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Archives, Paratexts and Life Writing in the First World War

Hannah C. Tweed

The chapters in this collection have demonstrated a range of ways the phrase ‘medical paratext’ can be conceptualised, and particularly the interactions between medical practice, medical texts, and their writers and readers. Focusing on the diaries of Canadian nurse-writers in the First World War (particularly the work of nursing sister Clare Gass and VAD Alice Lighthall), this chapter proposes that paratext can demonstrate the contemporary archiving and historiography of the authors’ experience, and support their claims to authoritative writing—as military historians, as medical practitioners, and as women operating within male-dominated environments.

Nursing already occupied a contested space in war narratives; Margaret H. Darrow describes the VAD as ‘the best example of the pervasive unease with any connection between women and war’ (Darrow 1996: 82), and many French nurse-writers’ accounts of the war disappeared after limited print runs (e.g. Noëlle Roger’s *Les carnets d’une infirmière* (1915))—particularly if the authors focused on their experiences over those of the soldiers they nursed. Darrow suggests that the French

H. C. Tweed (✉)
University of York, York, UK

22 volunteer nurses of the First World War had ‘the best chance to create a
 23 story of [French] women’s war experience, [and] the fact that no such
 24 story entered the culture is significant’ (Darrow 1996: 84). While the
 25 nurse-writers discussed here are French Canadian, Darrow’s comments
 26 on dominant, male-centric narratives during and in the immediate after-
 27 math of the war provide a potential explanation for Matron-in-Chief
 28 Margaret Macdonald’s inability to find a publisher for her history of the
 29 Canadian Nursing Services—with contributions from a range of nurses’
 30 diaries, memoirs, and recollections of the First World War (Mann,
 31 ‘Introduction’, xxxvi). Meanwhile Andrew Macphail’s official history of
 32 the Canadian medical services was published in 1925, but made little
 33 mention of nursing or VADs. Similarly, an officially-sanctioned volume
 34 commemorating the work of the No. 3 Hôpital Général was published in
 35 1928, edited and compiled by R. C. Fetherstonehaugh, with a foreword
 36 from ‘His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, K.G., K.T., K.P.,
 37 G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O., G.B.E.’ (frontispiece),
 38 and supported by the Department for National Defence and the Medical
 39 Faculty of McGill University (vii, xi). The text features two images of
 40 nurses (out of thirty-eight), and no single chapter is dedicated to the
 41 work of nursing sisters or VADs.

42 There are obvious exceptions to this neglect of nurses’ writing—Mary
 43 Borden’s *The Forbidden Zone* (1929), Ellen La Motte’s *The Backwash of*
 44 *War: The Human Wreckage of the Battlefield as Witnessed by an American*
 45 *Hospital Nurse* (1916; repr. 1934), and Vera Brittain’s *Testament of Youth*
 46 (1933), to name but a few. However, firstly, the majority of these texts
 47 were published—or, in La Motte’s case, reprinted—in the second wave of
 48 war memoirs and writing that explicitly criticised the narratives of glori-
 49 ous war. Secondly, Borden, La Motte and Brittain self-identified as writers
 50 before the war, and both Borden and La Motte socialised with modernist
 51 writers and society; according to her letters, La Motte ‘met a lot of inter-
 52 esting people through the Steins—Gertrude Stein has had me to lunch,
 53 and dinner and tea, and has given me her books, two of them’ (31
 54 October 1913, The Ellen N. La Motte Collection).¹ Finally, a sizeable
 55 majority of the nursing memoirs, diaries and biofictions published in the
 56 aftermath of the First World War were written by the women who worked
 57 together in Mary Borden’s self-funded L’Hôpital Chirurgical Mobile No.
 58 1—a field hospital that Christine E. Hallett refers to as ‘not only a centre
 59 of healing, but also [...] a cauldron of literary creativity’, particularly for
 60 nurse-writers (xi).

