

A Companion to Women's Military History

History of Warfare

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A Companion to Women's Military History

Edited by

Barton C. Hacker
Margaret Vining



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CHAPTER THREE

ESSENTIAL WOMEN, NECESSARY WIVES, AND EXEMPLARY SOLDIERS: THE MILITARY REALITY AND CULTURAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN'S MILITARY PARTICIPATION (1600–1815)

John A. Lynn II

Women's participation with armies in the field changed dramatically in the second half of the seventeenth century. Before then, women in great numbers accompanied troops on campaign. In 1615, the military commentator Johann Jacob von Wallhausen (1615/1971, 7) cautioned: "When you recruit a regiment of German soldiers today, you do not only acquire 3,000 soldiers; along with these you will certainly find 4,000 women and children." Yet during the eighteenth century a smaller proportion of women marched in the train of a company of troops. A Prussian circular of 23 August 1733, for example, commanded that the number of women with troops in the field could not exceed ten per hundred men (Haberling 1943, 53). Other armies allowed even fewer; the British often cut the number to six per hundred. To understand this decline in the numbers of women is not only to register change in the roles played by camp women; it is to comprehend the nature of major reforms in European military institutions and the conduct of war—the fundamental substance of military history.

Before 1650, camp women were essential to the character of armies and to the logistic system that kept them in the field; after that date, soldiers' wives in the train of armies were not quite as fundamental to the conduct of war, but they were still integral to the health and well-being of their husbands' units (Lynn 2008). They continued to perform the necessary, gender-defined tasks they had before, notably washing, sewing, and nursing, as well as serving as sutlers. Tracing this transformation requires that we return briefly to the era described by Mary Elizabeth Ailes in the previous chapter. While she covers a broad range of women and their contributions, however, this chapter emphasizes those plebeian women who lived a hard life alongside common soldiers in garrison and, particularly, on campaign.

Camp women, an ever-present reality with early modern armies, were little discussed at the time, but a great deal of public attention was, and is, lavished on the phenomenon of women who assumed male dress and identities to serve in the ranks as soldiers. Although the actual numbers of such female soldiers was very small in reality, they figured large in the European imagination. Today's readers familiar with the existing literature on military women of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries will be aware of the emphasis placed on these few extraordinary women. This chapter diverges from the usual treatment awarded them and instead stresses their importance as cultural rather than as military phenomena. Tales of their exploits attracted eager consumers who found them entertaining, but these stories also challenged their audiences, particularly men. The cultural representation of warrior women-in-arms certainly captured the public imagination, but the most important form of women's military participation was more prosaic; not the polished steel of sword and bayonet but the dull iron of pot and shovel. Stalwart and formidable camp women deserve first place here, because any attempt to describe early modern warfare without reference to them is doomed to be at least incomplete and, most probably, distorted.

Essential Women with Aggregate Contract Armies before 1650

A woodcut from Johannes Stumpf, *Schwytzer Chronica*, published in 1554 portrays the pillage of a village by soldiers and women on campaign (Bory 1978, 143; Lynn 2008, 148). In the foreground, four men and five women carry bundles and baskets of household goods, fowls, and other foodstuffs to an overburdened cart. The women team with their male companions to loot the village of all they can carry. In the background, the body of what appears to be a villager lies in the dirt, grim testimony to the violence of pillage. These camp women are not only participating in pillage; they are essential partners in this enterprise.

Considering the early modern period as a whole, camp women made their most central contributions before 1650, in the era typified by what I have termed the *aggregate contract army* (Lynn 1996). Reforms after that date would create a new style of force, the *state commission army*, which limited the numbers and roles of women on campaign, although they would remain integral to the existence and well-being of forces in the field. As the previous chapter demonstrates, early modern armies were not com-

posed exclusively of combatants nor were they all male. We need to redefine an early modern force in the field as a *campaign community*; although soldiers constituted its teeth and claws, a considerable number of noncombatants accompanied the troops into the field. These civilians were often referred to as “belonging to” or “serving with” the army, although they were not formally enrolled in any fighting unit. Noncombatants who marched with the troops fell into three categories: soldiers’ women, servants or “boys,” and service personnel. Soldiers’ women are the major focus of this chapter, but we should not forget about the other members of the campaign community who did not bear arms. Troops brought servants with them. Those who attended common soldiers are referred to as “boys” in accord with the fact that they were usually youths. Boys were of low status in the camp and had limited resources. Their numbers would also decline sharply with time, but they did not entirely disappear.

Civilian service personnel also attended armies. Contractors who provided troops with bread and other food stuffs sent thousands of bakers, teamsters, and other staff to the field. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, civilians drove the teams that pulled baggage wagons and artillery pieces. The French army, for example, did not replace civilian teamsters with uniformed military drivers in the artillery until the Revolution (Lynn 1984, 209). Maintaining a force in the field required a variety of civilian craftsmen, including carpenters, blacksmiths, and wheelwrights. Beyond this, merchants and peddlers, known as sutlers in English and *vivandiers* or *vivandières* in French, accompanied the troops to sell them liquor, food, and other goods. Service personnel included women as well as men, particularly among the sutlers. The term “camp women” references both soldiers’ women and female service personnel.

Distinct from the campaign communities, regiments that garrisoned towns and fortresses formed *garrison communities*. Particularly with the creation of large standing armies after 1650, major garrisons that existed in peacetime as well as war became permanent features of military life. Sedentary, town-based troops drew support from the civilian communities in which they lived, so they did not need the same degree of dedicated service personnel as did field forces. Yet garrison communities could include large numbers of soldiers’ wives—far more than were permitted to accompany troops in the field. The form of garrison communities probably varied more from one European state to another than did campaign communities, although these too differed. Changes in the participation of plebeian women with campaign and garrison communities both reflected

and influenced the evolution of early modern military institutions in Europe. This evolution, in turn, derived from the character of government and society. Consequently, a discussion of the numbers and roles of camp women must be considered in broader contexts, or it simply floats on the surface.

After the Thirty Years' War, fundamental military reforms increased the level of support given by the states to their armed forces and the level of control that those states exerted over their troops. One byproduct of increasing government efficiency and power was a relative decrease in the number of women who accompanied armies on campaign. At the same time, armies increased in size and established an unprecedented continuity, including the maintenance of formidable standing armies during peacetime. During the sixteenth century and the first half of the seventeenth, the abundant presence of women in the campaign community derived from two characteristics of contemporary armies: the libertine lifestyle typical of mercenary bands and the dependence on pillage to supply and compensate troops.

During wartime, small princely forces were supplemented by hired bands of soldiers, combining in the aggregate contract army. The most famous of these mercenaries were Swiss *Riesläufers* and German *Landsknechts*, but other areas of Europe also supplied men to the military labor market. Such units generally arrived armed, trained, and organized under their own commanders. Mary Elizabeth Ailes has already described these armies as entrepreneurial in character. Conditions varied according to place and time, but mercenaries exerted a leverage that later state recruits and conscripts could not. Troops who bargained for their conditions of service, expected to be accompanied by women and so they were. A libertine lifestyle that flamboyantly overturned proper civilian conventions was one of the attractions of military life, and along with drinking and gambling, the lure of sexual opportunity brought men into service. The historian J.R. Hale justly sees considerable significance in the soldiers' "sexually aggressive strut, the bulging codpiece, the suggestive sword hilt, the mixture of tousled peasant hairstyle with flamboyant costume that marked them as defying civilian morals and the everyman-in-his-place social restrictions of the sumptuary laws" (Hale 1985, 127).

The women who enhanced sexual opportunity in the camps were those who formed less than permanent unions with soldiers. Of course, some women sold sex to multiple partners. Prostitutes were a fixture of camp life, particularly before 1650. Some provided sexual service as their primary

way of making a living, but in addition to full-time prostitutes, part-time prostitutes also vied for customers. In civil life women from the lowest paying jobs, such as seamstresses and laundresses, were known to turn to part-time prostitution in hard times; it is, therefore, reasonable to expect the same in camp life. Soldiers also formed more stable, although not permanent, relationships with women. Free unions outside the sanctity of marriage were common. In Germany these could be *Mainehen*, “May marriages,” which were pragmatic arrangements between men and woman meant to last for the campaign. Because aggregate contract armies were often dismissed as rapidly as they were formed, a campaign-long agreement would likely be all a soldier needed. Such women were “possessed” or “belonged to” one man at a time, but they also changed partners. In camp language they were often referred to as “whores,” although they were not prostitutes.

If the lure of sexual opportunity drew men, did it attract women to the campaign community as well? For some, the answers may well have been yes, but for more, sexual activity may well have constituted part of a strategy designed to survive the hard and violent life of the camp. Economic hard times and other unacceptable personal conditions, plus the hope of gain, drove women, just as it did men, to opt for a life on campaign. A poem that appeared as part of a woodcut portrayed a soldier as setting aside his peacetime profession of cobbler to win riches at war and his female companion as abandoning spinning in the hope of “winning” booty:

Perhaps so much may be my winning
 Much more than ever I could whilst spinning.
 With yarn and twine I'll spin no more
 To become thereafter a Cobbler's whore. (Strauss 1984, 401)

Once committed to the campaign community, pairing with a man may have been necessary for a woman, both to get and keep the necessities of life and to protect her from abuse. In her hard-edged analysis of marriage, Susan Brownmiller argues that it derived from a survival strategy by which a woman gave herself to one man, allowing him to have her so that he would protect her from being raped by other men as well (Brownmiller 1975). This grim interpretation may well apply in the tough world of the early modern camp. A woman may have turned to one paramour in order to be protected from other men. We will see this again in the chapter by Yehudit Kol-Inbar. Thus a life style that was alluring to men, at least in fantasy, may have simply been stark reality to women.

The campaign community that typified aggregate contract armies did not simply differ from civilian society; a deep hostility separated them. Poorly supplied and often unpaid, soldiers and their companions preyed upon urban and rural populations unlucky enough to be within their reach. Political masters were notoriously irregular in paying their troops at a time when troops were supposed to rely on their wages to buy essential supplies. Speaking of the Thirty Years' War, Sir James Turner (1683/1968, 198–99) commented that although men were supposed to be mercenaries fighting for pay, “if you will consider how their wages are paid, I suppose, you will rather think them Voluntaries, at least very generous, for doing the greatest part of their service for nothing.” Of course, soldiers did not fight for free, rather they turned to pillage and plunder for subsistence and reward. Pierre de Brantôme (as quoted in Hale 1985, 189), writing from his experience of late sixteenth-century warfare, lamented, “It is deplorable that our soldiers dedicate themselves to pillage rather than to honourable feats, but it is all due to their not being paid.” Allowing troops to take what they wanted was accepted as a distasteful but practical necessity. As the *Mercure françois* put it in 1622 (as quoted in Tilly 1986, 123), “One finds enough soldiers when one gives them the freedom to live off the land, and allowing them to pillage supports them without pay.”

