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Addams’s Internationalist Pacifism and the Rhetoric of Maternalism

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Addams’s pacifism grew out of her experiences working for social justice in Chicago’s multi-national immigrant community. It rested on her well-tested conviction that justice and international comity could only be achieved through nonviolent means. While Addams at times used maternalist rhetoric, her pacifism was not based on a belief in woman’s essential, pacifist nature. Instead, it was grounded on her understanding of democracy, social justice, and international peace as mutually defining concepts. For Addams, progress toward democracy, social justice, and peace involved both institutional reform and changes in moral, intellectual, and affective sensibilities. A person’s sensibilities grow out of his or her experiences and change as that person encounters and reflects on new experiences. That is, acquiring new points of view entails reframing old viewpoints in light of the new experiences. In her speeches and writings, Addams often tried to foster such transitions. Addams’s peace writings demonstrate that she believed there were many paths toward peaceful internationalism. Addams used many rhetorical frames, varying them in order to communicate most effectively with specific audiences. When Addams used maternalist rhetoric, she was showing how those who framed their experiences in these terms could revise and broaden this frame toward a peaceful internationalism.

Keywords: Jane Addams / peace studies / peace activism / internationalism / maternalism

“I never knew anyone who so admirably combined willingness to yield what was due to others with maintenance of her own convictions as Jane Addams.”
—Helena Swanwick, 1935, 451

As the centenary of the publication of Addams’s Newer Ideals of Peace approaches, this is a good time to examine Addams’s theory and practice of pacifism. Swanwick’s observation in the above epigraph gives a clue to Addams’s method. Addams rarely argued directly against other people. She wanted to work with coalitions toward shared goals and did not want philosophical differences to hinder collaboration. She began with the beliefs and commitments people had and sought ways to work with them toward democratic, just, and peaceful relations.

Her “willingness to yield what was due to others” helps to account for Addams’s achievements toward social reform at the Hull House Settlement, and toward international understanding with the Women’s International
League for Peace and Freedom. However, if scholars, trying to cull out Addams's positions, are unaware of this trait, they can easily misinterpret her words. Such is the case with her use of maternalist rhetoric. Elshtain, for example, uses Addams's war writings to conclude, "Addams's is a sophisticated statement of woman as pacific Other. . . . In asserting the 'eternal opposition' between feminism and militarism, Addams constructs feminism as a collective Other, countering the collective embodiment of the warrior mentality and a politics of force and coercion" (1987, 235). In a similar vein, Deegan writes, "Addams thought that women were biologically superior to men because of their maternal instincts" (1988, 242). Deegan asserts that cultural feminism was Addams's "major intellectual stance," leading Addams to believe that woman's superior, feminine values of peace, nurture, and cooperation should be extended to all aspects of society (1988, 225–7).

Addams did use maternalist rhetoric in her writings on peace. However, I will show that she was not a maternalist in the sense Elshtain and Deegan claim. Instead, Addams's use of maternalist rhetoric was one manifestation of her "willingness to yield what was due to others," a part of enacting her pragmatist method of social change as the only sound approach toward a just and democratic peace.¹ To show this, I will contextualize her use of maternalist rhetoric by first discussing how she came to pacifism, and by then laying out her method of social change. This will provide a framework for interpreting her use of maternalist rhetoric in Newer Ideals of Peace (1907/2003) and in her war-time speeches and writings.

Addams did not come to pacifism through maternalist beliefs about woman's essential nature or through an unconditional commitment to nonviolence. She came to pacifism through her work with Chicago's multinational, immigrant communities.² Two dimensions of her work at Hull House were formative for her pacifism: the neighborhood's multinational character and her participation in forming labor unions and negotiating strikes.

When Addams moved to Chicago in 1889, three-fourths of the residents were immigrants or children of immigrants [Brown 2004, 212]. A Hull House survey in 1895 found immigrants from eighteen nations in the immediate vicinity [Holbrook 1895, 17]. The community's needs were obvious, as Addams noted, "The streets are inexpressibly dirty, the number of schools inadequate, factory legislation unenforced, the street-lighting bad, the paving miserable . . . and the stables defy all laws of sanitation. Hundreds of houses are unconnected with the street sewer" [1892/2002a, 30]. Addams and her colleagues in the Progressive movement worked for institutional reform in government, industry, and education to address these problems. However, in working closely with her immigrant neighbors, Addams noted more intimate changes taking place. Given the necessities of sheer survival, her neighbors worked out modes of living
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Together and caring for each other that transcended barriers stemming from former national loyalties. In Twenty Years at Hull House, Addams describes this transformation as “a sturdy and virile” internationalism (1910/1990, 178). To her, the local and the international were closely intertwined.

