

Manfred von Pentz

DEFENDING OUR WOMEN



The Accolade E. Blair Leighton (1853 – 1922)

Thou art my life, my love, my heart
The very eyes of me
And hast command of every part
To live and die for Thee.

Robert Herrick (1591 – 1674)

Imagine you had an *Ideal!*

A vision of allegiance, an indissoluble covenant, an eternal promise, and with it the profound satisfaction that is the reward for serving your Queen unconditionally. As her protector in any kind of weather. As a knight whose humaneness has been steeled by fire and agony. As a man who saw it all, yet grew stronger instead of giving in to despair. As a champion who has written *courage, decency, fairness, goodness, honesty, modesty, morality, probity, purity, rectitude, righteousness, trustworthiness, truthfulness, uprightness* and *virtue* on his banner. In short, as a man who has ditched his selfish individualism for a larger design.

Could *that* appeal to you?

Oh come now, I hear you say. Stuff this sort of utter nonsense! Because we aren't living in the times of the Round Table anymore. Today's ideals are pornography, greed, graft, lies, deception, blackmail and assassination, and those to whom it appeals are the ones who rule the world.

Giving in to *despair*, then?

*Not yet, I hope. Let us look indeed at what we have now, and what we had once, and why it got lost. Though lost is a relative term, as you will agree. Because even if it has been forced by the Pharisees and their combined media onslaught below the surface of our benumbed and befuddled minds, it is still there. And with it a whole range of dormant emotions. Like the intense joy of having been able to fulfil a vow. Or the elation to be cheered by burghers and peasants whose turf you have defended. Or the bliss of hearing a poem written in your commendation. Or the enchantment of listening to a lovely maiden singing a song in your praise. Or the ecstasy on receiving an accolade from your most beautiful Queen. Or just the delight to be called *a man of some consequence*.*

What has struck me always as extraordinary, or absolutely enthralling, is the extent to which we Christian men have gone in the worship of our women. The ease and certainty of how we elevated them to a status of near divinity, knowing full well that all our swords and halberds and daggers combined stood not the faintest chance against a slight touch of their slim hands, a fleeting kiss from their rosy lips.

And if the hands weren't so very slim, or the lips a bit less rosy, it made not much of a difference either. Because most likely the knight in question didn't look always as handsome as the one in the lovely painting on top of this piece, but had grown a bit bow-legged from all that horse-riding, or potbellied from all the wine before and after a battle, or bald from wearing a heavy iron helmet most of the time and in any kind of weather. Thus, as we say in Germany, *on every pot the proper lid*. Which doesn't diminish the romantic impact of my argument in any way.

The adoration for the eternal Female has come down to us from our Indo-German forebears as a largely undefined primeval impulse, but received a tremendous boost with the invention of *Love* as a system of thought and, in consequence, an all-compassing and imperative sentiment.

With very few exceptions, this sentiment is missing in most societies. Meaning those where women are historically treated as inferior, due to the simple fact that they can't hit back with equal force when attacked or abused by a man. And who are thus looked upon as second-rate creatures whose God-commanded duty it is to serve their male masters in any way ordered. There are whole tribes in Africa where the women till the fields, feed the kids, cook the food, and do in fact every bit of work necessary to sustain the family, while the men lay about and get high on *kwas* while beating them to kingdom come if they dare to object. With regard to a general workload, the same is true of any docile lass married to an orthodox Jew. One who fervently thanks his Lord every morning for having been created as a *man* and not a woman while he struggles into his scarecrow outfit, and then takes off to submerge himself all day long in the intricacies of the Talmud where it is probably stated on every second or third page that cleaning so much as a teaspoon is against Yahweh's divine intentions.

As to Muslim women living in the classic Islamic countries, I can't help but thinking of one of the saddest proverbs I've ever heard during my long journeys, namely one they whisper to each other when their supremo isn't around: *Life is just a Veil and a Grave...*

Or to quote a somewhat tougher stance from a recent novel:

They have killed Love. They treat their women like subhuman beings. They marry without love, they breed without love, they pamper their grubby sons like kings and abuse their daughters like dogs. They beat the living lights out of their women, strangle them or stone them to death if their pride demands it. They have deprived themselves of God's greatest gift, the free and happy love between a man and a woman. They live in terrible barrenness, because over the ages this lack of love has killed their souls. That is why they are dumb, cruel and near mad. With us Christians they see what love can be, and it drives them crazy. The only remedy they can find is hate, because their sick honour forbids anything else. That is why they long so much for their silly paradise. That is why they hate life and worship death, their own death included. That is why they kill their animals and enemies and women so barbarously, because it pleases them to see someone suffering more than themselves.

