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Abstract

This article compares and contrasts the representation of women's roles in the conflict in France and Britain during two key moments in which the war's cultural memory has been constructed: at the end of the war and during its centenary years. In order to do so it first considers two visual sources dating from 1918: the film "La Femme française pendant la guerre" (The Frenchwoman in Wartime) made by the Section cinémagraphique de l'armée (Army cinema unit), and photographs of British women's war work commissioned by the Photographic Section of the Ministry of Information. It then analyses the representation of women and the First World War in two museum exhibitions that were both launched in anticipation of the public interest that would be generated by the centenary of the conflict: the First World War galleries in the Imperial War Museum in London, which opened in 2014, and the permanent exhibition in the Musée de la Grande Guerre (Museum of the Great War) in Meaux, which first opened its doors in 2011.

'Female war icons: Visual representations of women's contribution to the First World War in France and Britain in 1914-18 and 2014-18'

In both France and Britain, women's participation in the First World War was highly mediatized from the outbreak of the conflict onwards. Although, as historians have argued, for the majority of women the war did not necessarily bring about a change in the kinds of waged or unwaged work that women carried out, it certainly made working women more visible.[1] Numerous photographs, drawings, films, books and newspaper articles depicted their diverse roles, constructing as they did so new versions of national heroines: angelic nurses, stoical mothers and plucky young war workers. Like all constructions of female identity, these idealized representations of women at war drew on familiar tropes of femininity which were adapted for the particular circumstances of 'total war'.[2] Alongside war heroines came their counterparts, anti-patriotic female villains – eroticized spies, selfish socialites, unfaithful wives – which equally drew on long-standing socio-cultural constructions of femininity. Some individual women gained iconic status during the war. Although she was executed for her role in an escape network for Allied soldiers, Edith Cavell embodied for many the patriotic self-sacrificing nurse, while Mata Hara tended to be cast as the model for the untrustworthy and anti-patriotic prostitute-spy.[3] Such stereotypes necessarily failed to account for the diversity and range of French and British women's activities, attitudes and experiences during the war. But they formed a backdrop for any visual representation of women's wartime roles; photographs and films depicting 'real' women in wartime were shaped both by popular wartime stereotypes and by long-standing gender imperatives that prescribed the limits of female roles.

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[1] On women and work in the First World War see for example Deborah Thom, Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War 1, London, 2000; Gail Braybon, Women Workers in the First World War, London,1981; Evelyne Morin-Rotureau, 1914-18: Combats de femmes, Paris, 2004; Françoise Thébaud, La Femme au temps de la guerre de 14, Paris, 1986; Margaret Darrow, French Women and the First World War, Oxford, 2000; Laura Lee Downs, Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industries 1914-1939, New York, 1995; Laura Lee Downs, War Work, in: Jay Winter ed., The Cambridge History of the First World War, vol 3, Cambridge, 2014, 72-95; Keith Mann, Forging Political Identity: Silk and Metal Workers in Lyon, France 1900-1939, Oxford, 2010.

[2] See Alison S. Fell, Remembering French and British First World War Heroines, in: Christa Hämmerle, Oswald Uberegger and Birgitta Bader Zaar eds., Gender and the First World War, Basingstoke, 2014, 108-126; Susan R. Grayzel, Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood and Politics during the First World War, Chapel Hill, 1999; Jean-Yves Le Naour, Misères et tourments de la chair durant la Grande Guerre, Paris, 2002.

[3] See Tammy Proctor, Female Intelligence: Women and Espionage in the First World War, New York/London, 2003; Chantal Antier, Marianne Walle and Olivier Lahaie, Les Espionnes dans la Grande Guerre, Rennes, 2008.