This latter factor should not be lightly dismissed: in contrast, Clare Gass, the best-known Canadian nurse-writer, is remembered not as a diarist, but for having recorded the first copy of John McCrae's 'In Flanders Fields' (1915), several weeks before he submitted it for publication. Gass's diaries, spanning work in No. 3 Hôpital Général and No. 2 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station from 1914 to 1918, were only published in 2000, edited by Susan Mann. Gass's war diaries, as with many writings of nursing sisters, detail a combination of the everyday, the personal, military history, and a detailed record of medical treatments (numbers of patients, types of injuries or illness, attempted treatments).

In contrast, Alice Lighthall's diaries and collected writings have yet to be published; an exhibition by McGill University Rare Books and Special Collections, 'The Lighthalls: A McGill Family at War' (26 Feb.–15 June 2015) was the first public display of Alice Lighthall's papers. While the archival status of these texts does not lessen their significance, it does highlight the deliberate nature of Lighthall's use of paratext: the loose-leaf insertions to her diaries were meticulously dated and identified (in some cases several years after the end of the war), and explicitly recorded as part of her military and medical service. For example, one of Lighthall's poems, 'I Found Him in the Forest', inserted into the diary entry for its date of composition (29 September 1918), is inscribed on the back with 'Written while on service at No. 5 Hospital, B.E.F., Rouen, France. Alice Lighthall, V.A.D.'. These statements of authorship indicate both Lighthall's military position (part of the British Expeditionary Force in Rouen) and her medical responsibilities (as a serving member of the Volunteer Aid Detachment). Lighthall uses marginalia and peritextual insertions throughout her papers to add authority and accuracy to her observations and writing, and adds clarifying notes on military and medical acronyms, in a manner that indicates an intended audience—even if the papers were not published in her lifetime.

Writing about the professionalisation of historians at the turn of the twentieth century, Elise Garritzen comments on the significance of paratexts for female scholars: how, to signal their professional status, 'women used title pages to demonstrate their qualifications, either by pointing out previous studies they had written or, as Liisi Karttunen once did, inserting their academic degree on a title page' (Garritzen 2012: 413). While Garritzen's analysis of gendered paratexts does not engage with medical practice, both academia and medicine were similarly limited in terms of female access in the early twentieth century—and the dominance of male accounts of the First World War in the period immediately after its conclusion. Despite the

100 lack of public readership for Lighthall's papers, as archival holdings there
 101 remains evidence of an intended audience and attempts at the signalling of
 102 knowledge and authority discussed by Garritzen. These signals are primarily
 103 evident in Lighthall's self-archiving of the papers, both as she wrote within
 104 the five-year diary format, and the inserted notes and page-markers listing
 105 key battles and significant points in the development of the war. Significantly,
 106 in terms of paratext as indicating authorial historiography, Lighthall's diaries
 107 were compiled using a 'Walker's "Year by Year" Book', that encouraged the
 108 author to write entries for up to five years on each dated page, and compare
 109 their present experiences with those of the past (see Fig. 8.1). Lighthall used
 110 this format throughout her war service (and earlier, in her teenage diaries),
 111 and also preserved a range of ephemera as loose-leaf additions to the diary.
 112 I refer to these collected writings and collection as 'the Lighthall papers' and
 113 'Lighthall's diaries' throughout this chapter, considering all of the material
 114 Lighthall included as part of the wider text. I argue that this marginalia and
 115 ephemera constitutes—and should be viewed as—a self-conscious archiving
 116 of Alice Lighthall's war experience, with paratexts employed as a means of
 117 demonstrating the different strands of Lighthall's experience: military, medical,
 118 and gendered.