Violence by troops before 1650 sometimes elevated from pillage alone to mutiny, which demonstrated the entrepreneurial nature of military bands. One alternative for impoverished soldiers was to refuse to obey their commanders until they were paid. The Spanish Army of Flanders suffered 45 mutinies or more from 1572 through 1607, including the horrendous sack of Antwerp in 1574 (Parker 1972, 185). Mutinies often resembled labor strikes; soldiers chose their own leaders, made demands for pay and better working conditions, and bargained with their employers until a settlement was reached. European rulers failed to pay and support their troops not as a matter of choice but because of the limitations and shortcomings of their governments. States lacked the adequate authority and mechanisms to mobilize the resources necessary to maintain their military forces adequately. Circumstances varied across Europe, but one of the factors that often frustrated princes was a powerful and independent aristocracy that competed with central government for local authority. In France, for example, the competition between the king and his aristocracy was exacerbated by religious and civil wars, which only subsided after 1650. After then, military reform would march together with government innovation and

more effective princely authority, gained through coercion and conciliation.

Before these reforms took effect, women played a major part in the pillage economies that supported armies. The presence of large numbers of women greatly increased the mouths that had to be fed, thus multiplying the demand for pillage. Also, women were hardly passive but took an active role in plundering civilian communities, meeting their own and their men's needs. Thus they figured on the supply as well as on the demand side of pillage. In addition, there is also good reason to believe that they managed the take for their male partners. One facet of the civilian economy that I believe translated into the campaign community was the role of women as business and financial managers. In the world of shop and guild, women demonstrated commercial ability. Even if guilds restricted women in craft production, masters' wives played a very active role behind the counter or in the market stall. Women regularly made sales, tended the till, and did the bookkeeping, and they often knew enough of the trade to assist journeymen and judge their work (Hufton 1998, 140, 152–53, 164–67, 223, 242; Farr 1988, 8–9). Artists' portrayals of shops give graphic evidence of women's active participation in managing the business. If the business maintained a market stall, this was the wife's preserve, for the husband was needed back at the shop. In fact, it was difficult for a master to run his business without a wife; therefore a widowed master really had to find a new wife. Women were regarded as competent enough in business affairs that guilds allowed master's widows to continue running the family shop until they remarried.

The fact that women were often the custodians of the books and the money in small businesses is of particular interest. In his journal, French eighteenth-century glazier Jacques-Louis Ménétra (1998, 244, 250, 258) complimented his wife on her business head and her ability to get a good price, though he also criticized her for squirreling away money without telling him, implying she had control of accounts. To his surprise and consternation, she was able to produce a tidy sum as a dowry for their daughter from her clandestine savings. An intriguing study by Jacob Melish (2006) draws its evidence from records of legal actions in Paris during the 1670s and early 1680s. He demonstrates how the sexual division of labor "led husbands to become dependent on wives for a number of tasks, one of which was the daily management of accounts and earnings." In one extreme case he found, a frustrated artisan complained to the police com-

missioner in 1683 that his wife held all the money and refused to give him any!

Because women of the campaign community were not subject to the full range of military duties and were less exposed to the dangers of combat, women were best placed to guard the plunder for their male partners. Also, just as artisans' wives did in civilian society, soldier wives quite probably managed the sale of goods and held the proceeds. In a sense, they minded the till. It may be a small thing, but in woodcuts showing partnered teams of *Landsknechts* and women, the men carry their weapons, as if ready for battle, but they have no visible purse; women are often shown with fat purses. We know women carried their men's clothing and other personal items, including their "valuables," according to the description of May marriages (Haberling 1943, 32). It would seem reasonable that this would include a purse full of the couple's stash of money.

Another poem attached to a sixteenth-century woodcut of a *Landsknecht* and his woman refers to the sexual attraction, domestic service, and pillage management associated with camp women prior to 1650:

Do well with me, my pretty lass
 And stay with me in the Landsknechts
 You'll wash my shirts
 Carry my sacks and flasks
 And if some booty should be mine
 You shall keep it safe and fine
 So when we put paid of this crew
 We'll sell the booty when we are through. (Rublack 1997, 17)

Commanders took what advantage they could from the presence of the large numbers of camp women by assigning them a number of duties, including heavy labor. In his *Kriegsbuch* of 1515, Leonhard Fronsperger (as quoted in Haberling 1943, 32) has "whores" describe their varied and demanding tasks:

We, whores and rogues in the wars
 Care for and wait on our masters
 With the best of our skills.
 We are whores direct from Flanders;
 And while we change one foot-soldier for another
 We are useful in the army nevertheless.
 We cook, we sweep, and him who is ill
 We nurse until he is well again.
 We whores and rogues, we are a pack;
 And even if we are often badly beaten;

We do it all for the soldier's sake;
 It is pleasant for him to be lifted up by us.
 When cleaning or digging is to be done,
 Is wood to be carried we are the ones,
 And if we don't do it, beatings are ours.

Women performed even more strenuous work when needed. Wilwort of Schaumburg reports that Charles the Bold of Burgundy detailed the 4000 "common women" accompanying his army to cart earth for entrenchments at the siege of Neuss (1474–75). Wallhausen (as quoted in Haberling 1943, 27, 36) provides another reference to particularly hard physical siege work: "The prostitutes and the boys [of the camp] also helped in binding fascines, filling ditches, digging pits and mounting cannon in difficult places." Present in such large numbers before 1650, women provided a sizeable workforce available to army commanders. Later, as their numbers declined, these tasks could be assigned to the troops or imposed on conscripted peasant labor, especially during sieges. But certain necessary gender-defined labor would continue to be the province of camp women.

Necessary Wives with State Commission Armies after 1650

Writing during the mid-eighteenth century, Bennet Cuthbertson in *A system for the compleat interior management and oeconomy of a battalion of infantry* (1768, 192–93) cautioned military officers against allowing a soldier to marry without first making a thorough inquiry into the suitability of the potential bride. But if the woman in question lived up to such scrutiny, he concluded, "it will be right to give him leave" to marry, because "honest, laborious Women are rather useful in a Company." New wives would quickly be put to "useful" tasks required to maintain the health and well-being of the troops.

After 1650, a wave of military reforms linked to governments more able to support their military forces created the state commission army. States grew in power and efficiency, yielding new patterns of government often termed Absolutism when associated with the great princes, such as Louis XIV of France. It would be too extreme to say that European states crossed some threshold to modernity, but they were better able to mobilize resources through taxation and credit and to marshal these resources to support larger and better-maintained armed forces. States paid, supplied, and controlled their forces more directly. Individual soldiers might still grab what plunder they could, but armies were no longer dependent upon

pillage for sustenance and compensation. Women were no longer as central to the economy of the army, but they still were necessary to perform the “useful” tasks of washing, sewing, and nursing.

At the same time, the old mercenary bands gave way to regiments created and regulated by the rulers they served. A king such as Louis XIV might still recruit some regiments from foreigners, but they accepted the same subordination as national troops. There remained a market for hiring existing military units from outside the state, but these were now the regular troops of territorial princes who let them out to other governments, as did the rulers of Hesse-Kassel, who often supplied the British with troops for military ventures (Atwood 1980; Wilson 1995). Men in the ranks lost the leverage and independence once enjoyed by earlier mercenaries, so they were unable to insist on so many female companions in the field. The libertine lifestyle, once so key in attracting and keeping men in the ranks, receded.

Once women ceased to be so fundamental to the very existence of the campaign community, military authorities could cut their numbers on campaign in the name of efficiency. Long before 1650, military authorities and commentators had decried the logistic and disciplinary problems caused by crowds of women on campaign. Typically, Mathieu de la Simonne (as quoted in Babeau 1890, 203–204), writing in the 1620s, complained “of the great impediments that [women] bring both on campaign and in garrison.” Yet even so formidable a monarch as Louis XIV could not have winnowed women from the baggage train of his armies simply by drafting an edict. Before the legions of women could be reduced, the compelling and brutal logic of the aggregate contract army that made them so valuable had to be reformed. Only the innovations that created the state commission army and the absolutist state could diminish the presence of women.

Another defining characteristic of state commission armies was the unprecedented multiplication of troop strength. The French monarchy, for example, commonly raised total forces 60,000–80,000 for major wars from the late Middle Ages through the Thirty Years’ War. In contrast, the army of Louis XIV peaked at 447,000 troops on paper in 1693, a figure that can be reasonably discounted to about 360,000 actual serving troops (Lynn 2006). Similar army growth can be seen across Europe in such varied states as Savoy, Hesse-Kassel, and Prussia. To a degree, this expansion was an unintended consequence of the radical decline in the numbers of camp women. Had the proportion of women in the campaign community remained high, it is incomprehensible that European armies would have

become so large; the burden of so many unpaid women would have made them impossibly cumbersome. Yet states did not cut the number of women in order that they could commit more troops to campaigns; instead, the decline in the number of camp women allowed larger armies to take the field effectively.

If the proportion of women in military camps declined, military expansion created impressive garrison forces, where military wives could figure large. Before 1650, when the army was not mobilized, princes kept some troops to man critical fortresses, guard the court and person of the prince, and provide some internal security. But these forces were quite small; in the French case they usually stood at 10,000. Yet by the 1680s, Louis maintained a standing army of about 150,000 men during peacetime, a figure that would remain fairly constant until the French Revolution. In percentage terms, this increase was more impressive than the growth of wartime forces. The retention of so many troops during peacetime meant that long years in garrison became a far more important aspect of European military life. Even as armies took fewer women into the field, the number of soldiers' women who populated garrisons could be large, although this varied. These changes were part of a period of military change and reform most prominently discussed by historians Michael Roberts (1956) and Geoffrey Parker (1988)—the Military Revolution (Rogers 1995). The dating and definition of the Military Revolution have inspired a productive debate. Roberts dated it to 1560–1660 and Parker 1500–1800, but Jeremy Black has argued that if a change worthy of the title “revolution” occurred, it came after 1660 (Black 1991). The change in the participation and contribution of women described in these pages buttresses Black's argument.