Addams strongly supported labor unions and saw their activities as crucial to democracy and justice. Yet, she was troubled by the violence that sometimes accompanied strikes. She saw firsthand how violence fostered animosity and how respectful disagreements deteriorated into hardened animosity. Repeatedly, she watched violence interrupt and reverse the careful, slow processes of fostering the democratic relations of trust and solidarity upon which social progress depended (Addams 1910/1990, 125–9).

In an early essay, Addams explained her aim at Hull House. “The social and educational activities of a Settlement are but differing manifestations of the attempt to socialize democracy, as is the existence of the settlement itself” (1892/2002b, 19). Addams stresses how our thoughts and imaginations are bounded by our experience, and how, through stretching our experiences, we can test and correct our moral, intellectual, and affective sensibilities. This stretching is critical to democracy, which rests, Addams claims, on “diversified human experience and resultant sympathy” (1902/2002, 7). For Addams, democracy is far more than a form of governmental machinery—it is a way of living together in families, communities, and workplaces, and is characterized by solidarity, trust, and widespread participation in community life.

Through her experiences in trying to “socialize democracy” in Chicago, Addams derived her theory of social change. For a society to be democratic, democratic social relations of trust and solidarity must be woven deeply into the fabric of daily living. These moral, intellectual, and affective sensibilities grow imperceptibly as people work together on the tasks of daily living. Addams and her fellow pragmatists describe this process as a “reconstruction of experience,” a process through which cognitive frames and affective attitudes are stretched, broadened, and reformulated. Because this reconstruction of experience is integral to the process of change and is in fact, one of the outcomes, “means” and “ends” cannot be separated. Democratic, just ends can only be obtained through democratic, consensual means. When violent methods are used, the violence affixes itself within the “reconstruction of experience” and corrupts the outcome.

Addams’s Hull House neighborhood was to her a world in microcosm. Her pacifism grew out of her understanding of democracy as a way of living together in multicultural, multinational settings, and out of her conviction that violence destroys the solidarity, trust, and openness to the “reconstruction of experience” that democracy requires. In an 1899 speech...
to the Central Anti-Imperialist League of Chicago, Addams articulated her definition of peace as “no longer merely absence of war, but the unfolding of life processes which are making for a common development.” To this she added, “Unless the present situation extends our nationalism into internationalism, unless it has thrust forward our patriotism into humanitarianism we cannot meet it” [1]. Throughout her life, this way of framing her quest for peace—in terms of democracy, social justice, and international understanding—stayed with her. We can understand Addams’s use of maternal rhetoric by placing it within this frame.

**Newer Ideals of Peace (1907)**

For Addams, the challenge in working for peace involved working for institutional reform and encouraging people to “reconstruct their experience” toward internationalism. In *Newer Ideals of Peace*, she frames this task using vocabulary and concepts drawn from social evolutionary theories of the day. She associates warfare with the bifurcated morality of tribal life, in which compassion and loyalty are directed toward those inside one’s own tribe, but enmity toward those outside. Addams argues that in a time of increasing industrialization and global interdependence, such bifurcated moral codes have become anachronistic [1907/2003, 10–1]. Addams values ties of tribal loyalty and the virtues of courage, heroism, and self-sacrifice that sustained them. However, these virtues need to be extended across national lines. It was time to displace “the juvenile propensities to warfare” with an “all-absorbing passion for multiform life, with the desire to understand its mysteries and to free its capacities” [10].

Many of Addams’s contemporaries shared this evolutionary paradigm and agreed that civilization was progressing beyond warfare [Marchand 1972, 83; Curti 1959, 119–20]. As evidence of this progress, some pointed to the growth of international commerce and to increased interest in arbitration treaties and international law [Marchand 1972]. By contrast, Addams looked to her impoverished, immigrant neighbors and saw there “a forecast of coming international relations.” Because they were uprooted from traditional patterns of life and forced to adjust to new conditions, her immigrant neighbors had “unusual mental alertness.” They were learning through daily interactions to care for and deal peacefully with people outside their national groups of origin, thus reconstructing their experience through their actions toward and perceptions of each other [Addams 1907/2003, 11–3]. They were stretching their nationalism toward internationalism, and their patriotism toward humanitarianism.