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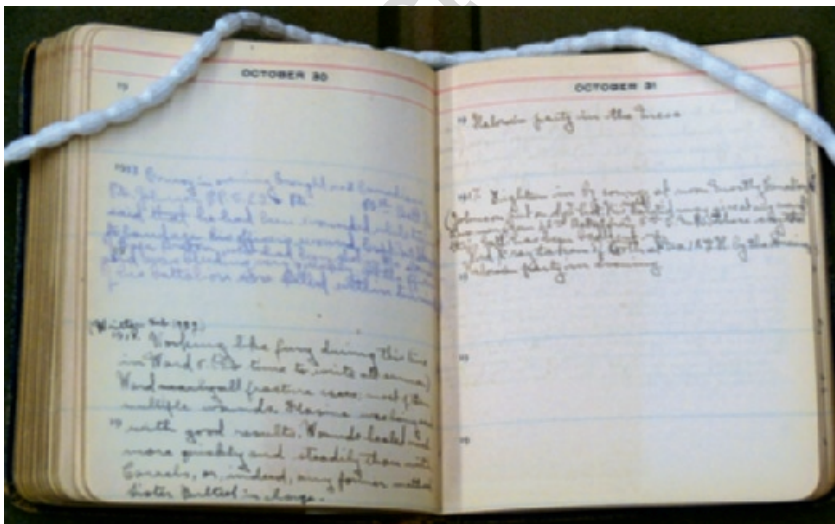


Fig. 8.1 Lighthall Papers, October 30th–31st

Alice Lighthall joined the Volunteer Aid Detachment (VAD) in 1916, from Montreal, Canada, and served as a VAD nurse at the No. 5 Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) General Hospital in Rouen from 1916 to 1918. Prior to signing up, Lighthall was a ‘partial student’ of the Arts as part of the women’s programme at McGill University (Quiney 2017: 89), and a member of the Montreal Junior League, a philanthropic organisation for young women (Chenier 2009: 693). As a wealthy upper-class VAD Lighthall was simultaneously of higher social standing than many nursing sisters, and of low medical and military rank—especially in comparison to university-trained nurses like Clare Gass, who signed up for war service via the Canadian Army Medical Corps (CAMC) and in recognition of the increasing professionalisation of nursing were given officer status as lieutenants. As a VAD, Lighthall’s position was particularly liminal in terms of the lines between the professionalisation of nursing and the social acceptability of upper-class volunteering. Many medical professionals, including nursing sisters, viewed VADs (who had minimal medical experience) as potentially damaging to the reputation of the nursing profession. Dr. C. K. Clarke, the director of the Canadian National Committee for Mental Hygiene, argued against the inclusion of VADs in hospitals, as ‘the unqualified woman is a nuisance’ (Quiney 2017: 39), while Matron-in-Chief Margaret Macdonald refused to accept VADs as part of CAMC military nursing at the Front (Quiney 2017: 8). Lighthall’s diaries reflect these concerns over medical experience, class, gender, and her status as contested historical observer.

Both the content and the form of Lighthall’s diaries are significant. The five-year diary is a development of the nineteenth-century pocket diary, which Sandro Jung describes as essentially conservative in form—compact, with illustrated pages, but a form that ‘did not offer women the opportunity to promote their own work until the mid-nineteenth century’, even though pocket diaries were marketed explicitly at women (Jung 2012: 29). One might, in the *Le Souvenir, or Pocket Table* (1842), a popular pocket diary, have 1–15 August on one page, with an illustration of Borrowdale, in the Lake District, at the top of the page (Jung 2012: 38). Women, presumably, did not need more than one line to write about their daily activities and experiences—just a few key words. Both Gass’s and Lighthall’s multi-year diaries feature entries where the page became a palimpsest when space was at a premium, as well as short epigrammatic entries; writing up as well as across the page and the central divide, in an attempt to convey their experiences beyond the space given to them (e.g.

158 Lighthall, 14 August 1918, or Lighthall, 11–12 November 1918). The
 159 pages also swell with inserted ephemera—handwritten music scores from
 160 Herbert Howells’ ‘Magnificat and Nunc Dimittis’ in E (20 July 1918),
 161 Lighthall’s poetry drafts, bookmarks indicating major battles or medical
 162 events, and newspaper cuttings memorialising colleagues. Nancy Martin
 163 describes the diary as ‘defy[ing] the traditional structural forms of narra-
 164 tive. Focusing generally on the immediate present, it is serial, open-ended,
 165 often repetitive and contradictory’ (Martin 2015: 1248). Martin details
 166 the attention to preserving minutiae in First World War diaries; in particu-
 167 lar, ‘photographs, a lock of child’s hair, flowers from the family garden
 168 [...] sketches of weapons, open fields, destroyed buildings, and trenches’
 169 (Martin 2015: 1248). Items such as those described above fall squarely
 170 into the category of paratext, particularly if they have been preserved
 171 within archival contexts, and they are found in both Gass’s and Lighthall’s
 172 work (Gass preserving photographs—taken illegally, with her own cam-
 173 era—newspaper articles, and botanical cuttings in her diary).