One reform that affected women with state commission armies was the favoring of wives over other women with the troops. Military authorities became officially intolerant of prostitution and denied soldiers the kinds of unofficial free unions that had been so common in the past. Just as the state commission army regulated tactics, training, discipline, and logistics as never before, it also recognized and regulated soldier marriage. While acceptance and timing varied, in general the percentage of married soldiers became substantial and European governments made provisions for wives. In a sense, the military wife, who will figure large in this volume, was a product of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. If the number of official wives increased in accord with cultural standards, however, this was not allowed to hamper military efficiency in the field. Soldiers may have been permitted to marry, but when they marched on campaign only

a modest number of their wives were allowed to go into the field with them. Garrison and camp life, then, diverged. Because my primary focus in this chapter is the reality and the perception of women who went into the field with armies, it is less the garrison and more the camp that concerns me.

Moral principles promoted by the Protestant Reformation and Catholic Counter-Reformation privileged marriage over casual sexual partnerships. Soldier wives had long enjoyed higher status than did prostitutes or women who informally partnered with men, but authorities now prescribed that women allowed to live with soldiers must be their legal wives. The prevalent temporary free unions of soldiers and their “whores” were no longer allowed. This moral revolution also brought with it a cultural tendency to sentimentalize marriage and the family in the eighteenth century, no matter how hard the reality might actually be.

Periodic attacks on prostitution never abolished, though they did hamper, the sex trade. During the sixteenth century and into the seventeenth, many commanders readily accepted the presence of prostitutes, usually called “public women,” “women in common,” or “common women.” Depending on time and place, Spanish authorities permitted different numbers of prostitutes per company of troops, ranging from three to eight per company. The Duke of Alba, who commanded in the Spanish Netherlands, 1567–1573, established price controls of five solds a session for such women (Parker 1972, 175–76; Haberling 1943, 37). But practices varied. Dutch articles of war dated 1580 criminalized prostitution: “all common whores shall for the first offense be shamefully driven from camp, and for the second offense, being found in the camp, shall be heavily flogged and banished” (Hale 1985, 162).

Armies of the new state commission style assaulted prostitution with greater vehemence. Louis XIV, despite his own lust for women when he was young, adopted a moralistic attitude toward prostitution in the army that suited his times. Older regulations had sporadically prohibited prostitution in Paris or the army, but in 1684 Louis took up the crusade in earnest. He banned prostitutes from within two leagues of Versailles where large numbers of troops were encamped because soldiers were fighting over the women and some men had been killed (Riley 2001, 55). Prostitutes caught within the restricted area were to be disfigured by having their ears and noses cut. In 1687, Louis extended these provisions to the army as a whole. Women without gainful employment found in the company of soldiers within two leagues of a camp or garrison were to be whipped and disfigured. Fear of spreading venereal disease among the troops led to

further French laws against prostitution in 1713, 1724, 1734, 1776, and 1777 (Hufton 1998, 310; Evans 1979, 98).

Official attempts to ban prostitution apparently met with incomplete success. André Corvisier, the noted French military historian, comments that when war broke out again, the restrictions imposed by Louis and his war minister, the marquis de Louvois, relaxed: "There was no longer a question of depriving Mars of Venus" (Contamine 1992, 403). Towns could supply ready women even if they were banned from camps. The major garrison town of Berlin was said to be notoriously thick with prostitutes (Duffy 1974, 45). Across the Channel, William Hogarth's well-known painting, "March of the Guards to Finchley," shows troops assembling to fight against the Jacobite rising of 1745. Soldiers pile out of a brothel as others in the streets are surrounded by women of apparently differing standards of virtue. Yet it would be inaccurate to say that military officials simply reverted to a permissive policy. Prostitutes could be punished with permanent or temporary disfigurement, or worse. They were still punished harshly or formally driven out of camp if discovered; they might even be drummed, or "beaten" in the terms of the day, through town to a "whores' march" (Forty and Forty 1979, 214). During the 1790s, French revolutionaries would incongruously charge that prostitution was a monarchist plot: "Remember that despots favor debauchery and corrupt men in order to debase them and bring them into the most sordid servitude." Prostitutes "not only enervate the courage of the warriors but also corrupt the most pure source of French blood" (Bertaud 1979, 198).

All but legal wives were to be prohibited from military camps. Such regulations appeared sporadically before 1650. Gustavus Adolphus promulgated stringent regulations in 1621: "No Whore shall be suffered in the Leaguer [camp]: but if any will have his own wife with him, he may. If any unmarried woman be found, he that keepes her may have leave lawfully to marry her; or else be forced to put her away" (Sweden 1621). Such insistence on married companions were only generalized in the later seventeenth century. Interestingly, Gustavus's earlier regulation linked marriage with permission for women to stay with the army in the field: only wives, but all wives, could stay. State commission armies would not equate marriage with the right to march with the troops; wives might be plentiful in garrison but only a few were allowed to campaign with the troops.

Marriage policy varied markedly from army to army, and the French marriage regulations were quite restrictive. The reformed army of Louis XIV limited the ability of soldiers to marry; the fact that wives were con-

sidered as preferable to prostitutes and female companions did not mean that marriage was actively encouraged. In addition to demanding that private soldiers gain officers' permission to wed, ordinances of 1685, 1686, and 1691 imposed penalties. Even with permission, a soldier lost all his seniority, which would begin to accrue again only from the moment of the marriage (Babeau 1890, 205; Contamine 1992, 403). The 1686 ordinance condemned marriage because "the needs of their wives and of their children inhibit" soldiers, and it particularly railed against those who married young (Delmas 1992, 757). Vauban actually favored allowing soldiers to marry if they were stable men with a profession to help augment their military pay, but his opinion did not become policy (Rochas d'Aiglun 1910, 1:340–41). Also, authorities did not want troops to become too attached to the local population, either because troops might be required to repress civil disorder or because local contacts made desertion easier; therefore, regulations forbade soldiers to marry women from the towns in which the troops were garrisoned. This restriction applied to officers as well.

Statistics show the decline of marriage in the French army from the mid-seventeenth century through the early eighteenth. According to research by Robert Chaboche (1973, 18), among *invalides* who had served in the Thirty Years' War and who listed their family condition, 45.9 percent had been or were married. But of the men admitted to the Hôtel des Invalides between 1674 and 1691, only 21 percent were married, and of those admitted in 1715, 16 percent had wives. These figures probably overstate the average, since veterans with many years of service and sergeants, the very men most likely to marry, were also more likely to gain the highly valued places at the Invalides. The same statistical sample reveals that those who married were most likely to choose women from their own regions—that is, a girl from home rather than someone they met while in the army (Contamine 1992, 1:446). The royal government continued to restrict soldier marriages until the French Revolution overturned that policy. The French Revolution brought dramatic change in marriage policy. Seeing regulations restricting soldier marriage as vestiges of oppression, the revolutionary government lifted them. When war broke out in 1792, soldiers believed that they had the right to keep their new wives with them in the field, but this soon created serious logistic problems. Shocked by reports arriving from the front, in April 1793 the National Convention ordered that all but a few wives necessary as laundresses and sutlers be sent home. Marriage had won out, but not the right for wives to encumber armies in the field.

Compared to French practice under the monarchy, Prussian policy was eventually far more permissive, as detailed by Beate Engelen, who provides the most extensive study of early modern soldier marriage in her *Soldatenfrauen in Preußen* (2004, 42–65). Articles of war declared in 1656 by Frederick William, the Great Elector of Brandenburg allowed soldiers to marry and bring wives into the field and reside with them in garrison, but he formally excluded prostitutes and unmarried female companions. Later, in 1669, he instituted support payments to wives left behind when their husbands went on campaign. In 1673 he simply declared that soldiers' women who were not yet married to their partners were now their official wives. Yet in the early 1680s he began to restrict soldier marriage, limiting the number of soldiers per company who could marry to thirty or forty—still a sizeable number—and giving captains authority over who could marry in their companies. His son, King Frederick I of Prussia, increased the difficulty of soldier marriage by allowing only a few married men per company unless a soldier paid his captain the equivalent of three months pay to gain permission to marry. But Frederick William I moderated the marriage policies of his father, guided by Pietist beliefs in the importance of the family and by the realization that soldiers' offspring could become a source of recruitment for the army.

Frederick II, the Great, further reduced restrictions on soldier marriage and praised it “so as to populate the country, and to preserve the stock, which is admirable” (Duffy 1974, 60). Frederick's army thus multiplied the population of the state while preparing to defend it. This fit particularly well with the Prussian canton system, established in 1733, which created a native reserve force that could be mobilized in wartime. During peacetime, these troops stayed at home to work the land except for two months when they drilled with their regiments. Thus, such men were encouraged to raise families. Prussian policies under Frederick the Great multiplied the number of soldiers' wives (Engelen 2004). The Knobloch regiment had 1077 women and 1925 children in 1751, meaning that 61.5 percent of its soldiers were married. Roughly a third of the soldiers in the Berlin garrison were married during peacetime from the 1770s into the early 1800s, with about 7000 to 9000 children. Considering the entire electorate of Brandenburg, this proportion stood higher, at 38.8 percent of 34,861 troops in 1790 and 43 percent of 28,163 in 1800. The pattern of marriage in the Prince Heinrich Regiment indicates that soldiers married less during wartime years and rushed to the altar immediately when peace returned, as they did in 1748 when 148 soldiers married, 1764 when 188 soldiers married, and 1780 when 123 soldiers married (Engelen 2004, 566–67).

Several lesser German states mirrored evolving Brandenburg-Prussian policies. In 1682 Hesse-Kassel stipulated that common soldiers must get the permission of their officers to marry, and by 1700 most German states had adopted similar restrictions (Wilson 1996, 136). Soldiers who married without permission could suffer severe penalties. By the mid-eighteenth century, the majority of German armies subjected such culprits to run a gauntlet of 200 soldiers from 12 to 24 times, as the troops forming the gauntlet beat the man passing between them. The unfortunate bride was to serve a minimum sentence of one year in a workhouse (Wilson 1996, 136). Yet as the eighteenth century progressed, German states tended to liberalize marriage policy as they adopted versions of the canton system. The percentage of married troops in Württemberg notably increased after the War of the Austrian Succession, and in Frankfurt the portion of married troops doubled from a third in 1733 to two-thirds in 1753. Interestingly, German states were likely to oppose the marriage of officers, because the cost of pensions to widows would have been prohibitive (Wilson 1996, 137–38, 145). It is often stated, as Ulinka Rublack (1997, 12) comments, “soldiers were almost never permitted to marry,” but the percentages of German married troops does not bear out such a conclusion across the board. Of course, the above figures on the prevalence of soldier marriage impacted garrison and rural life, not the campaign community, which restricted the number of accompanying women.