However, there was much work to be done. In keeping with her definition of peace as “the unfolding of life processes which are making for a common development” [1899/2003, 1], Addams also looked for structures of injustice.
within the United States, structures that sustained the adolescent propensity for war. For this analysis, Addams borrowed the terms “militarism” and “industrialism” from Herbert Spencer’s sociology. According to Spencer, in a militaristic society, order is maintained through hierarchy and repression. Spencer labels “industrial” a society organized for freedom and concerned with personal and social well-being, traits he associated with laissez-faire capitalism and classical political liberalism (1896, volume 1, 544–57). He was a pacifist, believing that warfare could no longer lead to social progress (volume 2, 663–5).

In light of progressive reform efforts at that time, Addams believed that the United States was moving from industrialism toward a stage she called humanitarianism. She anticipated that as government took responsibility for human well-being, government itself would be transformed from a hierarchical, repressive, and hence “militaristic” institution to a highly participatory, social democracy, responsive to the needs and lives of all the people [1907/2003, 12–9]. Concomitantly, people’s sympathies would increasingly cross class, ethnic, and national lines, growing into what Addams calls “cosmopolitan humanitarianism” (1907/2003, 41).

However, this path was bumpy, full of militaristic survivals that obstructed progress. In Newer Ideals of Peace, Addams examines the day-to-day experience of poor people, immigrants, and industrial workers and reports on how militarism still structured their lives. In spite of the rhetoric of equality and freedom, these people experienced municipal authorities and industrial employers as coercive and uninterested in their well-being. Addams applies the pragmatist test to classical economic and political liberalism: how do institutional structures based on these theories affect the daily lives of those without social privilege?

The book is peppered with women’s experiences, mixed in with those of men and children. Addams also devotes a chapter, “Utilization of Women in City Government,” specifically to women’s concerns. Using maternalist rhetoric common to the day, she describes city governance as “enlarged housekeeping,” to which women could make significant contributions because of their experience as housekeepers and caretakers (1907/2003, 90). The housekeepers she has in mind, however, are not middle-class, Victorian women, residing in their own separate sphere. Referring again to social evolutionary theory, Addams draws her models from pre-industrial women, who are in charge of sanitation, textiles, food production, child care, education, and health. These women are vigorous, active, and skillful contributors to the public good (1907/2003, 91).

Addams’s argument for women’s suffrage is neither an equal rights argument, nor a “difference” argument; women are entitled to the vote because of their knowledge, experience, and expertise in areas critical to good governance (1907/2003, 91). What is interesting for our purposes is that Addams frames women’s entitlement to the city franchise as a move
away from militarism and toward industrialism and humanitarianism. Many at the time argued that because men bore military responsibility for defense, only men were entitled to the franchise (Marchand 1972, 200). Addams responds that this argument had become antiquated because the nature of government itself had evolved (Addams 1907/2003, 89). For Addams, “enlarged housekeeping” signaled an evolutionary advance from the medieval, militaristic model of the walled city. The needs of a modern city were quite different. Humanitarian needs for clean water, sanitation, disease prevention, untainted food supply, and education were the same needs that women had been addressing since tribal times. In carrying out these responsibilities, women acquired knowledge, skill, and affective care, and thus could serve as essential resources to good city governance. To call these civic functions “housekeeping” signaled to women that they belonged in the public sphere and had much to offer there.

Here we see Addams using maternalist rhetoric in the service of her method of social change. Women, she predicted, would see that the skills they had historically exercised in their communities and families could be channeled into the public sphere and applied toward ameliorating industrial and political conditions (1907/2003, 96). In terms of this larger, historic continuity, women would see that in adopting the ideology of separate spheres, they had abandoned their traditional responsibilities to the community and thus deviated from the path of social evolution. That is, women would “reconstruct their experience,” and in the process redefine their sense of identity and obligation by embracing wider responsibilities for justice and peace.

In viewing humanitarianism as a necessary step toward peace, Addams was proposing that women had a good deal to contribute toward peace. Their potential contributions did not stem from an essential pacifist nature, nor from their potentially purifying effect on politics. Their potential contributions were grittier than that. Women, particularly poor women and immigrant women, had skills and expertise useful for shaping a humane, just society, a necessary step toward peace.