As the war drew to a close, the French and British governments sought to record women's contributions to the war effort by commissioning photographs and making films. They did so for a range of motives: to document and memorialize what was largely presented as the temporary replacement of male workers by women in a time of national emergency; to reassure both civilians and mobilized men that women were 'doing their bit' for the war effort; and, in some cases, to inform future government policy around female employment and family welfare. At the same time, suffragists and feminists were keen to make the most of the opportunity to showcase the evidence of women's efforts as citizens in order to argue for increased rights for women – particularly the vote – and improved working conditions. French suffragist Léon Abensour's 1917 publication "Les Vaillantes: Héröines, Marytrs et Remplaçantes" (Valliant Women: Heroines, Martyrs and Substitutes), for example, presents women's activities during the war years not as a temporary chapter in his nation's history, but as the culmination of women's increasingly important contribution to society. Absenour thus begins his eulogy to women's contributions to the war effort with a vision of a future in which 'one half of the human species which has up until this point been relegated to the side-lines will bring a new energy with which to serve society'.[4] NEW PARAGRAPH?

Positive images of women at war could therefore be used to serve different political purposes, depending on the ways in which they were presented, circulated and interpreted. Whatever the political agenda, however, certain images had more propaganda value than others. The emphasis was placed on women whose contributions were seen as the most worthy, whose lives had been transformed by the war, rather than on the majority of women who continued to work in roles during the war that were similar to those they had done previously – albeit in different and often difficult circumstances.

A hundred years later, the French and British governments are once again funding representations and re-appraisals of women's roles during the First World War in the context of the wealth of public events, museum exhibitions, films, television programmes and other cultural programmes designed to commemorate and reflect on the war and its legacies. This article will compare and contrast the representation of women's roles in the conflict in France and Britain during two key moments in which the war's cultural memory has been constructed: at the end of the war and during its centenary years. In order to do so it will first

[4] Léon Absenour, Les Vaillaintes: Héröines, Marytrs et Remplaçantes, Paris,1917, 1.

consider two visual sources dating from 1918: the film "La Femme française pendant la guerre" and photographs of British women's war work commissioned by the Photographic Section of the Ministry of Information. It will then analyse the representation of women and the First World War in two museum exhibitions that were both launched in anticipation of the public interest that would be generated by the centenary of the conflict: the First World War galleries in the Imperial War Museum in London, which opened in 2014, and the permanent exhibition in the Musée de la Grande Guerre in Meaux, which first opened its doors in 2011.

Visualising women and war in 1918

In both nations examined here, the manpower shortage that intensified from 1916 onwards led to increased government efforts to recruit women into a range of waged war work in diverse sectors of the economy. Targeting women was done in part by positive press and magazine articles highlighting the importance and patriotic virtue of women engaged in war work. The emphasis remained on the temporary nature of the work, reassuring their audiences that traditional boundaries of what was considered acceptable for men and women would be reinstated once the guns had fallen silent. This is reflected in the language used to describe women's war work: in Britain, work was described as being only 'for the duration', while in France women war workers were frequently referred to as 'les remplaçantes' (substitutes). At the same time, there were also concerns in both nations about the potential impact of the war on the birth rate, on women's health and on family life. Emphasis continued to be placed on the importance of motherhood as women's primary role, which was presented as a national duty as well as a source of individual fulfilment, particularly in France where pronatalism had been a growing force in political life from the late nineteenth century onwards.[5] NEW PARAGRAPH?

While some images of women in the First World War therefore emphasize the (temporary) transgressions of what were seen as the boundaries of women's identities, carrying out tasks previously understood as inappropriate or unfeasible for women, others celebrate the continuity of traditional women's roles as actual or potential wives and mothers. As Laurent Véray notes in relation to the representation of women's work in French wartime propaganda films:

[5] Grayzel, Women's Identities at War, see note 1; Anne Cova, Maternité et droits des femmes en France, Paris, 1997.

> Certainly important social changes in women's activities are highlighted. But at the same time in each film there are multiple maternal metaphors, and feminine qualities are sought out; even when women are dressed and working like men, an effort is made to feminise them, to remind the spectator that fundamentally they are still women, whose essential task in a bloody war is to repopulate France.[6]

This was particularly the case at the end of the war, when images of mothers and young children not only served to underscore this pronatalist message, but also to embody a vision of a peaceful imagined future and post-war return to the status quo.