Although often restrictive through the eighteenth century, British regulations became more generous toward soldier marriage during the Napoleonic wars. From the mid-1600s, English regulations required that soldiers gain permission to marry from their officers, who were to inquire into the suitability of the women in question. Many a commander echoed the sentiments of James Wolfe, the hero of Quebec, who cautioned his regiment garrisoned in Scotland, “The Officers are desired to discourage Matrimony amongst the men as much as possible.” But his rationale, that “the Service suffers by the multitude of Women already in the Regiment,” admits that marriage was still common (Williams 1988, 12). As late as 1795, British cavalry regulations still insisted “Marriage is to be discouraged as much as possible. Officers must explain to the men of the many miseries that women are exposed to, and by every sort of persuasion they must prevent their marrying if possible” (Whitfield 1973, 65).

The reform era associated with the Duke of York, who became commander-in-chief of the British Army in 1798, brought a change in attitude within British regiments. The 1801 article regulating marriage and wives

with the Corps of Riflemen at Shorncliffe began by affirming: "The Marriage of soldiers being a matter of benefit to a regiment" (Hacker 1981, 660). However, a more open policy toward allowing soldiers to marry did not increase the number of wives allowed to accompany the troops. Because the British fought overseas, wives who shipped out with troops were carried on the books at state expense; they were "wives on the strength" and British practice was to limit this number. This was an old policy. In 1703, the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland explained that he had to dispatch four women per company with troops sailing for Portugal, "which is the least that has been permitted and cannot be avoided" (Williams 1988, 11). Numbers could be more, or less, restrictive depending on circumstances. In his 1764 American campaign, Henry Bouquet cut the number of women who could march with his column to one woman for each unit and two nurses for the column's hospital (Hendrix 2000, 33). Although the number permitted to go with their men on campaign varied, six wives per hundred men was a common standard (Hagist 1993–95). This was, in fact, the number set for all British troops by the Duke of York in his order of 29 October 1800; women not permitted to sail with their regiment were to be given funds to return home (Williams 1988, 17). This led to the painful matter of choosing which wives could accompany their husbands. Selection could be made by lot, throwing dice on a drumhead. Once a woman shipped over, she was likely to remain in the married state one way or another as long as she survived—in other words, widows did not stay widows for long. Lt. William Gratton reported, "When a man was shot, and his wife was a capable and desirable person, she would receive half a dozen proposals before her husband was 48 hours in the grave" (Cordingly 2002, 105). Women were wise to remarry in order to retain their regimental rations and support.

In all armies, the necessity of choosing only a restricted number of regimental wives to accompany the troops on campaign was the natural product of a moral policy that privileged, and of an insistence on military efficiency that limited, the number of women with a state commission army in the field. Vauban wrote of marriage as a way of limiting desertion, because soldiers would want to return to their wives in winter quarters, but he argued that the wives would not be a hindrance in war, since "one took along on campaign only three or four women per company," which in a standard fifty-man company meant six to eight wives per hundred men (Rochas d'Aiglun 1910, vol. 1, 340–41). Frederick the Great only permitted five to twelve wives per company to accompany the troops in the field, even though the number of married Prussian troops was very high (Duffy

1974, 59). During the mid-eighteenth century, the Austrians allowed three to five wives per company, but later they would adopt the most restrictive policy of all, when a 1775 regulation banned all soldiers' wives from accompanying the army in the field (Duffy 1979, 57). Such a restriction could not have eliminated women who performed functional duties, such as sutlers.

A painful irony arose as armies banned prostitutes and privileged wives—these same wives could slip into prostitution. Because soldiers earned such meager salaries, wives in garrison had to supplement family income through their own labor, usually in low-paying jobs. Hard times compelled some to turn to prostitution, as was the case among some Prussian soldiers' wives (Engelen 2004, 156–58). This phenomenon occurred elsewhere, as with the Piedmontese army in garrison (Loriga 2007, 46). Wives left behind when the troops went on campaign could be particularly vulnerable. In 1714, the last year of the War of the Spanish Succession, complaints were lodged against nine soldiers' wives who were brazening soliciting by a Paris city gate. Authorities did not arrest them, however, out of consideration for their circumstances, because their husbands were away on campaign (Riley 2001, 66). Unfortunately, daughters of soldiers also were all too likely to turn to prostitution, at least in Prussia. A 1717 inspection of the Berlin prostitution section and brothels revealed that the largest percentage of girls working the trade were actually the daughters of soldiers in this garrison town (Haberling 1943, 53; Duffy 1974, 60). On campaign, desperation and starvation could drive army wives and widows to offer sex for food. After the battle of Talavera in 1809 the British forces were in bad straits to provision themselves. A commissary officer reported that soldiers' wives in rags were offering themselves to any man who would give them half a loaf of bread (Williams 1988, 52). Women who lost their soldier husbands on campaign were particularly vulnerable, which explains their willingness to marry again soon after their husband's death.

Soldier wives were praised for their contributions to their husbands. In his *Pallas Armata* of 1683, Sir James Turner (1683/1968, 277) pointed out the practical value of these hearty women on campaign: "As woman was created to be a helper to man, so women are great helpers in Armies to their husbands, especially those of the lower condition." Women with armies were expected to perform a variety of work that conformed to societal gender norms. They increased the well-being of the men by washing and repairing clothes, nursing the sick, and cooking meals. In performing such gender-defined tasks they also relieved soldiers of work thought demeaning to men. Washing and repairing clothing remained a basic

woman's responsibility throughout the early modern era. Written sources also make clear the gendered nature of this service, which directives often tied to other women's work. During the mid-eighteenth century, a French military authority advised that in each company there should be one man married to a "woman who washed and mended the linens of the soldiers and sold them eau de vie and vegetables" (Seriu 2005, 104). This would have amounted to six to eight women per battalion who served as washerwomen and *vivandières*. Incidentally, laundresses enjoyed a reputation for strength developed in handling baskets of wet clothes and great dripping sheets, as well as plying heavy irons (Hufton 1998, 85).

Needlework was also regarded as suitable for women. They repaired clothing and turned their skills to making shirts and personal linens. They could be barred from making men's outer garments, because this was reserved for male tailors (Crowston 2001). Eighteenth-century commentators listed tailors as tradesmen who should be within the ranks of regiments (Seriu 2005, 104). An unusually revealing statement concerning washing and needlework comes from rules set out for the British Corps of Riflemen, soon to be the 95th Regiment of Foot, in 1801. It provided for "employment and comfortable livelihood" for women permitted to travel with the regiment. "The Colonel requests that the officers will never give their linen to wash out of the regiment, and also that they will distribute it nearly equally among the sergeants' wives." Soldiers' laundry was "to be distributed in equal proportions among the other women of the companies." Interestingly, it sets the amount of wash to be paid for by the "pay sergeant," making the laundresses army employees. Moreover, "The Quartermaster will never give any needlework out of the regiment which can be done in it, and officers are requested to do the same" (Shepard 1952, 48–49; Hacker 1981, 660–61). Needlework was also to be apportioned out to soldiers' wives in the eighteenth-century Piedmontese army in order to give these women a livelihood (Loriga 2007, 48–49).

The idea that needlework was particularly suited to women was enshrined by Jean-Jacques Rousseau in Book V of *Emile* (1762/1979, 368, 199), where he argued that young girls took naturally to sewing, "holding a needle, that they always learn gladly." He also insisted that needlework, while natural to women, was not suited to men, who should be invested in more manly, and martial, skills: "The needle and the sword cannot be wielded by the same hands. If I were sovereign, I would permit sewing and the needle trades only to women." Not surprisingly, the *levée en masse* decreed by the French National Convention in 1793 called young men to

arms, but summoned women to needles and nursing: "The young men shall go to battle; ... the women shall make tents and clothing and shall serve in the hospitals" (Lynn 1984, 56).

Nursing, as the *levée en masse* signaled, was another task traditionally considered particularly suited to women. General Robert Venables, when censured for having brought his wife and some other women on an expedition to the West Indies, 1654–55, replied that experience in the Irish wars had demonstrated "the necessity of having that sex with an army to attend upon and help the sick and wounded, which men are unfit for" (Firth 1902/1962, 262). On campaign, camp women were close at hand and could give immediate care to the sick and wounded at the front. Women were also generally considered most apt at providing nursing care in military hospitals, where they might be aided by men but still provided the primary nursing. The nineteenth-century historian Victor Belhomme (1895, 154–57) states that circa 1690, French army hospitals maintained one nurse for every five wounded or ten sick. Sir William Howe ordered that any women accompanying his British army in October 1776 had to be willing to undertake nursing chores: "The Commander in Chief is Determin'd not to Allow any woman to Remain with the Army That Refused to take a Share of this Necessary Duty" (Mayer 1996, 13).

Cooking was not so clearly a gender-defined task at any point, and in most, if not all, armies it eventually became more a man's than a woman's job. Characteristically, a late sixteenth-century German set of articles regulating the artillery denied that any soldier could bring with him a "whore" unless permission was granted by the colonel "and that the women are formed into platoons in the regiments and shall be assigned to nursing and cooking" (Haberling 1943, 40). But even in the sixteenth century, men are shown cooking as well, and baking was a man's job with the armies as it was in civilian society throughout the early modern era (Hirth 1972, 2:875; Strauss 1975, 1071). During the second half of the seventeenth century, as authorities decreased the number of women in camp and subjected camp life to much more detailed regulations, cooking duties were explicitly assigned to the men themselves. For example, as defined by field regulations from 1758, the *ordinaire* or mess group included fourteen to sixteen men who prepared their food in a marmite, or large kettle, and ate in common (Lynn 1984, chapter 7). Some illustrations still show women at the cooking fires, and this may be particularly true of British troops, who were officially permitted a larger number of accompanying women. On campaign, women sutlers continued to prepare food for their improvised field

taverns, but troops were generally expected to prepare their own daily rations.

Beyond their roles as laundresses, seamstresses, and nurses, soldier wives helped to supplement the incomes of their male partners through a variety of small commercial ventures on campaign. Women commonly took part in the campaign economy, sometimes on their own and sometimes as partners of their husbands. The seventeenth-century mercenary captain James Turner defended the presence of women with armies because a woman was able to “gain money to her husband and herself” (Turner 1683/1968, 277). Although written about civilian economies, the assessment of Olwen Hufton (1998, 500) applies to life with the army as well: “Indeed, we might offer as a working generalization that the more modest the family, the more essential both the labour and the ingenuity of the womenfolk. They are at the centre of the economy of makeshifts.”