It is important to note that this chapter on women is part of Newer Ideals of Peace, a book that presents a broad critique of classical economic and political liberalism, and of the imperialism of that time. Addams employed maternal rhetoric as just one piece of a much larger critique, demonstrating that peace among nation-states is intimately tied to social justice within states.
Two Speeches in 1915

World War I began in Europe in August 1914. That fall, two feminist-pacifists, Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence of Great Britain and Rozika Schwimmer of Hungary, came to the United States and persuaded Addams and Carrie Chapman Catt to call a meeting of women's organizations to protest the war. In articles appearing on 5 December 1914, in *Harpers Weekly* and *The Survey*, Pethick-Lawrence wrote about how the women's movement could and should be a revitalizing force in leading the world from war to peace. She refers to women as “the natural custodians of the human race” and “the mother half of humanity.” She states that underneath women's outward support for war, they deny that war is necessary. Deep in their hearts “there is a rooted revolt against the destruction of the blossoming manhood of the race” (1914b, 230; 1914a, 542).

Maternalist rhetoric was ubiquitous at the founding conference of the Woman's Peace Party.8 The 3,000 women gathered in Washington, D.C. on 10 January 1915 listened as Anna Garlin Spencer presented the platform's preamble, which stated, “As women, we feel a peculiar moral passion of revolt against both the cruelty and the waste of war. As women, we are especially the custodians of the life of the ages. We will not [sic] longer consent to its reckless destruction” (Degen 1939/1974, 38). The preamble goes on to describe how women have been responsible for the young, the old, the helpless, and for the home. Thus, as “the mother half of humanity,” they have the right to be heard regarding international disputes (Woman's Peace Party 1915/1988).

Maternalist rhetoric was also thick in the speeches delivered that day. Janet Richards of the National Conference of Catholic Charities asked the audience, “Why do you women feel that you are specially qualified to inaugurate and launch a special woman's movement for peace? Because woman is naturally constructive, not destructive, and you know that. Woman conserves the home; woman protects the child; woman does not lead in great battles; you do not find her ready to march forward in serried ranks to murder. We are unalterably opposed to war.” Anna Howard Shaw ended her speech with this stirring call, “Woman, the mother of the race, is the great sufferer, and because of that we women have a right to demand that in the councils of the nations the mothers of men shall have a voice in regard to their lives and the lives of their children” (Woman's Peace Party 1915/1988).

Most members of the platform committee had been active in the women's suffrage movement where such rhetoric was commonplace (Degen 1939/1974, 31; Marchand 1972, 186). Women representing a wide spectrum of women's organizations were in the audience, ranging from established peace societies, to temperance and educational organizations, to the Daughters of the American Revolution (Degen 1939/1974, 39–40).
Using maternalist rhetoric was one avenue for expressing commonality among the disparate groups.

“What War is Destroying,” Addams’s speech that afternoon, was a rhetorical masterpiece and merits careful examination. She adapted some of the language of previous speakers, language that could resonate with the mix of creeds and commitments of her audience members. It is easy to excerpt a few choice phrases from Addams’s speech and use them as indications of her assent to woman’s inherent pacifism. It is understandable that, given the setting, Addams would use maternalist rhetoric strategically to create unity among the wide range of women’s associations there, and to strengthen active opposition to the war. But Addams also used the rhetoric toward a “reconstruction of experience,” leading her audience from maternalism to the same message of social change that she offered in Newer Ideals of Peace: The patriotism of tribal loyalty, guarded by militaristic attitudes, affections, and institutional structures, needs to be a thing of the past. We need to move to a new form of patriotism that is international in scope, where concern for human well-being is structured into our institutions, our affections, and our actions. Women, given their historical and current skills and sensibilities have much that they can contribute to this transformation (1907/2003).

After a typical, self-deprecating remark, Addams began the speech, “There are certain things now being destroyed by war in which from the beginning of time women, as women, have held a vested interest” (1915/2003a, 61). Addams distinguished two forms of patriotism, placing them within the social evolutionary scale. She called the patriotism that supported eighteenth and nineteenth century European and American revolutions “a higher type of patriotism,” one “which should contain liberty for the individual as well as loyalty to the state” (1915/2003a, 61). Most likely, many in the audience had not questioned the justice of the American Revolution; Addams praised that patriotism as a sign of evolutionary progress. But the war then raging in Europe represented evolutionary backsliding. The European nation-states were enacting a tribal form of patriotism in which loyalty to state, based on brute force, was the only virtue. Women had a right to protest this reversion, Addams argued, because of their adherence to the higher form of patriotism (1915/2003a, 61).