This becomes very clear by looking at the Section cinématographique de l'armée was formed in 1915 and disbanded in 1919; in the four years it was in operation it made 930 films in total.[7] The film "La Femme Française pendant la Guerre", directed by Alexandre Devarennes, was shown to both soldiers and the public after it was released in 1918.[8] The film is an example of this sometimes uneasy blend of the new and the traditional in terms of the iconic visual images of wartime femininity it offers. Its underlying narrative suggests that despite the temporary (and heroic) replacement of men by women at a time of national emergency, the French woman has retained the essential qualities of her femininity. Its message is underscored in the tricolor poster created to publicize it which features a triptych of women with a seated breastfeeding mother in the centre flanked by an industrial worker on the left, and a paysanne on the right. In the background and looming over all three women is a Marianne figure, symbolising the mother country; the four female figures taken together function to underline the voluntary subordination of French women's individual concerns to the totalizing national war project. The message of the poster and the film is clear: women have given freely of their labour for the nation, but their primary task remains that of repopulating France with its future citizens.

PICTURE?

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[6] Laurent Véray, Le cinéma de propagande durant la Grande Guerre: endoctrinement ou consentement de l'Opinion ?, in: Jean-Pierre Bertin-Maghit ed., Une histoire mondiale des cinémas de propagande, Paris, 2008, 41.

[7] Violaine Challéat, Le cinema au service de la défense, 1915-2008, in : Revue historique des armées, 252 (2008). Available online at http://rha.revues.org/2983

[8] The film is available to view online via the EPCAD archives: http://www.ecpad.fr/la-femme-francaise-pendant-la-guerre/

The film is a blend of fiction and documentary, opening with a fictional tableau with actors playing the roles of female relatives of mobilised men, before moving to documentary-style images of the 'voluntary mobilisation' of women working in towns, factories, farms and hospitals. The 'women at work' section of the film concentrate on those roles more usually performed by men before the war: railway porters, tram drivers, mechanics, welders, chimney sweeps, postal workers and so on. In agricultural work, the women are shown ploughing, using pitchforks and cultivating the land. Frequently the clips chosen foreground the physically demanding nature of the task, and the cheerful resilience of the women workers. In this way, the continuity of women's work before and during the war is underplayed, and emphasis is placed instead on the work as both new and temporary. In reality, although in both nations the war saw high levels of women employed in industry, for many of them it was a case of moving from one sector to another, often for (temporarily) higher wages. In France the 1906 census stated that women accounted for 33.9% of France's industrial labour force. By 1918 this had increased to over 40%.[9] However, the film's sections on 'towns' and 'factories' imply that the war had resulted in an influx of women coming into the industrial workforce for the first time rather than what in real terms was an increase of around 7%.The film is also keen to show that work did not mean the neglect of their maternal duties. Female metal workers – described in the inter-title as 'ouvrières et mamans' (workers and mums) – are shown carefully washing their hands and putting on clean over-clothes before breastfeeding their babies in the factory crèche, thereby dispelling anxieties around the potentially harmful impact of factory work on women's health and on family life.

The second half of the film emphasizes the largely unwaged work that blended seamlessly with what were constructed as the 'eternal' qualities of women: nurturing women knit, care for sick and wounded soldiers, and raise future generations of patriotic young citizens. Bourgeois women are shown to have enthusiastically responded to what the inter-title refers to as the 'call made to their hearts'. Their work is therefore presented as an extension of the domestic space, and there are frequent associations made with Catholic images of saintly and selfless female virtue. At the end of this section, for example, the film shows statues of St Geneviève, Jeanne d'Arc, and Jeanne Hachette, presenting them as 'the lessons of the past' that French women have drawn on during the war. When we see a series of women being awarded medals at the end of the film, therefore, this is framed in the light of transcendent

[9] Mann, Forging Political Identity, see note 1, 18.

heroines answering to a ‘higher call’ rather than ordinary women acting as patriotic French citizens. Nevertheless, the final scene in which heavily bandaged women lie helplessly in hospital beds with their medals displayed on the hospital wall above them, whom we learn are ‘workers who remained at their posts when Paris was bombed [in an air raid] on 30 January 1918’, is not easily integrated with this more abstract Catholic framework of female martyrdom. The visceral nature of seeing their injured bodies and laboured breathing brings the violence of war on women to the foreground and does not sit easily with the more sanitised and highly stylised representations of the impact of war on women’s lives that we see in other scenes. PARAGRAPH HERE?