If campaign communities were marching cities, they were also mobile marketplaces (Sandberg 2007). We know that women were central to civilian markets and retail trade (Hufton 1998; Wiesner 2000). We also know that in garrison, Prussian soldier wives hawked goods and sold cooked food (Engelen 2004, 149–70). It should come as no surprise that they created small commercial ventures in military camps. Women in civil communities legally dominated many areas of commerce, such as the sale of agricultural produce in open markets. Christian Davies (1740, 153), the eighteenth-century woman soldier turned soldier wife, was energetic in scheming to make money, even turning to smuggling goods into Ghent at one point. French soldiers, too, were notorious for smuggling, although salt was their specialty (McCullough 2007; Ruff 2001, 11–13). An order directed to British troops in Rhode Island in 1776 commanded, “No soldier’s wife is upon any account to keep a shop, without permission in writing signed by the Commandant,” which is good indication that women were indeed setting up their own shops (Hagist 1993–95). In one of the most original gambits, women from the Bevern Regiment of the Prussian army, then engaged at the battle of Kolin, on a hot June day in 1757 broke into an ice house and sold chunks of ice to the soldiers (Duffy 1974, 59–60).

One common business in the campaign community was that of sutler, selling food items, alcohol, tobacco, and small luxuries to troops. Sutlers could be male or female; women sutlers were also known as *vivandières*. Sutlers set up markets or mobile canteens under the supervision of the local military authorities, usually the provost marshal of an army and the regimental marshals who worked under his supervision. Formal disputes

were handled by the judge marshal (Turner 1683/1968, 207–208). Sutlers filled part of the gap between what the state supplied and what the men in the ranks needed or wanted. Christopher Duffy (1974, 138), a military historian of unusual breadth, has argued that modern beliefs that earlier armies were nearly all “teeth” with only minimal “tail” are “very deceptive” because such assumptions tend to forget the civilian logistic support that traveled with military forces. Troops of state commission armies were generally expected to purchase their own food only during winter quarters and in garrison; they received their basic rations directly from army suppliers on campaign. Still, they could and did buy luxuries, such as extra food, alcohol, and tobacco from sutlers, and the sutlers’ tents became centers of camaraderie and carousing on campaign.

Sutlers bought their supplies or accumulated them through foraging and pillaging as circumstances allowed. We gain our best insights on this and other details concerning the lives and work of female sutlers from fictional or fictionalized accounts of life on campaign. Most relevant for the period after 1650 is *The Life and Adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies, commonly called Mother Ross*, which deals with the eponymous protagonist’s exploits during the War of the Spanish Succession. She was a real person, but her story is almost certainly heavily embellished. The life of Christian Davies was written by an anonymous author who knew contemporary military practice. The tale, when compared with that of Grimmelshausen’s *The Life of Courage* (1670/2001) written seventy years earlier, indicates that the daily existence of sutlers and *vivandières* did not alter that much from the early seventeenth century to the first decades of the eighteenth, even if sutlers were more essential for the supply of basic foodstuffs before 1650 than they became after that date. Both Grimmelshausen’s antiheroine, Courage, and Christian Davies relied on forage and pillage as much as they could to secure their stocks; after all they turned a much greater profit by stealing their inventory. Christian Davies (1740, 69) boasted that “I never lost an Opportunity of Maroding.” She foraged for pigs, sheep, cocks and hens (“in the camp language, corporals and their wives”), fruits, vegetables, and grain (Davies 1740, 139, 169–70, 174–75, 201). As *The Life and Adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies* reports (Davies 1740, 176), the profession of *vivandière* was not an easy life. Once found, animals had to be butchered and cooked:

Having made these Prizes, I cut up my Mutton, laid by a Shoulder to roast, the Neck and Breast to make Broth; dug a Hole with a Hatchet to boil my Pot in, which, the Fire being made, I set on with the Mutton and Sweet-

herbs. ... They [officers] called for a Gallon of Beer ... ordered the Shoulder of Mutton to be roasted, which I did by pitching two forked Sticks in the Ground, putting it on a jointed Spit, and setting a Soldier's Wife to turn it. I made four Crowns a-piece of my Sheep, besides the Fat which I sold to a Woman, who made mold Candles for the Men, and made a good Penny of my Fowls and Pigeons.

Strong drink—brandy or eau de vie—was also central to the *vivandière's* trade. In fact, dealing in beer, wine, and strong drink was a traditional occupation for women in civil society (Wiesner 2000, 117–18). One complimentary remark from a British soldier (as quoted in De Pauw 1998, 122) with Wolfe in Canada pointed to the value of alcohol during the campaign of 1759:

The swarming flies, short rations, dysentery and scurvy were as plaguing as the painted Red Indians, prowling around the old posts with tomahawks and scalping knives. The only relief was in the almost lethal spirits provided by the women sutlers.

In representations of *vivandières*, alcohol is a constant prop. Depending on the army and the situation, she also sold tobacco. During the reign of Louis XIV, smoking came to be regarded as a necessity of life by French soldiers (Babeau 1890, 253).

Men and women served as sutlers, but available sources indicate that the job over time went from male to female. Courage says that she had to have a male front man to run her business as a sutler during the Thirty Years' War, and so she had her stooge, Tearaway: "It would be good bye to the business the moment I lacked such a figurehead" (Grimmelshausen 1667/2001, 136). Christian Davies ran her own business openly with gusto two generations later, in the era of the state commission army. Eighteenth-century comments on sutlers seem to refer primarily or exclusively to women, particularly when it came to distributing strong drink to the troops. As the Duke of Cumberland's standing orders of 1755 allowed, "Soldier's wives may suttle" (Williams 1988, 238). These were formidable women. It is said that once Frederick the Great rode up a hill to observe his troops during training maneuvers, but was shooed away from this vantage point by two women sutlers who had already set up shop there (Duffy 1974, 137).

Sutlers and *vivandières* lived under military regulation and supervision. Sir James Turner (1683/1968, 274–75) stated that the Swedish army allowed one sutler to each infantry company and one or two to each company of cavalry. So many accompanied the French army during the war with Spain, 1635–59, that a law of 1653 cut down their numbers to four per regiment

(Babeau 1890, 200). Austrian field regulations of 1749 and 1759 provided for *vivandières* to march with the troops, not back in the baggage train: “No woman in the infantry may, in future, march side by side with the regiment except those having no children and those serving soldiers with brandy” (Haberling 1943, 52; Duffy 1979, 57). During the same era, the provost in French field armies assigned numbers to the *vivandières*’ wagons and supervised them in the baggage train. If they encumbered the march, the provost’s men cut their horses’ traces and left them stranded (Kennett 1967, 123). Sutlers might wear some version of military dress and/or a badge, as did Prussian male and female sutlers, who sported blue cockades in their hats (Duffy 1974, 137).

Women who sold drink to French troops were allowed to remain with the regiments during the Revolution according to the law of April 1793, and shortly thereafter they were better known as *cantinières*, instead of *vivandières*. During the Napoleonic era, the French attached *cantinières* to particular regiments. A regulation stipulated that: “No women shall accompany the corps except those employed as washerwomen, vendors of victuals and drink” (Haberling 1943, 57–58). These women, often the wives of sergeants, would be appointed by the regimental *conseil d’administration*, a committee of officers headed by the colonel (Rothenberg 1981, 88). A very notable pair of this sort was the future Napoleonic marshal Pierre François Joseph Lefebvre, a sergeant in the French Guards before the Revolution, and the woman he married in 1783, Catherine Hübscher, who worked as a *vivandière/cantinière* and washerwoman. She would later become the subject of the play, *Madame Sans-Gêne* and movies by that name starring Gloria Swanson in 1923 and Sophia Loren in 1962.

Cantinières were well known in their own day; the *cantinière* of the 26th regiment crossed to enemy lines to take care of a wounded French noncommissioned officer saying, “we shall see if the English will kill a woman,” and another, Catherine Baland of the 95th Infantry Regiment, was said to have distributed goods for free during combat. She also was supposed to have received the Legion of Honor in 1813, although, in fact, Napoleon did not distribute this award to women (Rothenberg 1981, 88). Her role in the battle of Chiclana (1811) is memorialized in a grand painting by Louis-François Lejeune. The institution of *cantinières* survived into the Third Republic (Cardoza 2002; Mihaely 2005).

Early modern sutlers and *vivandières* set up their tents or huts in designated areas set off from the more regular encampment of the troops. Christian Davies (1740, 107) held herself fortunate that when she opted to

be a sutler, she was given special treatment, apparently in recognition of her previous service as a soldier; she “was permitted to pitch my Tent in the Front, while others were driven to the Rear of the Army.” Sutlers’ and *vivandières*’ tents were a favorite subject for artists, and we possess many engravings and paintings illustrating the life that went on around them. In established camps, for example, at sieges, sutlers might erect rough wooden huts. On the march, their tents often seemed improvised, a sheet of canvas thrown over a rough frame of branches or wooden poles. They usually were marked by some sign; as early as the mid-sixteenth century one such emblem appeared for sutler taverns—a tankard hung above the front of the establishment, often from the ridge pole of a tent. A wreath seems to have been an even more common emblem, and it could be combined with the tankard and/or a flag. But other emblems might be employed, including placards of one kind or another.

In prints and drawings, simple tables, stools, and/or benches sit in front of the tent, and the eating and drinking take place outside. Inevitably women are part of the scene, either as servers for male sutlers or as the sutlers themselves. Scenes also often portray men sitting with, holding, or jostling the women, demonstrating that the *vivandière*’s tent was a venue for contact between the sexes. Along with drinking, flirting, and fondling, came the occasional quarrels between soldiers warm with wine and, perhaps, contending over the attentions of the women present. One unusually explicit drawing of a sutler’s tent in Flanders during the War of the Spanish Succession must be taken seriously, since it was sketched by Marcellus Laroon, who served in Marlborough’s army at the time (Barnett 1974, 145). In the left foreground sits a large barrel of wine or beer. In the background, a few men play musical instruments as a couple dance in the right foreground. The attractive, lively-stepping young woman has unbuttoned and opened her blouse down to the waist, revealing her breasts, as her partner, in spurs and sword, clutches a bottle while kicking up his heels. At the table, two men drink, while another cavalryman embraces a second woman. It all comes off as a camp bacchanalia. Whether or not the owner was a woman, the lure of female presence was an effective way to bring in clients. Artists were very much taken with the theme of dalliance between soldiers and women around the sutler’s tent. In fact, the pretty *vivandière* became something of a fixture in artists’ renditions of camp life.