Already we see a difference between Addams’s expression of pacifism and that of the day’s previous speakers. Their maternalist pacifism was based on either a belief in woman’s essentially pacifist nature or in an unconditional adherence to nonviolence. Both views are essentially static in appealing to universal principles or to woman’s essential nature. By contrast, Addams’s pacifism was evolutionary, progressive, and dynamic, linked to historically changing conceptions of patriotism.

Addams next gives a hedge: “I do not assert that women are better than men—even in the heat of suffrage debates I have never maintained
that.” She then goes on to say, “We would all admit that there are things concerning which women are more sensitive than men, and that one of these is the treasuring of life” (1915/2003a, 62). When we examine how Addams defined the five aspects of this sensitivity, we can see how she reshaped maternalist rhetoric to convey her pragmatist, humanitarian, and internationalist message.

Two of the five aspects, the protection and conservation of human life, deal with the state’s responsibility for human welfare, and not with woman’s inherent instincts. Addams noted how money and resources were being diverted from social programs supporting infants, the elderly, and the infirm, to fund the war (1915/2003a, 63). Given that these social programs are obligations of the state, they are obligations that men and women share. Three of the five aspects deal with sensitivities associated with caring for dependents. It is not only mothers, but also teachers, nurses, and others who do this labor. As they labor, they are sustained by imagining what the child can become, and through this imagination “every baby is thus made human, and is developed by the hope and expectation which surrounds him” (1915/2003a, 62). What we see in this explanation is that Addams recognized how the gendered world of care-giving included many women who were not biological mothers. She stressed how through their concrete, daily tasks, caregivers “reconstruct” their experience to include sensitivity to “the nurture of life,” “the fulfillment of human life,” and “the ascent of life” (1915/2003a, 62–3). That is, in performing caretaking work, the imagination plays a vital role in interpreting or “constructing” that experience.

Toward the end of the speech, Addams observed, “Our protest reflects our emotions as well as our convictions, but still more is the result of deep-grounded human experience” (1915/2003a, 64). Here Addams grounded her opposition to war, not in some kind of natural female propensity toward pacifism, but in women’s concrete, lived experiences. Addams was fully aware of women’s oppression and of the legal and social restrictions placed on them. Yet, focused on progress toward social justice and peace, she always considered women as responsible agents, having duties of citizenship and obligations to shape their world. Addams used maternalist rhetoric as a bridge from many women’s construction of their own experiences to a broader, more embracive reconstruction.

“Women and War” was Addams’s presidential address to the International Congress of Women at The Hague in April 1915. At this remarkable gathering, more than 1,400 people from twelve countries met together. They had come from nations on both sides of the war and from neutral nations (Bussey and Tims 1980, 19). Many had left fathers, husbands, and sons in trenches. Addams called their journey to The Hague “little short of an act of heroism” (1915/2003b, 75). She framed her speech in terms of adjusting claims of patriotism and internationalism into complementarity.
"These two great affections should never have been set one against the other," she asserted (1915/2003b, 77). Rather, devotion to family, to nation, and to the whole human race needed be brought into alignment. Addams told the participants that in coming to the conference they were responding to the "spirit of internationalism." This international spirit need not conflict with national patriotism any more than patriotism need conflict with family life (1915/2003b, 76).

Addams asked the Congress to "dig new channels through which (this large internationalism) may flow" (1915/2003b, 76). This phrase, of digging channels through which moral energy can flow, was one of Addams's favorites. She had used it repeatedly to describe her work at Hull House, arguing that people's affections and moral energies needed channels through which to be expressed and put to good effect. In this speech, Addams hypothesized that nationalistic feelings in Europe had become excessive because they lacked an internationalist outlet (1915/2003b, 76).

Addams placed the Congress within an historical trajectory of progress toward peace. She referred to Grotius, Kant, and Tolstoy who each "placed law above force," and who each "did his utmost to express clearly the truth that was in him and beyond that human effort cannot go" (1915/2003b, 77). Perhaps, she speculated, this truth that was in these thinkers was too exclusively weighted in terms of human reason. Addams appealed to her largely female, largely suffragist audience to contribute what they could to adjust the balance. She writes, "Reason is only part of the human endowment; emotion and deep-set racial impulses must be utilized as well—those primitive human urgings to foster life and to protect the hopeless, of which women were the earliest custodians. . . . These universal desires must be given opportunities to expand and the most highly trained intellects must serve them rather than the technique of war and diplomacy" (1915/2003b, 78).