The film is framed with two images of grieving mothers and widows of mobilised men. In the first, a stylized tableau bearing the hallmarks of melodrama shows a woman giving up her husband to the patrie. In the final scene, women dressed in mourning are given medals in a large outdoor ceremony by the French state. “La Femme Française pendant la Guerre” thus praises women for their war service but, crucially, it is not their own sacrifice that is prioritised at the start and end of the film, but that of their male relatives. The question of men’s and women’s differentiated relationship to the state is therefore not questioned. It is the men who have paid the ‘blood tax’ as a central tenet of their Republican citizenship. Women’s relationship to the state is understood primarily not as individual citizens, but as the female relatives of male citizens, and as the reproducers of future ones.

In Britain, press articles describing and celebrating women’s wartime roles were often illustrated by photographers working for the Ministry of Information or Ministry of Munitions. These photographs perform a similar function to the documentary footage of women at work filmed by the Section cinématographique de l’armée, at least to some extent. The government had commissioned photographs to be taken of women workers in part to encourage sceptical employers to take on women to replace skilled male workers. Dilution officers were employed to tour the provinces to convince reluctant employers, worried about the potential problems of employing women such as discipline issues or the costs of providing separate female lavatories, to consider employing more female workers. These officers took photographs with them to help make their case, and two booklets of

photographs were also produced and sent all over the country.[10] As Deborah Thom and Claire Bowen have argued, it is important when looking at official photographs taken of women workers to bear in mind the circumstances in which they were produced, and the messages they were intended to convey. Originally, these photographs were designed to offer a positive image of women working in jobs normally reserved for men. The Photographic Section of the Ministry of Information sent out a letter in June 1918 stating that the government was 'desirous of making a complete collection of photographs illustrating the wonderful manner in which women have taken the place of men during the war'.[11] NEW PARAGRAPH?

As was the case for "La Femme Française pendant la Guerre", whereas British women had been working in diverse roles in factories and mills before the outbreak of the war, these photographs suggested that this kind of work was new for women, created by the unique circumstances of the war. Studying these photographs uncritically can therefore risk 'encouraging a history of innovation which understates the persistence of some aspects of industrial life'.[12] Equally, government photographers Horace Nicholls and G. P. Lewis actively sought out women workers who would make for good photographs, rather than aiming for an exhaustive record of female labour in the war years. The ordinary was rejected in favour of the sensational; images of women carrying out hard manual labour were selected, for example, to underscore the extent to which they had replaced absent men. Their expressions are usually cheery or stoical rather than miserable or bored. The desired impression was of a plucky band of willing and capable temporary women workers. As Claire Buck summarizes, this placed considerable representative weight on female industrial workers, who became a 'metonym for the whole nation', with images of female munitions workers in particular making women 'the symbolic link between the domestic home front and the war'.[13] PICTURE?

However, if the short-term objective of photographing women in their workplace was to help solve the labour shortage by implementing the system of dilution, their longer-term

[10] Deborah Thom, Making Spectaculars: Museums and how we remember Gender in Wartime, in: Gail Braybon ed., Evidence, History and the Great War: Historians and the Impact of 1914-18, Oxford, 2003), 48-66.
[11] Letter, J.B. Browne, Photographic Section of the Ministry of Information to Messrs Scowcroft and Sons, Wigan, 8 June 1918. Ministry of Information Papers, Box 2, Wellington House Files. Quoted in Claire Bowen, Recording women's work in factories during the Great War: The Women's Work Sub Committee's 'substitution' photographic project, in: Revue LISA/LISA e-journal, 6, 4 (2008), 27-39.
[12] Thom, Making Spectaculars, see note 10, 58.
[13] Claire Buck, Conceiving Strangeness in British First World War Writing, Basingstoke, 2015, 179.

importance as records of the war years was almost immediately recognised. In March 1917, the National War Museum Committee, which was to lead to the founding of the Imperial War Museum, established a Women's Work Sub-Committee, which began to commission photographs directly for a series of exhibitions. The above mentioned photographers Nicholls and Lewis were seconded to the sub-committee in August 1918, and organised factory visits both in London in the provinces. A first exhibition of Women's Work took place in October 1918, and attracted 82,000 visitors including the Queen.[14] Agnes Conway, daughter of Sir Alfred Mund who was the original Chairman of the Committee, was the appointed official responsible to Lady Norman, who like several women of her class had run a hospital in France early in the war, for the Women's Work section. Conway was a middle-class suffragist and was keen through the depiction of women in war work to underscore their importance to the war effort, and potentially provide evidence for arguments supporting women's continuing importance in paid and skilled jobs after the war.[15] NEW PARAGRAPH?