The Crimson Goddess

Rather strong stuff, admittedly, though it needs just one search in the Internet for a present-day stoning to make it stick. Which could lead to the assumption that only primitive people treat their women in this vicious way. But that isn't true. Take the Japanese, for example, a

highly cultured bunch who could elevate the mere drinking of a cup of tea to an endless ceremony of the highest sententious significance, yet forced their girls at an early age into shoes that crippled their feet and made them hobble painfully for the rest of their lives. Which had the advantage of a tighter vagina when grown up, but most likely lacked any deeper emotional remuneration for both sides involved.

One could go on, sadly enough, for a few more pages stating similar horrors, but they aren't really the issue here. Let us therefore, and with a sigh of relief, return to our Christian men. Or, by giving chronology its due, to their forebears first, namely the old Greeks.

One of those, most likely the greatest of them all, but unfortunately not known by name, was the glorious hopper who conceived the hitherto unheard of idea that one might get an infinitely greater kick out of life if it were to be shared with an intelligent, warm-hearted, self-assured, witty, happy and sensual consort, instead of an illiterate harem moll who knew a few tricks in bed but nothing else, or a downtrodden colleen who hardly said a word for fear of catching a swipe. It can be assumed with near certainty that the idea was divinely inspired, most likely by *Zeus* himself, King of Gods, who had a predilection for exceptionally beautiful women and sired such stupendous dishes as the Muses or, perfectly fitting within this context, peerless *Aphrodite* Herself.

All this happened long before the great *Homer* roamed our sacred earth. Because when he was up and about, the social status of a fine woman had reached already such eminence that it could trigger a long and costly war. Talk is here of course about the *lovely face that launched a thousand ships*, Helen of Troy. Who offered a cold shoulder to her husband-king and eloped with fetching young Paris, thereby unleashing nine long years of bloodshed, but also one of mankind's most magnificent literary monuments.

Which doesn't mean that cuckolding was a generally accepted pastime in ancient Greece. Quite the opposite. Women were on the whole expected to be loyal to their hubbies and keep a cool eye on house and hearth. But they didn't get pushed about, meaning that all hell could break loose if they had reason for serious discontent. Just think of *Lysistrata*, heroine of *Aristophanes'* irreverent and sometimes ribald comedy, who locked herself and her fellow plotters into the acropolis of Athens and Sparta respectively, in this way refusing any sexual favours until their brutish husbands refrained from cutting each other's throats and behaved for a change like decent human beings.

Or take Socrates' wife *Xanthippe*, who wasn't too impressed by his flights of fancy or the tea she had to serve his disciples all day long, but kept telling everyone within earshot that a new dress and perhaps a help in the kitchen would be a lot more tangible than all those *ethics* and *epistemologies* and Zeus help her whatnot. Though it is also said that she cried bitterly when the Athenian Neocons forced him to drink his deadly poison.

As to the purely visual development, it reached a veneration so sublime that we still stand stunned whenever we have the great good luck to come face to face with it in one of the greater museums. Take, for example, the *Aphrodite of Rhodos*.

Or *Arsinoe II*, a Greco-Egyptian queen who lived some two hundred years before Cleopatra, and who dressed herself into robes of such epic delicacy that defies any human imagination.



The mood continued through Roman times, excellently expressed in poetry but somewhat less so in the Fine Arts. It was during this era that God's blueprint for the Human Race received an important thrust towards its distant perfection, namely with the arrival of another glorious Dignitary. One who defined *Love* in a much broadened and therefore completely new dimension, thus preparing the essentials for a spiritualization which has influenced and fertilized European thought since then in an inimitable way.

Now this was of course an event so large that the world needed nearly a millennium to digest it. But then: *Eureka!* Almost out of the blue a cultural Golden Age began to blossom that lasted nearly another thousand years. And it soared and expanded and reached celestial heights that are without equal in the entire History of Man, and will never be attained, let alone surpassed again, by anybody but its inventors and their children.

Our problem is that we took it for granted.

Or rather, it seemed inconceivable that this miracle could not continue, being preserved and extended from generation to generation, and in this way advance a cultural development that should eventually culminate in a perfect and peaceful Utopia.

For a better understanding of the above allow me to take you a moment to France, namely the lovely city of *Autun*. Here we find one of the first wondrous examples of a Greco – Roman Renaissance that grew beyond itself and culminated in Botticelli's *Venus* or Lord Leighton's *Flaming June*.



Eternal *Eve* she is, and Romanesque in style.

She reclines her splendid figure in a garden with many trees and a thousand flowers. Her skin has the texture of polished alabaster, her lovely bosom is small but firm. Her gorgeous long hair flows freely. Her delicate head is supported by an exquisitely long hand. The enchanting lips are pursed in thoughtful contemplation, tempered with the faintest touch of mischievousness. Her enchanting eyes are half-closed and have a dreamy expression. She tentatively reaches out with another deliciously long hand for the *forbidden fruit*.

No *serpent*, mind you.

Just look at her, *lo and behold*, and tremble!