Those in the audience would have recognized her reference to women as the earliest custodians of the impulse to foster life. In this context, Addams is asking women for whom the "way to truth that is in them" is through a maternalist lens, to join their efforts toward internationalism with those of Grotius, Kant, and Tolstoy. Addams is in effect asking for a "reconstruction of experience," saying that those who stress human reason and those who stress human instincts and affections both have partial visions of truth; both can contribute to the journey toward internationalism. If this is maternalism, it is a sophisticated version of it.
Addams shaped the speeches discussed above for audiences that were primarily composed of women. We might expect her to use maternalist rhetoric in those settings. So it will be useful to examine how Addams talks about women and war in The Long Road of Woman's Memory and in Peace and Bread in Time of War, books written for more general audiences.

In both books, Addams frames her arguments in terms of ancient instincts to care for the helpless and to protect one's own group. These references were consistent with leading psychological and sociological theories of the day, which did not assume that instincts were biologically dictated or unalterably fixed. At that time, Darwin's evolutionary theory had not yet completely replaced Lamarck's theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics. Herbert Spencer incorporated Lamarck's explanation for evolution into his own theory. As animals and people interact with the environment, they acquire physical, emotional, and intellectual ways of adapting. The earliest humans had instincts to aid the helpless and to care for offspring (1896, volume 1, 6-7, 66-7). Of obvious survival value, these behavioral characteristics became part of our biological inheritance. William James, in Principles of Psychology, devotes a chapter to instincts and impulses. He defines these as “the functional equivalent of structure” and states that instincts of sympathy for offspring and of hunting and fighting are of ancient origin (1890, volume 2, 383, 410). Wilhelm Wundt wrote, “In instinct, habits that were originally conscious have become transformed into an unconscious activity.” This process had taken “countless generations” (1897, 132).

In “Challenging War,” a chapter in The Long Road of Woman's Memory, Addams tells of conversations with two European women whose sons had been killed in the war. One woman was educated and sophisticated; the other Addams called a “humble” woman. Addams frames the chapter as recounting how these women's experiences led them to struggle with conflicting duties of tribal loyalty to the state and humanitarian loyalty to the well-being of their children and others. Assuming an anthropological frame, Addams traces these competing loyalties back to two ancient, fundamental instincts. “The first is tribal loyalty, such unquestioning acceptance of the tribe's morals and standards that the individual automatically fights when the word comes; the second is woman's deepest instinct, that the child of her body must be made to live” (1916/2002, 66). In saying that these two instincts were “responsible for our very development as human beings,” Addams acknowledged the purpose and value behind tribal loyalty, and did not give an outright rejection of all that militarism represents (66).
Addams describes the first woman who had worked with disabled children for many years as highly educated and intelligent. (She was actually a composite of two women, one from each side of the war.) The woman observed that as the state became increasingly involved in education and job training, “I had unconsciously come to regard the government as an agency for nurturing human life” (1916/2002, 58). When her son was called to fight, neither she nor he questionned his duty to the state, a duty of tribal loyalty.

During the next several months, the woman began to question this tribal conception of duty as she watched state support for her agency’s children diminish, food and men being diverted from civilian life to the military, and women and children working illegal hours in factories. The state, she concluded, had abandoned “all the other motives which enter into modern patriotism” (1916/2002, 58). She also watched her son come to question the war, drawing from his own experience as a research chemist. He was asked to redirect his research on toxicity levels away from industrial safety and toward developing chemical weapons. In his last letter home, he had told his mother that “he felt as if science herself in this mad world had also become cruel and malignant.” She commented, “I know how hard it must have been for him to put knowledge acquired in his long efforts to protect normal living to the brutal use of killing men. It was literally a forced act of prostitution” (1916/2002, 59). Reflecting on her own path and that of her son, the woman concluded, “I have never been a Feminist. . . . [but] I have become conscious of an unalterable cleavage between Militarism and Feminism. . . . Inevitably the two are in eternal opposition” (1916/2002, 63).12

The second woman was probably a European peasant, whose family members had immigrated to the United States and had done well there. Addams admits that the woman’s image of the United States was a utopian fantasy. This woman’s perplexity was not that her son was killed in the European war; that was consistent with that troubled continent’s history. Her confusion came when she learned that her son had been killed by an American-made bullet. She could not reconcile her image of America, idealized though it was, with war’s cruel demand for tribal loyalty (1916/2002, 63–6).