A *vivandière* on campaign could morph into a tavern-keeper during winter quarters or in garrison. Keeping a small tavern or drink shop was a good venture for women in civilian society, so it fit camp women as well

(Hufton 1998, 170–71; Wiesner 2000, 117–18; Engelen 2004, 149–70). A series of letters from 1710 in the French military archives illuminates a few details of the life of one such enterprising woman. Castres, her husband, a non-commissioned officer in the cavalry Regiment du Roi, petitioned authorities that since he was a soldier, his wife should not have to quarter soldiers at her home and business establishment in Guise (Service historique, AG, A¹2266, no. 87–90). The official inquiry reports: “This woman is a kind of *vivandière* who works at that profession during the campaign season, and in the winter she returns to Guise, in a house ... [where] she now runs a cabaret.” Mme. Castres obviously augmented the family income, perhaps pulling in more money than her husband. He appealed both to the law and to his thirty years of service and his wounds to get a break, but to no avail. The authorities decided that there were so many troops in Guise that Mme. Castres would have to quarter soldiers anyway. Christian Davies (1740, 237) reports that she also ran a tavern, but after she left the army: “As I had before kept a Publick-House, and was used to Subleing in the Army, I could think on nothing better than that of my former, and accordingly, I took a House, put in a Stock of Beer, and by this and making Pies, I got a comfortable Support.” She later returned to the army and set up as a sutler in Hyde Park, where troops camped.

While sutlers and *vivandières* provided valuable services and a site for entertainment and carousing, they were not always beloved. Sutlers snagged the soldiers’ money, for their alcohol provided one of the few comforts of camp. Authorities in camp were supposed to protect soldiers from price-gouging by setting prices. However, sutlers could conspire with provosts and auditors to cheat the troops: “But the truth is, the Buyers are too often abused, and the Prices set too high by collusion of the Provost-Marshal with the Sutlers, and the Sutlers bribing the Judg Marshal (Turner 1683/1968, 207–8).” Turner (1683/1968, 291) expressed concern over “debates and brawls betwixt Souldiers and Sutlers.” The beloved *vivandière* of eighteenth-century lore was probably a rarer figure in reality.

Whatever their tasks, thousands upon thousands of women accompanied the troops between the end of the Thirty Years’ Wars and the end of the Napoleonic Wars, sharing with them many of the dangers of the combat zone. What differentiates this zone from the “rear” or the “home front”? In fact, the combat zone is best defined by the intensity and immediacy of danger and by the ability to do direct harm to the enemy. It is where adversaries collide, where the enemy is in striking distance. The full reality of war lives here, including fear and the sights, sounds, and smells of death,

as does the opportunity for victory or the possibility of defeat. It would be ridiculous to claim that only those who bear weapons endure the rigors of war. For women who lived within the sound of the cannon, it was not simply a question of *supporting* the fighting individuals but of *sharing* danger, injury, and death, of experiencing much of what the men on the firing line experienced. Women bivouacked in the open air, slept in tents with the men of their company, or shared improvised huts with their husbands. In addition to discomfort, fatigue, and suffering, disease plagued early modern armies. As members of the campaign community, women endured all this, while they performed strenuous jobs.

As a particular burden of their sex, the hardships endured by wives of the campaign community included pregnancy and childbirth. Rifleman Harris (1970, 84) tells a story of childbirth and remarkable endurance on the grueling retreat to Coruna in 1808–09:

One of the men's wives ... being very large in the family-way, towards evening stepped from amongst the crowd, and lay herself down amidst the snow, a little out of the main road. Her husband remained with her; and I heard one or two hasty observations amongst our men that they had taken possession of their last resting-place. ... To remain behind the column of march in such weather was to perish, and we accordingly soon forgot all about them. To my surprise, however, I, some little time afterwards (being myself then in the rear of our party), again saw the woman. She was hurrying, with her husband, after us, and in her arms she carried the babe she had just given birth to.

Such fortitude gives the lie to the statement that women by nature lack carrying power and stamina.

Beyond the trials of the march and of camp life, women braved the dangers of war. Although women typically inhabited the baggage train, they could attend their men on the battle line. On 4 June 1759, Mary May petitioned Colonel Henry Bouquet (1951, 30) to pardon her for her breach of military discipline. When she saw her husband seized for an infraction, she had flown into a rage that caused her own arrest. In her appeal we see her affection, her history, and her toughness:

I have been a Wife 22 years and have Traveld with my Husband every Place or Country the Company Marcht too and have workt very hard ever since I was in the Army I hope y' honour will be so Good as to pardon me this time that I may go with my Poor Husband one time more to carry him and my good officers water in hottest Battles as I have done before.

The formidable wife of Sergeant Stone, as described in *The Royal Gazette* of 25 September 1779, matched Mary May. Here we see her praised for her conduct at the siege of Louisbourg in 1758 (as quoted in Mayer 1996, 9):

She accompanied him, though she was rather of a small and handsome make, through most of the hardships of our armies underwent in America during the last war; no consideration of fear could make her leave her husband's side, thro' nine engagements in which he was concerned; in the course of which she twice helped to carry him off wounded from the field of battle; and it is a fact ... that at the siege of Louisburg, at a time when many of our troops were killed, she supplied the living with the powder cartridges of the dead, and animated the men in the ranks next to her by her words and actions. Though a woman of the most surprising intrepidity, she was never known to be guilty of any thing that could impeach her delicacy, or violate the modest demeanour of her sex.

The story makes her conventional femininity clear: her “small and handsome make,” her “delicacy,” and “modest demeanour.” But she also bore “most of the hardships of our armies,” even helping to carry off her wounded husband twice. Through it all she was not simply hardworking but courageous in the face of enemy fire.

Women also risked capture and the hardship and humiliation of imprisonment. A poignant description from the late eighteenth century describes a Boston woman's reaction (as quoted in De Pauw 1998, 120) to seeing British prisoners taken at Saratoga:

I never had the least Idea that the Creation produced such a sordid set of creatures in human Figure—poor, dirty, emaciated men, great numbers of women, who seemed to be the beasts of burden, having a bushel basket on their back, by which they were bent double, the contents deemed to be Pots and Kettles, various sorts of Furniture, children peeping thro' gridirons and other utensils, some very young infants who were born on the road, the women bare feet, cloathed in dirty rags, such effluvia filld the air while they were passing, had they not been smoaking all the time, I should have been apprehensive of being contaminated by them

The wives of soldiers often constituted a significant segment of the population of garrison towns, and in smaller numbers played an important role in military camps. In garrison or campaign communities their presence was so common as to become mundane. We lack detailed individual accounts of these necessary wives, *not* because they were rare, but because their presence was such an expected and normal aspect of military life. Interestingly, our most complete account of the life of a camp wife is that of Christian Davies, but we have her story because her primary renown

was not as a camp woman but as female soldier. She is a bridge to the other pole of women's military life 1650–1815, the cross-dressing woman in arms.

Exemplary Female Soldiers

The preface to Davies's biography notes that she displayed an "uncommon Intrepidity but rarely found in the fair Sex." For this she won praise, although the preface goes on to concede that she had developed "a masculine Air and Behavior" which "would hardly be [excusable] in any other of her Sex." She was thus to be considered an exemplary soldier, but not a model for other members of "the fair Sex." In this we see a hint that the cultural representation of the female soldier was less designed to guide women than to challenge men to match her exploits. From the seventeenth century into the nineteenth, the European imagination was fascinated with female soldiers: women who donned men's clothing, assumed a male identity, and served under arms in the ranks. This fascination reflected a reality, for such women certainly existed; however, their likeness was exaggerated and distorted by the parabolic mirror of contemporary perception and purpose.

Other authors in this volume, notably Elizabeth Prelinger and Dorotea Gucciardo and Megan Howatt, address the representation of women in propaganda and memorials during the twentieth century. This manipulation of female image and action took place during the early modern epoch as well. In studying this period, it is the *stories* of female soldiers, not the less romantic realities of their actual lives that deserve our attention. For a variety of reasons, contemporaries found, and historians still find, female soldiers of consummate interest. People of their time enjoyed hearing of cross-dressing women warriors because of the unusual, entertaining, and even titillating nature of their experiences. The fact that their stories were embellished along the way did not hurt their popular appeal. Also, modern-day historians interested in the condition of women and the malleability of gender find excellent grist for their mills in the lives of women who abandoned unacceptable living conditions and limited possibilities to take on masculine appearance and roles.

Notable individuals, such as Catalina de Erauso, Maria van Antwerpen, Christian Davies, Catharina Linck, Hannah Snell, Deborah Sampson, and Rose Barreau demonstrate that such women did indeed assume male garb and shoulder weapons. Some eager scholars conclude from such examples

that great numbers of women served in the ranks, yet these exaggerated claims do not bear up to scrutiny. While we can document perhaps a few hundred women who became soldiers and sailors from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, in relation to the many hundreds of thousands of men who marched in European armies or sailed in merchant and naval fleets, the presence of cross-dressing women was extremely limited. The numbers who stood in the ranks of any particular European army at any particular time was undoubtedly miniscule. For example, Peter Wilson (1996, 152), in his research of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries at the Stuttgart archives, discovered only a single woman soldier, Anna Maria Christmännin, who served 1716–18. Don Hagist (1993–95) concludes that “we cannot fully document any cases of women serving as British regulars in the American War.” Historians who argue for a sizeable participation by women soldiers must *assume* that there were many thousands of women who went undetected, and that is a big assumption.

Thus, it is an exaggeration to conclude, as does Alfred Young (2005, 8), that although the American female soldier Deborah Sampson enjoyed notoriety at home, “In the larger Atlantic world of the eighteenth century, Sampson would not have raised many eyebrows.” It is precisely because the existence of woman soldiers was rare, even in Europe, that it caught the public interest. Stories of cross-dressing soldiers definitely “raised many eyebrows” or they would not have been told. Arlette Farge (1993, 499) likewise misleads her readers when she asserts, “To march off to war as men did, to rebel by passing as men: cross-dressing was one of the traditional forms of popular protest.” In another excessive appraisal, Linda Grant de Pauw (1981, 209) claims that “During the American War for Independence tens of thousands of women were involved in active combat.” To call cross-dressing as a male soldier a “tradition” implies that it was reasonably common, which it was not. To imply that great numbers of women were on the firing line stretches the truth beyond recognition. Yes, some women fought, and yes, people knew about it, but while this was a known option, there is no real evidence that it was a road taken by more than a tiny minority.

