressives," women against the war used an explicitly "feminine" ideology to expand their political action into the arenas of national and military policy. Kennedy suggests that that nationalist opinion began to explicitly propagandize the concept of patriotic motherhood in response to this challenge.

The debate over duties of (male) citizens also caused debates over women's rights to consider the issue of their apparent non-eligibility for military service. Criticizing the program of the Women's Peace Party (WPP), the New Republic magazine (a leading forum for "pro-war Progressives") observed that the women of America, unlike their European sisters, were neither exposed to the hazards of war nor living under the tension of direct threats to their nation or homes and that women needed to gain more experience in domestic politics before venturing into the international arena. This superficially reasonable critique is broken down by the author's observation that the editors of the New Republic had no more personal experience of the hazards of war than the members of the WPP, and many female political leaders already had considerable experience in domestic politics. Rather, their argument women were not "ready" to influence national policy for war appeared to rest on the two functions in society still reserved for men, soldiering and, through the franchise, the ultimate if indirect capacity to decide questions of war and peace, with the inference that this capacity to serve and sacrifice for the state/commonwealth represented a form of citizenship women could not share.

Since women were assumed, even by those who defined themselves as progressives or feminists, to be incapable of military service, the concept of citizenship being advanced by the "preparedness" and nationalist communities seemed to exclude them. If women cannot fight, then what? Three broad responses seemed to emerge from the increasingly fractured women's rights movement, all of which attempted to define female citizenship in some manner related to the war.

The first sought to justify women's roles as vital but different, and equal to men's in the prosecution of the war (maternalism as "patriotic motherhood"), the second to justify women's political expression as necessary to counterbalance men's flawed politics (maternalism as pacifism/socialism); and the last focused on the paradox of a "crusade" for human rights abroad by a state that denied a basic political right to persons at home–an equity-based view that regarded human rights as innate, and decoupled arguments for women's suffrage from any war- or service-related citizenship justification.

Regardless of where they stood politically feminists and dissidents in general struggled with the challenges the war posed to their beliefs and loyalties, and they acted in an environment that was, by current US standards, extraordinarily hostile to free speech and unpopular positions. This long-standing intolerance was grounded in the intense labor disputes of the late nineteenth century and the perception of inflammatory, often alien radical speech as a cause. The special wartime "emergency acts,"

however, placed the enforcement powers of national authority behind this existing identification of dissenting speech as dangerous to the Republic, and could be-and were-interpreted by the courts as criminalizing any criticism of the government or its policies. "By the end of the war, both federal and state governments had in place an apparatus designed solely to control domestic dissent.

These changes resulted in the modern surveillance state." But as the St. Louis resolution and the occurrence of some German sabotage (even while while the US was still neutral) indicate though, the dangers seen to be posed by homegrown radicals, hostile acts of foreign governments, and "unassimilated" immigrant groups cannot simply be regarded mirages generated by those who feared differentness or loss of privilege.

While women made up only a small percentage of the persons convicted under these "emergency acts", they were overwhelmingly women already outside the norm in some fashion-political leaders, medical doctors, teachers or other professionals. Additionally, they were particularly prominent defendants in part because men were often arrested en masse, but especially due to their conspicuousness as female leaders and, the author implies, to the centrality of perceptions of women's roles to public discourse over America's response to the war. Kennedy seeks to demonstrate that, while the laws under which they were charged took notice of gender as written, a close reading of both the trial proceedings and public commentary reveals that the defendants were also on trial for opposition to, or failure to conform to, either the ideology of patriotic motherhood or societal norms in some respect.

The case studies allow the author to illustrate her arguments by examining in detail how these trials, addressed a multitude of interlocking issues on women, nationalism, and social values. The major cases address different philosophic and political grounds for anti-war activism, the "secondary" cases explore how various female (and also male) defendants were explicitly judged on their views on marriage and other social issues, as well as narrowly on their illegal speech. The defendants, many foreign-born, consistently attempted to portray themselves in the public eye as rational political actors, and to define themselves as belonging to a larger American political community by identifying their goals with aspects of US political and cultural history. By contrast their prosecutors and critics attempted to define them "out" of the community, as threats to core values and often as irrational or degenerate persons.

In particular, the cases involving educators shine an intriguing light on how the schools and the teaching profession became an important battleground in the struggle to define the new nature of American citizenship and society. Both before and during the war, preparedness/loyalty activism brought about much more centralized state and federal control over curricula and content, as well as overtly addressing what role schools should play in creating the citizens America needed-a legacy that continues today.

Kennedy's study offers a different perspective on a critical era in US history. As the destabilized international situation and maturing industrial economy at home forced a recognition that the weak state structure and laissez faire capitalism of the previous century could not continue, we debated what sort of society we were building domestically. Her work illuminates the significant role women's issues and political activism played in this process well before they acquired voting rights.

Reviewing the attempts to enforce particular value on motherhood, she notes that at its narrowest, patriotic motherhood reduced women to their "basest biological functions." In a world where military power was expressed as mass armies and industrial production, which further require a powerful state structure to be effective, a perceived foreign threat presented American society with an apparent quandary: transform into a "military state" or run the terrible risks of weakness–both projected the loss of our traditional values and way of life. In this context patriotic motherhood might be seen as an attempt to build social values that could successfully meet the challenges of the new era, as aspect the author does not explore.

Kennedy does not attempt to link her dissidents or their ideals with the eventual extension of the franchise to women. Nevertheless her well-written book offers much food for thought on how the struggles over women's citizenship help shape how Americans would come to define their relationship with the state. The public continued to reject Bolshevism, communism and socialist internationalism, but ultimately the ideology of patriotic motherhood did not take root either. Women obtained voting rights without regard to the issue of service to the state–i.e., the "polis" model of citizenship was rejected, and thereby for men also despite the presence of a real or potential draft for much of the century–and overt attention to women's social reproduction roles faded from American cultural politics as social feminism was marginalized on the left as well.

The author appears to maintain that this era brought together an expanding state, national security fears and conformist, nativist beliefs to produce a culture that could not tolerate dissent, and that this was a lasting development. This view, however, is contradicted by another development of the World War I period she does not mention, the growth of an activist, pro-free speech legal culture. Since that time US society and government have moved away from this extreme intolerance of dissent, despite the arguably greater threats posed by World War II and the Cold War and the trend to a stronger state and military.

Overall, "Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens" is a concise and highly readable study of women's influence on a crucial era in American political and cultural history, one that quietly illuminates our society's choices in the face of the challenges of the 20th century.

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