Each of the stories in this chapter gives a different pattern of how to work through the conflict between two ancient instincts, two conceptions of duty, and two conceptions of governmental responsibility. The educated woman, her son, and the “humble” woman each framed the conflict differently, each one filtered his or her reflections on different sets of concrete experience, and each moved toward a conception of internationalism. The first woman saw that the twentieth century version of tribal loyalty—to use force in defense of absolute state sovereignty—was morally bankrupt and contrary to a commitment to humanitarianism. Her son, through his
research and through his membership in an international community of scientists had also come to regard war between nation-states as barbaric. The second woman was by no means a pacifist and probably not a feminist. Yet Addams writes that she held a “conception of actual internationalism as it had been evolved among simple people, crude and abortive though it was” (1916/2002, 65). This woman’s internationalism was through kinship to those who, like Addams’s Hull House neighbors, had experienced cosmopolitan relations in daily actions and affections.

These stories together provide a context for interpreting Addams’s use of maternal rhetoric in this chapter. By putting well-known phrases about cleavage and eternal opposition between militarism and feminism in someone else’s mouth, Addams put a bit of distance between herself and the rhetoric. Because the first woman’s path toward maternalism contained much that Addams herself said in other contexts, we can read this chapter as Addams giving a sympathetic interpretation of those whose experiences led them to adopt maternalist beliefs, and illustrating the many paths leading from a patriotism of tribal loyalty to a patriotism of internationalism. With different life histories and different sets of responsibilities, people will “reconstruct experience” in their own ways. The rhetoric of maternalism is useful on some of those paths.

*Peace and Bread in Time of War* (1922/2002) is quite literally about the connection between peace and bread. Here Addams reflects on the horrors of military conflict itself, but she places more emphasis on how war causes food shortages as agricultural fields become battlefields, farmers become soldiers, transportation lines are cut, and civilian populations face starvation. In a literal sense, *Peace and Bread in Time of War* is about how to feed those made hungry by war.

When war broke out in Europe in August 1914, Herbert Hoover, a millionaire mining engineer, had been living in London for twenty years. When Germany marched across neutral Belgium a few weeks later, Hoover realized that its citizens would soon starve to death, their imported food transportation lines severed. For the next two-and-a-half years, Hoover and his organization located and transported two-and-a-half million tons of food, and thus kept nine million people alive (Nash 1996, 4). In May 1917, shortly after the United States entered the war, Hoover was appointed head of the Food Administration and given virtual dictatorial control of food prices, transportation, storage, distribution, and export, in order to continue to feed the allies’ civilian populations (Nash 1996, 71–3). Hoover knew that the program’s success depended on women’s willingness to conserve food in every conceivable way (Nash 1996, 41).

Addams was eager to help. She had gone from being the most admired woman in America to the most vilified because of her pacifism. Because her normal arenas of social reform were closed, she gladly joined the vast number of (mostly) women speaking (mostly) to women’s organizations
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around the country, teaching them how their conservation efforts would contribute to ameliorating hunger in Europe. She hoped to give women the intellectual and sympathetic understanding they needed to place their daily activities in the context of responding to international need (Addams 1922/2002).

In Chapter 4 of Peace and Bread, “A Review of Bread Rations and Woman’s Traditions,” Addams frames her intentions for participating in the food program in terms of two ancient instincts, stating that the impulse to feed the hungry predated the instinct to fight by a million years. Addams coupled this observation with her reading of Frazer’s Golden Bough, noting that myths are a congealed form of history, and that they embody morals. Frazer tells of the Corn Mother, the Rice Mother, and other female deities who preserve in myth the instinct to feed the helpless (1922/1996, 45–6). Addams asks, “Could not the earlier instinct and training in connection with food be aroused and would it be strong enough to overcome and quench the later tendency to war?” (1922/2002, 44). Addams hoped that the activity of participating in Hoover’s food program would activate this most ancient instinct to feed the helpless, creating lines of understanding and sympathy from the local to the international level. She writes, “As I had felt the young immigrant conscripts caught up into a great world movement, which sent them out to fight, so it seemed to me the millions of American women might be caught up into a great world purpose, that of conservation of life; there might be found an antidote to war in woman’s affection and all-embracing pity for helpless children” (1922/2002, 48).