The emphasis was rather different, then, to that of the photographs taken to support the dilution scheme. However, it remains important to bear the aims and motivations of the Women's Work section in mind when considering the photographic archive that they commissioned. Some work and activities carried out by women was underrepresented or absent. There were more photographs of women working in munitions than was proportionally the case, as these roles had higher propaganda value. In short, and as an official memo relating to a 1919 exhibition of women's war work summarises, the men and women who commissioned and took the photographs of women at work in the First World War 'were consistently moved more by a concern for good propaganda than for an accurate record or representative sample.'[16] That said, and as is equally the case with the French film, the wide range of industrial activities covered – glass-making, construction, air-craft building, munitions, chemicals, ceramics, breweries, steel, mining, textiles, flour and paper-mills – still give us a sense of the diverse work in which women were engaged in order to produce the goods required to keep the army and the country functioning. Some of the photographs appear to be staged. Others, however, have a more documentary style, highlighting the

[14] Gaynor Kavanagh, Museum as Memorial: The Origins of the Imperial War Museum, in: Journal of Contemporary History 23,1 (1988), 77-97.
[15] Mary Wilkinson, A Closer Look at the Women's Work Collection. Available online at http://www.iwm.org.uk/history/a-closer-look-at-the-womens-work-collection
[16] Quoted in Thom, Making Spectaculars, see note 10, 60.

professional context, and depicting the women as skilled workers rather than portraying women in wartime as artificially glamorous 'munitionettes' like those who sometimes graced the pages of magazines, or as ornamental accessories used to sell wartime goods. NEW PARAGRAPH HERE?

"La Femme Française pendant la Guerre" and the photographs taken for the Women's Work Sub-Committee continue to serve to remind us of the broad range of waged and unwaged work undertaken by women during the war. Rarely had women's employment been so carefully visually documented. The different contexts and aims of the Section cinématographique de l'armée and the women's Work Sub-Committee meant that the French film is much more explicit in its espousing of a pronatalist message, and in underscoring women's role in the reconstruction of the nation after the war, whereas the British photographs tend instead to emphasize the skills, adaptability and competence of working women. In both cases, however, when depicting women's waged work, change was prioritized over continuity; collaboration over industrial unrest; and political consensus over political resistance. The resulting images give an impression of women of different ages and social backgrounds willingly giving of their service and sacrifice for the sake of the greater good.

Representing women and war during the Centenary

I will now turn to two major museum projects to assess if the activity generated by the war's centenary has offered French and British public a different take on women's roles and activities during the First World War. PARAGRAPH?

Situated at the site of the first Battle of the Marne, the Musée de la Grande Guerre in Meaux was the brainchild of Jean-Pierre Verney, who had amassed an enormous collection of First World War objects over several decades, and Jean-François Copé, president of the regional authority of Meaux, representing 85,000 inhabitants.[17] Copé acquired the collection in 2005 and set about raising funding for the museum. This has not been without controversy: some inhabitants have objected to their taxes being used to fund the museum, but Copé has defended the museum both in terms of its importance as a lieu de mémoire, and its benefits to

[17] Musée de la Grande Guerre de Pays de Meaux, Chemins de mémoire website of the Ministre des Armées http://www.cheminsdememoire.gouv.fr/fr/musee-de-la-grande-guerre-du-pays-de-meaux ; Le passeur de mémoire, interview with Jean-Pierre Verney by François Guillaume Lorrain, Le Point (9 November 2011), http://www.lepoint.fr/culture/le-passeur-de-memoire-09-11-2011-1394492_3.php#

the local economy.[18] The museum was opened on 10 November 2011, and included the 'couloir des femmes' (women's corridor), which runs alongside the main museum space, and which was added to and expanded in 2016. The Museum has also curated a 16 panel mobile exhibition on women in the war that is available for hire to be exhibited in other settings during the centenary period.[19]