Because *this* is the quintessential *Female Evil*, the wicked temptress and sinful seducer who brought upon us all the world's woes. Because of *her* we got kicked out of Paradise and have regretted it ever since!

Damn the Bitch!

Can you believe that?

Well, *don't!* It is one of the *Old Testament's* most ugly and vicious inventions, and was from the very beginning intended to subjugate our womenfolk with a terrible accusation and make them suffer for their crime, be it in the kitchen, the vegetable garden, in bed or in a dungeon. Because what really happened must be obvious for anyone with open eyes and a grain of feeling, namely that Eve tasted the mysterious apple, and as a result saw with breathless wonder that she lived in an earthly Paradise of such incomparable splendour as could never be more beautifully imagined. And that she did what every loving wife would do, namely offer her man a bite as well.

And if they hadn't noticed until then that they were naked, they knew it now, and my spirited guess is that they didn't mind it at all.

On the contrary

The whole brute narrative, by the way, throws a clear light at the insuperable abyss which separates the *Old Testament* from the *New Testament*. Because the apologists of the former must, if not long since atheists or downright nihilists, regard themselves as victims condemned by an angry god to wander for a lifetime in a kind of terrestrial Hades filled with bandits, savages and other infidels. Which has probably let them to the assumption that the latter can be screwed by divine decree to kingdom come, provided of course one doesn't get caught.

Whereas supporters of the *New Testament*, provided they are sufficiently empathetic and intelligent, have taken its testimony to heart and are well aware that they live in an overwhelmingly beautiful earthly paradise. Provided, of course, there are no evil spirits to dispute it.

This interpretation of Eve was clearly intended by *Ghislebertus*, the man who carved her so beautifully around 1140 AD, and who gave us the clue to any future reading of the marvelous epoch that had just begun to unfold.

Yet in order to understand it fully we must remember its foundations, namely the cataclysm that had happened a millennium earlier and now began to blossom into the mysterious flower

that is mankind's one and only hope for a distant salvation. If this sounds too farfetched or improbable altogether, let me tell you that those men and women who nourished it were not confounded fools or delirious dreamers, but bright, independent and clear-minded scholars who could have stood up to any present-day academic with absolute ease. Take *St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, who commanded an immense respect among peasants and nobles alike, due to a brilliant mind combined with the profound conviction that whatever views he postulated had a sound and demonstrable base. This is a line from his famous *Canticles*.

Love seeks no cause beyond itself and no fruit. It is its own fruit, its own enjoyment. I love because I love. I love in order that I may love...

In the windfall of this extraordinary gnosis prospered a poetic revival that began around 1050 AD with the French Troubadours and culminated in the German *Minnesingers*, whereby the latter developed a highly stylised form of female veneration called Minnesong. Now *Minne* is Old High German and means Love, but in this case has some very particular connotations. Because the lyrical hymns those battle-hardened knights and nobles, their emperor included, composed and performed in praise of an adorable lady, were almost as pure and exalted as Schubert's *Ave Maria*.

Which does not mean that the adored ones were unaware of their seductive appeal. This is a captivating excerpt from a courtly tale of those days, *Lanval*, written by the exquisite *Marie de France*.

She had an attractive, slim-wasted figure. Her neck was as white as snow on a bough. Bright eyes in a pale face, a lovely mouth, a perfect nose, dark eyebrows. Her hair was wavy and corn-coloured. In the sun it had a light finer than spun gold. She was dressed into a white linen shift, loosely laced at the sides so that one could see the skin from top to bottom.

Yet what really mattered was the emotional depth tempered by a chivalrous restraint that imbued the recitals with a sublime thrill, a deeply gratifying delicacy based on an Art that endowed the weaker sex with a divine dimension of spiritual purity, and thus raised worship to a tremendously sensitive intellectual pleasure which is hardly comprehensible anymore in the pornography-infested emotive deserts of our Modern age.

The *Gothic Era*, an epoch so marvellous, magical and perplexing that it must be left untouched in this little essay, triggered a rebirth or *Renaissance*, another magnificent period that, most important, rediscovered the great cultures of our forebears, Greek and Roman alike, and polished them off with Christ's maxims.

In due course the first literary giants of Christianity stepped onto the stage and Humanism was born. Magnificent heroines like Petrarca's *Laura* or Dante's *Beatrice* captivated the hearts of educated Italy and beyond. As a result the veneration of Womanhood received yet another boost, and those Dukes, Popes, Counts and Condottieri, all with an infallible sense for beauty and elegance, had their spouses, daughters and mistresses educated, usually by the best scholars money could buy. Thus while proudly exhibiting the ladies' outer splendour at proper occasions, it was advertised with equal delight that they could read *Aristophanes* in the original and, perhaps over a glass of sublime *Montepulciano*, embark on a spirited critique of his certainties and fallacies alike.

End of Part One