In writing Peace and Bread, Addams drew from previous speeches and essays. She had spoken to many different audiences about the need to conserve food in the United States and to feed those made hungry by war. She varied her line of argument with the specific audience. In each case she framed responsibilities to feed in terms that connected well with the audience’s concerns and concrete activities.13 These speeches often contain clues to help us interpret passages in her books where the writing is more polished. Many passages in Peace and Bread can be found in “The World’s Food Supply and Woman’s Obligation,” a 1918 address to the General Federation of Women’s Clubs. Addams begins with a lengthy presentation of war conditions, describing diminished harvests in France and Romania, refugees in Italy, and the eight million civilians who had died in Russia. After discussing specific food conservation techniques, she comments that many club women would have encountered Corn Mother myths in their clubs’ studies of ancient social customs (1918/1984, 260). Addams could well have been shaping her speech to connect her concerns for food and internationalism with the current interests of her audience members. Addams follows her references to the Corn Mother myths with the observation that through efforts to feed the hungry, “A
new internationalism is being established day by day" (1918/1984, 263). Women could contribute to establishing this new internationalism, not because of an essentialist, nurturing, pacifist nature, but through their concrete, daily efforts with food conservation. They would come to see their daily household activities as directly connected to international needs, and thus reconstruct their experience, extending their intellectual and affective sensibilities toward internationalism.

Did Addams believe the maternalist rhetoric that she sometimes used? It is difficult to say. She was unconvinced by static principles, including adherence to absolute nonresistance, and uninterested in static essences, such as woman as inherently pacifist. These do not fit into the pragmatist, evolutionary frame through which she approached the world. She did, however, value maternalist rhetoric. It provided a way for many women to express their experience of caregiving and to indicate how serious, important, and genuine that experience was. While Addams sometimes used this rhetoric in her peace writings, often she did not. What stays constant throughout her writings is her commitment to peace based on justice and international understanding. Her method was to show people how they could take the experiences and understandings they already had and reconstruct them, stretching their moral, intellectual, and affective sensibilities toward internationalism.

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Notes

1. For an excellent account of Addams’s pragmatism, see Charlene Haddock Seigfried’s introduction to Addams, Democracy and Social Ethics (1902/2002, ix–xxxviii). See also Seigfried, Pragmatism and Feminism (1996).

2. This work was done collaboratively. Addams’s philosophy grew out of her activism and reflection with fellow Hull House residents, her neighbors, and colleagues at the University of Chicago, including John Dewey and G.H. Mead. For an account of her collaboration with the University of Chicago, see Mary Jo Deegan, Jane Addams and the Men of the Chicago School, 1892–1918 (1988).

3. Mindful of her audience, Addams rarely used technical philosophical vocabulary, although her writings exemplify the meaning of such technical concepts. In Twenty Years at Hull House she refers to “that education which Dr. Dewey

4. Addams uses the term, “internationalism,” and I will continue that practice here. For contemporary ears, “transnational” is a more appropriate term. In addition to creating institutional structures that would facilitate resolving disputes between nation-states, Addams wanted to foster ties of understanding among people in ways that would diminish the divisiveness of nation-state lines.


6. In Chapter 3 of *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902/2002) Addams criticizes such middle-class women as undemocratic because of the way they regard and treat their servants. In Chapter 2 Addams gives a brilliant analysis of how a middle-class “charity visitor” reconstructs her own experience through working with immigrant clients. She comes to see that her own values and moral principles are a product of her class membership and are not applicable to the immigrants' context. For an account of how Addams figured in the debate on separate spheres, see Rosalind Rosenberg, *Beyond Separate Spheres: Intellectual Roots of Modern Feminism* (1982, 33–43).

7. The prominent anthropologist, Otis Tufton Mason, gives this account in *Woman's Share in Primitive Culture* (1894).


11. In his discussion on the origins of instincts, James sides with Darwin and against Lamarck and Spencer. For our purposes, what is significant is that he thinks Spencer and Lamarck's position worthy of serious consideration and response (1890, volume 2, 678–88).

12. Addams has the woman give a gentle critique to equal rights feminism, saying that a militaristic state that bases duty on the primacy of physical force has abandoned morality altogether. “Equality” for women in such a state has no moral basis (1916/2002, 63). The “eternal opposition between militarism and feminism” was understood at the time as an opposition between brute force as the foundation of political organization and political relations based on consent. While the phrase may sound extreme today, at the time many people, including many opposed to political parity for women, agreed that militarism and feminism were inalterably opposed, and did not find the phrase objectionable.

13. See “World’s Food and World’s Politics,” Addams’s 1918 speech for the National Conference of Social Work. Here she makes a few references to tribal instincts to feed dependents, but does not use maternalist rhetoric. She includes information on the dimensions of the need and of Hoover's efforts, and several references to how this effort could provide one part of the foundation for a new internationalism.

References

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