The permanent and mobile exhibition on women feature some of the same women who appeared in the 1918 film. For example, a photograph of Germaine Malaterre Sellier and Jeanne Macherez, two Red Cross nurses who worked in Soissons during the war, and who were both awarded the Croix de guerre and the Prix Audiffred by the French state for their bravery, appears in both, and function in both cases to underline a specifically 'feminine' brand of heroism during the war.[20] However, the Meaux exhibitions certainly offer a broader range of women's activities and roles during the war than the 1918 film. A notable difference is a focus on working women who led episodes of industrial action, and not merely a celebration of female industrial workers as 'mobilised' for the nation. A film shown next to one of the panels in the women's corridor, for example, tells the story of the highly mediatized and successful strike by Parisian textile workers (popularly known as the midinettes). There is also a greater concentration on the ways in which women's everyday lives were affected by the experience of occupation. One of the women featured in an individual panel, for example, is Gabrielle Marchand, who refused to be evacuated from Lille and managed the family farm. We are also told that at the end of the war her husband married another woman, and she was left a single mother caring for her children. This story of separation and bigamy was relatively common during the war, but is rarely a focus of popular histories of the conflict.

However, despite this inclusion of a more varied range of women's experiences and a less celebratory tone when describing their participation, a new kind of heroine emerges in 'le couloir des femmes': the feminist or proto-feminist. Whereas the assumptions of the film-makers in 1918 was that women carrying out men's roles were worthy of praise and admiration because they had temporarily left their domestic roles, in the early twenty-first

[18] Valentine Rousseau, Pays de Meaux. Le Musée de la Grande Guerre pèse sur le budget, Le Parisien (18 March 2016), http://www.leparisien.fr/meaux-77100/pays-de-meaux-le-musee-de-la-grande-guerre-pese-sur-le-budget-18-03-2016-5638367.php

[19] http://www.museedelagrandeguerre.eu/fr/expositions-evenements/expositions-itinerantes.html

[20] See Alison S. Fell, Germaine Malaterre-Sellier, la Grande Guerre et le féminisme pacifiste de l'entre-deux-guerres, in : Christine Bard ed., Les féministes de la première vague, Rennes, 2015, 207-16.

century such transgressions are celebrated because they are seen as female incursions into public space. This means that in contemporary museum exhibitions particular attention is given, for example, to women who were very close to the front lines, or to female combatants, even though such women represented a tiny minority of the female population as a whole. In Meaux, a panel explains the existence of the Russian women's Battalion of Death and the founding of the British Women's Army Auxiliary Corps in 1917, and includes images of the Serbian combatant Milunka Savic, Russian Maria Bochkareva and Frenchwoman Marie Marvingt as examples of women who carried out combatant roles. Because of the rarity of the combatant experience for women in France (Marvingt probably served in a French combatant unit for about three weeks with the 42nd Batallion of the Chasseurs à Pied), the museum is forced to turn to examples from other nations.[21] It is notable that this is not the case, for example, when considering women's experiences of enemy occupation, or of war work. PARAGRAPH?

The reasons for their inclusion is perhaps made clear when the next panel focuses on the responses of French and international feminist organisations, including feminist pacifists such as Frenchwoman Hélène Brion, to the war. A key difference between the narratives of women's First World War experiences in 1918 and a hundred years later is thus the link that is nearly always made to the progress (or lack of progress) in women's rights. The continuing insistence in popular culture of the war as emancipating for women, a view of the war that was discredited by many historians from the 1980s onwards, especially in relation to France where women remained disenfranchised until after the Second World War, appears to have inflected the way in which their participation is represented in museums such as the Musée de la Grande Guerre in Méaux.[22]

Whereas female experiences of the war are limited to a single area of the main exhibition in Meaux, the 'women's corridor', this is not the case in the First World War galleries in the Imperial War Museum in London, which opened in 2014. The new galleries were part of an ambitious redevelopment of the museum timed to coincide with the start of the war's centenary, which was funded by an initial £5 million government grant, a £6.5 million grant by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and a further £25 million of funding secured from a variety of