And yet, although women warriors were few in actual numbers, the stories about them abound. Celebration of the cross-dressing woman soldier in popular culture lasted for about two centuries, picking up in the early or mid-seventeenth century and dying out in the first half of the nineteenth. Particularly after 1650, these women provided a staple of songs, literature, and stage performances. Popular culture recognized and reflected the fact that women served as soldiers, but it also filtered and

elaborated this reality to entertain the public, to highlight the issue of gender roles, and to stimulate military values.

The image of woman soldiers promoted by popular culture related to an enduring European fascination with the mythology of women warriors and a reverence for Biblical heroines. Amazons captured the European imagination, particularly, it would seem, that of notable women of power and birth during the seventeenth century (DeJean 2003; Shepherd 1981). Interiors of elegant homes were decorated with paintings of Amazons and other ancient heroines. Between 1637 and 1642, the flamboyant Marie de Cossé Brissac, *maréchale de La Meilleraye*, embellished her study with a series of portraits of deadly heroines, including three Amazon queens. She was not alone in this interest. No less a personage than the queen regent of France, Anne of Austria, intended to create such a gallery for herself. Literature echoed this attention to valorous women of the past. Jacques Du Bosc's *La Femme héroïque* appeared in 1645, followed two years later with the far more successful *La Galerie des femmes fortes* by Pierre Le Moyne (as cited in DeJean 2003, 128).

The Old Testament provided compelling images of women who employed deadly violence in a divine cause. Beyond ancient mythology or literary fancy, these stories had the power of Biblical authority. The Kennite woman Jael slew the Canaanite general, Sisera, after he had been defeated by the Israelites. When Sisera came to her tent, she offered him milk, suggested he rest, and, when he slept, hammered a tent spike through his temple. She was then praised as a heroine by Deborah, the judge. The story is contained in Judges 4 and 5. Her story was told and illustrated in Le Moyne's *La Galerie des femmes fortes* (as cited in DeJean 2003, 120–31).

Judith (13:2–8, as cited in Rublack 1997, 5) gave Europe a still more relevant and immediate image of the sword-bearing woman. Not only was she praised from the pulpit, but artists such as Botticelli, Donatello, Caravaggio, and Rembrandt celebrated her beauty, resolve, and deadly blade. In the early modern period, when wars often consisted primarily of sieges, Judith shone like a beacon. When the Assyrians attacked her town of Bethulia, all hope seemed lost, and the men of the town were ready to capitulate. Not the beautiful and determined widow Judith, who entered the Assyrian camp, where she captivated the enemy general, Holofernes. When he was “overcome with wine” she decapitated him with his own sword. Their leader slain, the Assyrians retired; Judith saved Bethulia and enjoyed great renown and respect for the rest of her long life.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, a number of extraordinary elite women turned ancient myth and Biblical example into reality during the turmoil of the Thirty Years' War, the Fronde, and the English Civil Wars. For example, in Lorraine during the late 1630s and early 1640s, the magnificent Alberte-Barbe d'Ernecourt, Comtesse de Saint-Baslement, defended her lands against raiders while her husband was away at the wars (Cuénin 1992). She donned appropriate men's attire, summoned her tenants, and led them in combat, although she was always the lady of her estates. Mme. de Saint-Baslement was celebrated with two equestrian portraits of her dressed and armed to fight and a biography, suitably entitled *L'Amazone chrestienne* (DeJean 2003, 123, 147). The English Civil Wars supply several examples of land-owning women who defended their homes and estates (Plowden 1998). Lady Blanche Arundell, whose husband was off fighting for the king, led the defense of her estate, Wardour, which held out for six days in May 1643 before capitulating. Mary Bankes and Charlotte Stanley, Countess of Derby, also won renown for their actions in defense of their lands. During the French rebellion of the Fronde (1648–53), headstrong aristocratic women took part in the drama of politics and combat. Catherine Meurdrac de La Guette defended her lands in the absence of her husband. The flamboyant grand noblewomen, Anne-Marie-Louise d'Orléans, Duchesse de Montpensier, played the part of a rebel against the monarchy, even leading troops of the Paris garrison as they fought against royal forces. The exploits of such elite women caught the public fancy, as they were seen as grand, current-day reflections of heroines of old.

This fashion of aristocratic Amazons reflected but was quite distinct from the more widespread cultural fascination with common women in arms, a subject far more in keeping with the theme of this chapter. Cross-dressing plebeian women who passed for male soldiers appeared in song, literature, and stage performances, from plays to variety acts. Songs about women soldiers delighted the ears of a particularly broad spectrum of listeners, who did not even need to be literate. By nature, songs are easily acquired and highly portable, but they also simplify. The appeal of songs about women in uniform derived from the novelty of their theme and from their way of turning a hard existence into a romantic fantasy. Dianne Dugaw provides the best scholarly discussion to date of this phenomenon; she centers on English-language songs, of which she has collected 120. Dugaw's (1996, xi) transvestite heroines abandon home, often encountering parental resistance, in a quest for love and glory. While some go to pursue or accompany a lover or husband, others leave in search of adven-

ture, but even those who seek adventure generally discover romance as well. Dugaw (1996, 1) terms the songs “success stories” with a predictable plot whereby the “masquerading heroine—a model of bravery, beauty, and pluck—proves herself deserving in romance, able in war and rewarded in both.”

Beyond the ubiquitous songs, many pamphlets and books presented the lives of women soldiers to the literate population. In contrast to song, literature allowed for a greater range of exposition and meaning. The authority of the printed page gave these accounts more weight, although this could mislead the naïve, because the biographies, memoirs, and correspondence of women soldiers were less likely to be fact than fancy. One of the earliest fictional tales of armed women told of the exploits of Long Meg of Westminster, which appeared first in 1582 in the pamphlet, or chapbook repertoire, and was reissued with embellishments repeatedly into the eighteenth century. Her many sisters appeared in tales told in the British Isles, Spain, France, the Netherlands, Russia, and America. The “true” story of a woman soldier’s life became a seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literary genre. Sylvie Steinberg (2001, 80), a historian who has written perceptively on the subject, concludes, “Such adventures form a veritable motif in the most popular of literature.” She points out how events from one woman’s life had the disturbing habit of popping up in the tales of another. We will soon examine two examples of this literature, the biographies of Christian Davies and Hannah Snell, in greater detail. Women masquerading as male soldiers also appeared in many plays and other stage performances throughout Europe. Amusing comedies delighted audiences with their exotic themes of inverted gender, but they also demonstrate a frustration with the limited possibilities of femininity and express women’s possession of masculine traits. Often the heroine is quite happy to adopt masculine tastes for drinking and gambling, and to draw her sword in earnest (Dugaw 1985, 125–26; Wheelwright 1994, 14).

The multiplicity of songs, stories, and performances featuring women soldiers should not be seen as evidence of great numbers of women actually in the ranks. In fact, the cultural attention paid to the exploits of female soldiers derived from three other sources: their entertainment value, their relationship to popular concern with inverted gender roles and the battle of the sexes, and, in some cases, their political use to justify or inspire military action. On the most superficial, yet still perhaps the most important level, such stories appealed to audiences with a taste for extraordinary adventures. As the title page of the biography of Catherine Vezzani, a

female soldier, advertised: "What odd fantastic Things, we Women do!" (Dekker and van de Pol 1989, pl. 10). The texts of such literature involved love, rejection, disguise, and confusion. Authors supplied inherent sexual double entendres, occasional homosexual innuendos, and bizarre plot twists that played on the cross-dressing disguise, such as the heroine being accused of getting a girl pregnant. Once Europeans showed enthusiasm for this genre, they were sure to get more from those willing to please and eager to profit. But explaining the popularity of this genre by its entertainment value is to a degree begging the question: was this capacity to amuse tied to some other cultural concern that enjoyed widespread interest?

It was. Early modern popular culture devoted a great deal of attention to defining gender and gender roles. One common expression of this was a fascination with gender inversion, that is, a reversal of identity and roles that commonly featured women acting as men (Kunzle 1978; Davis 1978). Examples range from naïve images meant to inform and amuse children to serious political attacks meant to discredit powerful men. Dutch catch-penny broadsheets from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries designed for the young displayed series of inversions, including cows butchering butchers, mice attacking cats, and hens mounting roosters (Van Veen 1971). Inevitably included were pictures of women armed for war as their husbands sat plying the distaff or bands of women forming a besieging army (Van Veen 1971, pl. 39; Kunzle 1978, 45–47; Lynn 2008, 98). A more elaborate set of images from eighteenth-century Prussia displays women in uniforms with skirts drilling as soldiers, firing muskets, and manning artillery. One of the drawings in this series shows a uniformed woman sitting at a tavern table drinking and smoking a pipe as her male companion tends the baby and holds a distaff (Engelen 2004, 377). An American print entitled *Cornwallis turned nurse, and his mistress a soldier* appeared in *The Continental Almanac for 1782*. This plate humiliates the British general by showing him seated with a baby on his lap and holding a distaff, while his woman shoulders a flintlock musket (Young 2005, 89). The woman gone off to war clearly represented an ultimate form of gender inversion.

One particularly jibing version of this concern for proper gender roles was the battle for the pants. Prints from the sixteenth through the eighteenth century show men and women disputing who will wear the pants, often in violent confrontations. A woodcut of 1533 by Erhard Schön shows a woman who has harnessed her husband to a cart and is whipping him (Moxey 1989, 102; Strauss 1984, 255; Lynn 2008, 128). She holds the traditional symbols of male authority—sword, purse, and pants (underpants in

this case). An eighteenth-century plate shows a woman triumphantly holding a sword and with a crowing rooster at her feet, while her compliant husband, attended by a slinking dog, hands her his pants (Dekker and van de Pol 1989, pl. 23). In a world well aware of the metaphor of the battle for the pants, the female soldier not only wore pants but bore that ultimate symbol of virility, a sword; and she used it (Hopkin 2003b; Lynn 2008, chapter 4).

Beyond their entertainment value which involved gender inversion, stories of women warriors also may have carried a message meant to defend unpopular wars and shame men into taking up arms themselves. To examine this deeper current, we need to return to the literary portrayals of two woman soldiers in eighteenth-century Britain. The widely circulated biographies of Christian Davies and Hannah Snell, actual female soldiers, published in 1740 and 1750 tell us much about contemporary military life, and also may witness the publishers' desire to push a political agenda and inspire military values. These works have justly attracted scholarly attention (Easton 2003, Bowen 2004, Stephens 1997).

