



# Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War

*Jeanie Attie*

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## **Patriotic Toil: Northern Women and the American Civil War** Jeanie Attie

During the Civil War, the United States Sanitary Commission attempted to replace female charity networks and traditions of voluntarism with a centralized organization that would ensure women's support for the war effort served an elite, liberal vision of nationhood. Coming after years of debate over women's place in the democracy and status as citizens, soldier relief work offered women an occasion to demonstrate their patriotism and their rights to inclusion in the body politic. Exploring the economic and ideological conflicts that surrounded women's unpaid labors on behalf of the Union army, Jeanie Attie reveals the impact of the Civil War on the gender structure of nineteenth-century America. She illuminates how the war became a testing ground for the gendering of political rights and the ideological separation of men's and women's domains of work and influence. Attie draws on letters by hundreds of women in which they reflect on their political awakenings at the war's outbreak and their increasing skepticism of national policies as the conflict dragged on. Her book integrates the Civil War into the history of American gender relations and the development of feminism, providing a nuanced analysis of the relationship among gender construction, class development, and state formation in nineteenth-century America.

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