[21] Marcel Cordier and Rosalie Maggio, Marie Marvingt: La Femme d'un siècle, Sarreguemines, 1991.
[22] For a discussion of the limitations of the war as emancipatory for women in France see for example James F. McMillan, Housewife or Harlot? The Place of Women in French Society 1870-1940,1981; Françoise Thébaud, La Femme, see note 1; Sîan Reynolds, France Between the Wars: Gender and Politics, London, 1996.

sources.[23] An accompanying book was published by Paul Cornish, senior curator of the galleries, with a forward by the Duke of Cambridge.[24] With Deborah Thom, a leading historian of British women's war work, appointed to the committee, as well as with Dan Todman, whose work explores the evolving British cultural attitudes to the conflict, including towards its impact on women, it is clear that the IWM saw it as important not to exclude women from their 2014 narrative of the war.[25] Although women's roles are not relegated to a separate part of the exhibition, but are integrated into the broader narrative which emphasizes the connections between the home front and the fighting front, the only mention of women in the museum's press release at the launch of the galleries resembles the way in which women's participation in the war had been represented in 1918: '[the exhibition] explores how a total war on the battlefields, meant a total war on the home front as women stepped into roles in factories, hospitals, transport and agriculture.'[26] The IWM's desire to tell a fuller story of the war, including the story of Empire and of global conflict, has not completely eradicated, then, the 1918 prioritizing of what was seen as a temporary taking on of men's roles as part of a broader national sacrifice necessitated by 'total war'. PARAGRAPH?

However, in the galleries more generally, the IWM were attempting to produce a 'thick description' of the First World War, placing items in a broader context, and paying particular attention to hitherto overlooked aspects, thereby shaping and shifting public perceptions of the war and its legacies. In terms of the galleries' narrative, the curators were consciously attempting to incorporate a contemporaneous understanding of the war by including participants' own voices alongside a sense of the social, political, economic and military structures that underpinned that individual experience. In practice, this means that women's experience is reduced to a selection of representative cases. Unlike in Meaux, there are no in-depth case studies, and the examples chosen tend to tread fairly well-worn paths. In the section on mobilisation 'Your Country Needs You', for example, 'some enterprising women' who went closest to the fighting fronts are included, such as a photograph of the well-known 'Heroines of Pervyse', Elsie Knocker and Mairi Chisholm, and a book commemorating the

[23] http://www.1914.org/news/pm-david-cameron-announces-funding-for-iwm-london-new-first-world-war-galleries/; http://www.iwm.org.uk/sites/default/files/press-release/PR-IWMLsecuresHLFgrant.pdf
[24] Paul Cornish, The First World War Galleries, London, 2014.
[25] Thom, Nice Girls and Rude Girls, see note 1; Daniel Todman, The Great War: Myth and Memory, London, 2005.
[26] http://www.iwm.org.uk/sites/default/files/pressrelease/First%20World%20War%20Galleries%20at%20IWM%20London_0.pdf

execution of Edith Cavell.[27] In the section 'At All Costs', we are shown a nurse's uniform, a Glasgow tramways conductress's hat, an armband from the Women's National Land Service Corps, and a photograph of members of the women's auxiliary services. The problem with this approach to constructing a narrative of the First World War, as Claire Buck notes in relation to the exhibition's representation of the non-white experience of the war, is that 'without prior knowledge we can only glimpse another way of understanding the war'.[28]

It is important to acknowledge that the Imperial War Museum saw its First World War Galleries as offering a 'totalising vision' of the war, functioning as one of principle ways during the centenary years in which British citizens would learn about, and see itself reflected in, the complex histories and legacies of the conflict. Its public remit is reflected in the amount of public funding it received, and, to some extent, in the high visitor numbers (In 2014 the IWM attracted almost 915,000 visitors, up 153% on the previous year).[29] The centenary has also offered opportunities for alternative representations of women's roles in the First World War, including theatre productions, films, television dramas, and other museum exhibitions. While some of these have relied on well-worn narratives, others have offered a fresh vision of the war and its impacts on women's lives by uncovering lesser-known stories, or by reflecting on the ways in which women's lives in 1914-18 can inform our understanding of women's lives a hundred years later. PARAGRAPH?