The lengthy English biography, *The life and adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies, commonly called Mother Ross* presents itself as "taken from her own mouth," covering her military experiences in a life claimed to span the years from 1667 to 1739. Scholars have debated if Christian Davies actually existed, but recent scholarship establishes that she was quite real and lived to receive a pension of "Five Pence a Day for her future Support and Maintenance" owing to "divers Wounds she receiv'd in follg. the said Regt." during "the late Warr in Flanders" while "disguis'd in the habit of a man," according to the records of the Royal Hospital at Chelsea (Easton 2003, 14). Davies's biography lacks most of the typical romantic nonsense and speaks with some authority about camp life, though it is padded with historical reports on the War of the Spanish Succession across Europe, facts Davies would not have known firsthand and probably not at all. Whatever its veracity, the book became a primary staple of the literature on women soldiers; after its first appearance in 1740, it saw another full edition in 1741 and abridged editions in 1742 and 1744. Her story would then be briefly told in a series of later volumes.

The accounts of the service of Hannah Snell, *The female soldier: Or, the surprizing life and adventures of Hannah Snell* may lie closer to reality. On 25 May 1750 she returned from her adventures at sea and in India, where she had fought as a marine, and revealed her true identity to her comrades right after drawing her final pay. After she appealed to the Duke of

Cumberland for support, a notice of her adventures and actions appeared in *The Whitehall Evening Post* on 23 June. The enterprising publisher Robert Walker, sensing the possibility of profit, signed a declaration and agreement with her that gained him exclusive rights to her biography on 27 June. The next day he advertised the upcoming publication of her story, and on 3 July it appeared in a short 42-page form. He then issued a longer serialized account beginning 14 July. Her story also appeared in the pages of the *Gentleman's Magazine* and the *Scots Magazine* (Bowen 2004, 43). As demonstrated in a study by one of her descendants, Matthew Stephens, there is absolutely no doubt that Hannah Snell served as a marine, and there is evidence that she was eventually given support through the old soldiers' home at Chelsea (Stephens 1997). Yet even here, the unvarnished truth was not good enough for the editor, who added fanciful material at the start of the story and shifted the dates of major events for the sake of drama.

Both Davies and Snell left home in search of lost husbands, but they did not follow the romantic course of the songs. Davies hoped to find her beloved husband, who was shanghaied to fight in the Netherlands during the Nine Years War. She donned her husband's clothes, signed up for the army in 1693, served out the last years of that war, returned home, and then once again enlisted at the start of the War of the Spanish Succession, during which she was discovered to be a woman when treated for wounds in 1706. After being recognized as a woman, she stayed with the regiment as cook and sutler. Along the way she found her husband in the embrace of another woman; they reconciled as friends, and he died in battle.

The female soldier claims that Snell was abandoned by her good-for-nothing spouse when she was pregnant. After the death of her baby in 1745, she signed on as a soldier to track down the culprit and wreak her revenge on him. Parish records show, however, that her child was born in 1746 and died in 1747; so the first part of her story has to be a fabrication. Yet ship records establish that in late 1747 she did indeed sign on to sail to India as a marine. *The female soldier* reports that while serving she learned that her husband had been executed for stabbing a man. After her return to England, military records state that in recognition of her service, she was admitted as an out pensioner at the Royal Hospital at Chelsea (Stephens 1997, 44–45).

Beyond their commercial success as entertainment, Davies's and Snell's memoirs work on deeper levels. Scarlet Bowen (2004, 26) argues that the depiction of these women in the ranks should be regarded as constituting the kind of female masculinity proposed by Judith Halberstam (1998). Bowen (2004, 28) asserts that:

far from reifying male masculinity or serving simply as a 'proxy' for the heroism of male soldiers, the female heroine possesses her own brand of female masculinity that she uses in order to cajole other male characters in the memoirs into being 'real men.'

In a similar vein, Julie Wheelwright (1987, 490) concludes that female soldiers during the eighteenth century "were hailed as heroines, albeit exceptions."

For early modern Europe, intrepid female heroines who exemplified masculine virtues were accepted, and they were ready and able to show men what they ought to do to prove their manliness. Bowen (2004, 32) argues that the memoirs of Davies and Snell were intended to inspire patriotic fervor and argue in favor of the unpopular war of 1739–48. Publishers were consciously pursuing political programs, and these tales were intended to shame men into military service. *The life and adventures of Mrs. Christian Davies* appeared the very year that British audiences first heard the patriotic air "Rule Britannia!"

Bowen's thesis receives support from stage performances that date from the same era as the Davies and Snell biographies. As advertised on an engaging broadside, Peg Woffington performed *The female volunteer; or, an attempt to make our men stand* on the London stage during the Scottish rebellion of 1745–46 (Daly 1891, between 112 and 113; Lynn 181). This actress made a reputation playing men in uniform to appreciative audiences; her first such role was *The female officer* in 1740 (Wheelwright 1994, 115). As the female volunteer, she lightheartedly, but directly, shamed the men in the audience to fight for king and country. Considered alongside Davies's and Snell's memoirs, her performance provides another mid-eighteenth-century appeal to burgeoning national feeling in Britain. Noting initial defeat at the hands of Scottish rebels, she chidingly played the card of her own manliness: "if 'tis so, and that our Men can't stand, 'Tis Time we Women take the Thing in Hand." But ultimately she counseled women to put their feminine charms to noble service, rewarding only the brave warrior. Circa 1790, Mrs. Wrihten performed another song, *The female captain*, written by her husband, at Sadlers Wells. This ditty cut much in the same direction as the Peg Woffington's act. It reminded the men "'Tis your king and your country now calls for you aid," and threatened them that should they fail the call, she would step forward "the breaches to assume" (Dugaw 1996, 52).

Woffington and Wrihten both issued a gendered challenge to the men of the audience to fulfill their manly duties or be shunned, or even replaced,

by women. Their appeals to duty also assume higher-minded rationales for service than those that typified mercenaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Another English stage song at the end of the 1700s, also sung by a woman in military attire and also entitled *The female volunteer* (as quoted in Dugaw 1996, 52), suggested that women might actually follow the martial careers of men:

When our gallant lads are obliged to roam
Why should women idly stay at home.

Interestingly, Hannah Snell also herself took to the footlights, performing even before Walker published his printed accounts. On 29 June 1750 she marched on stage at the New Wells theater for the first of sixty appearances that stretched on until 6 September. The New Wells offered harlequinades, variety shows appealing to a popular audience. *The Whitehall and General Evening Post* reported the success of her first performance, singing two songs attired as a marine (Stephens 1997, 41). Hannah was no singer, however, and by 19 July she had augmented the content of her show by demonstrating “the manual exercises of a soldier in her new regimentals.” Walker’s quick reaction to Snell and her ability to immediately exploit her experience in print and on stage provides a powerful demonstration of the fascination that greeted the phenomenon of the woman soldier.

The ultimate impact of popular culture’s fascination with woman soldiers can only be conjectured, given the anecdotal nature of the evidence. Proof of their amusement value lies in the prevalence of songs, pamphlets, and books extolling female soldiers for two hundred years. Tales praising women warriors may also have served a purpose by suggesting more assertive alternative lives for plebeian women. Yet given the small number of women who actually assumed male identities to serve in the ranks, the value of stories of women soldiers must have been predominantly metaphorical rather than actually fostering a career in uniform. Julie Wheelwright (1994, 9, 13–14, 21–22) is pressing the case a bit hard when she argues that the persona of woman soldier shone as a beckoning example of liberation for plebeian women. Moreover, it is impossible to establish how the image of the woman warrior influenced gender tensions between men and women during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. My guess is that tales of female soldiers drew heat from the battle for the pants rather than stoked it. There is better chance that the image of the woman at arms was more closely linked to and influential upon the patriotic upsurge of the late eighteenth century.

Toward the end of the period under discussion, the French Revolution provided a special and particularly strident case of women asserting their right to bear arms in the name of militant patriotism. They may have been influenced by tales of women soldiers before the Revolution, but they were certainly driven by a severe sense of citizen rights and responsibility expressed as demands, posed in the language of ancient myth and symbolism, to defend the nation. Soon after the fall of the Bastille, a fanciful street pamphlet declared the formation of "Bellona's Amazons," named after the Roman goddess of war. This pamphlet played against Rousseau's gender stereotype by asserting that "we also know how to fight and win; we know how to handle other arms than needle and thread" (Hopkin 2003b, 82). Noteworthy revolutionary women proclaimed that women should be formed in their armed units to insure political order and fight the enemies of France. Olymphe de Gouges, author of the Declaration of the Rights of Women, demanded that the government create a regiment of "Amazons," and Théroigne de Méricourt urged women, "Let us arm ourselves, we have the right to do so by nature and by law. Let us show men that we are not inferior, either in virtue or in courage" (Steinberg 2001, 249). But the government, while praising women for their devotion, did nothing to organize them for war; instead it stated a wish that their example would shame men who had not yet volunteered to repent their reluctance and join the army. There seems to have been an enduring expectation that, as in Britain, the idea of women in arms would inspire men to do their duty.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the adventure stories of female soldiers commanded a large audience, expanding a lesser, though interesting, reality into an imposing myth of women warriors in the ranks. Early modern popular culture's fascination with cross-dressing women warriors as engaging individuals continues to this day in books intended for a broad readership (Laffin, 1967; Truby 1977; Wheelwright 1994; Stark 1996; Jones 2000; Cordingly 2002). To this, scholars are adding a very modern concern with transvestism and homosexuality within the context of gender history (Eriksson 1985; Dekker and van de Pol 1989; Steinberg 2001; Easton 2003; Bowen 2004; Aresti 2007).

Unfortunately, the embellished myth of the exemplary female soldier continues to eclipse the participation and contribution of camp women, who were infinitely more important for the conduct of war and the character of military institutions. This chapter has argued that before 1650 women accompanied European armies in large numbers and were essential to the very existence of those forces. After that date the gender-defined

tasks performed by a smaller but still significant number of soldiers' wives on campaign were integral to the health and well-being of the troops; armies needed "useful" wives. Women were thus necessary inhabitants of the campaign community, and even more numerous in the garrison communities that resulted from the maintenance of large standing armies. To allow such plebeian women to remain in obscurity is to misrepresent the nature of early modern armies.

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