A 2017 photography exhibition, 'No Man's Land', held at the Impressions Gallery in Bradford, for example, combines rarely seen photographs taken by female photographers of the First World War with new commissioned works by contemporary women war photographers. A more participatory approach with their audience was reflected in a simultaneous Heritage Lottery Fund project in which a group of young people from Bradford called 'New Focus' produced an accompanying book that was given to all Bradford school children.[30] In France, a 2017 exhibition in the Pantheon exploring scientist Marie Curie's mobile X-ray unit in the First World War, shows that women's experiences and contributions

[27] Cornish, The First World War Galleries, see note 24, 57.
[28] Buck, Conceiving Strangeness, see note 13, 191.
[29] http://www.centenarynews.com/article?id=3267
[30] http://www.impressions-gallery.com/exhibitions/exhibition.php?id=82

are now showcased in what was previously a bastion of French Republican identity from which women were excluded.[31]

Outlook/conclusion …

In conclusion, comparing visual sources in France and Britain reveals some divergences that relate to the nations' different experiences of the war. Notable in this context, for example, is the inclusion in France of the experiences of women living under German occupation – something which tends to be only indirectly referred to in Britain via the case of Edith Cavell. However, it is equally notable that there are more similarities than differences when we examine evolving understandings of women's contributions to the First World War via the visual sources used to depict them. While popular stereotypes of heroines have shifted to occasionally include women who resisted the war, women workers involved in industrial action, and the rare cases of women who took on combat roles, women's contribution is still nearly always couched in relation to the central war story of the suffering front-line combatant, particularly on the Western Front. Then and now it would seem that the ultimate measure of women's war service remains their relationship to the soldier (rather, for example, than their relationship to the war economy or to the state). This explains the continuing emphasis on exceptional martyr-heroines such as Edith Cavell who can be seen as having paid an equivalent 'ultimate sacrifice', on women who lost sons and husbands, or on nurses who cared for sick and wounded men. In terms of women's work behind the lines, priority is given to women's munitions work, which is often presented as an alternative 'front' in which workers are carrying out an equivalent of male military service. PARAGRAPH?

A narrative of the war that prioritizes front-line combat in terms of men's and women's roles means that the diversity of men's activities and experiences, both within and without the armed services, is rarely foregrounded. It is notable, for example, that older men, male war workers and non-combatant enlisted men are rarely featured in museum exhibitions. This means that women's roles and experiences during the war are not always integrated with those of men, even when, as in the case of workers involved in episodes of industrial action,

[31] http://centenaire.org/fr/autour-de-la-grande-guerre/expositions/exposition-marie-curie-une-femme-au-pantheon

or in medical personnel working in hospitals and casualty clearing stations, they were often living and working side by side rather than separately.

Of course there is no solution to this tension between a more in-depth and nuanced approach to the diversity of women's experiences of the First World War on the one hand, and the need to place those experiences both side by side with those of (combatant and non-combatant) men, and within broader historical frameworks and timelines on the other. Museums are increasingly operating with what James Wallace and James Taylor call a 'more consultancy-based mind set', wishing to take account of external expectations and diverse audiences, as well as needing to be aware of the economics of the museum as a tourist destination.[32] This 'shift in power towards the visitor' has resulted, in the case of the representation of women's participation in the conflict, in the continuing inclusion of 'heroines' in the narrative of the First World War. These have shifted to include not only the heroines of 1918, the 'plucky' temporary war workers, angelic nurses and martyr-heroines, but also 'feminist heroines', those who 'dared' to defy patriarchal expectations in order to gain access to the front lines, who dressed up as men in order to play a combatant role, or who used the war as a means of carrying on a political struggle for women's rights. These new heroines reflect contemporary understandings of the war as an important staging post in the progression of European women's rights. Yet they also, like the 'heroines of the nation' who were constructed in the French and British films and photographs produced in 1918, necessarily highlight a symbolic few over a more representative many, and in so doing focus on change rather than on continuity.

(40,100 Characters including spaces)

[32] James Wallace and James Taylor, The art of war display: The Imperial War Museum's First World War Galleries, 2014, in: James Wallace and David C Harvey eds., Commemorative Spaces of the First World War: Historical Geographies at the Centenary, London/New York, 2018.