174 First World War diaries have been commonly presented as ‘a private,
 175 self-reflective form’, that demonstrates the actions and emotional states of
 176 individual men and women (Martin 2015: 1245). Martin argues that dia-
 177 ries provided a space in which the soldier-diarist could ‘reevaluate his
 178 newly militarised identity’, even as the government ‘worked to recode
 179 (and control) the wartime behaviour of its citizens’ (Martin 2015: 1247)—
 180 whether by drawing on military metaphors and classical allusions, or by
 181 presenting fragments of narrative, as with Mary Borden’s *The Forbidden*
 182 *Zone*, her ‘collection of fragments’ that reflected ‘a great confusion’
 183 (Borden 2008: 8). If one extends Martin’s arguments across to the multi-
 184 year diaries used by Lighthall and Gass, I would suggest that as well as
 185 negotiating their identities as women and medical professionals (with
 186 varying degrees of training and authority) operating at the Front, Lighthall
 187 and her contemporaries—particularly those who, like Lighthall, joined up
 188 part-way through the war—also demonstrate a negotiation of their self-
 189 conscious status as historians, as well as witnesses and participants. More
 190 than simply representing self-reflective writing, these diaries indicate an
 191 awareness of the significance of the authors’ status as both witnesses and
 192 medical practitioners.

193 While I describe Lighthall and her contemporaries as participants,
 194 both in terms of medical service and writing, these diaries are also curi-
 195 ously distant from more confessional forms of autobiographical writ-
 196 ing. Leigh Gilmore, in *The Limits of Autobiography: Trauma and*

Testimony (2001), suggests that individuals who are narrating trauma frequently distance themselves from autobiography. She argues:

Because testimonial projects require subjects to confess, to bear witness, to make public and shareable a private and intolerable pain, they enter into a legalistic framework in which their efforts can move quickly beyond their interpretation and control, become exposed as ambiguous, and therefore subject to judgements about their veracity and word [...] although those who can tell their stories benefit from the therapeutic balm of words, the path to this achievement is strewn with obstacles. To navigate it, some writers move away from recognizably autobiographical forms even as they engage autobiography's central questions. (Gilmore 2001: 7)

This description holds true for both Gass and Lighthall. Instead of metaphorical or emotive language, emotional affect is conveyed by both diarists via juxtaposition of subject matter—the everyday and quotidian alongside the horrific and bloody, with no explanatory comments linking the two. For instance, Gass wrote on 27 October 1915 of overseeing blood transfusions, and on 30 October 1915 of receiving ‘a big convoy of patients [...]’. Capt Burgess opened up a new line of Hubert Neilson tents to serve for his ward for the present. Miss Eastwood & I went there this morning [...] We are still able to get lab roses for our dining tables. It has been a wonderful summer of Poppies & Roses’ (75–76). Given that Gass then transcribed McCrae’s ‘In Flanders Fields’ (with some differences in punctuation and indentation) immediately after this entry, there seems a deliberate irony to the juxtaposition of the medical and the pastoral. Similarly, on 25 March 1918, Lighthall wrote: ‘Went to dell in the forest for flowers, found wood anemones and primroses. Got back to find the ward turned surgical. First convoy of rush in. Dressing till 10.30pm.’ The frequently jarring juxtaposition of subject matter in these diaries (part personal travelogue, part medical and military history) is even more pronounced when entries for multiple years are compared simultaneously, as the war developed.

This use of form to provide reflection and highlight significance was part of the intention of the publishers of the multi-year diary (albeit probably with more domestic spheres in mind than war hospitals). ‘Walker’s “Year By Year” Books’, according to their prefatory material, ‘set forth an altogether new and novel idea and one that is eminently useful’ (iv). The preface continues as follows:

234 It means little and much: little recording and much satisfaction.

235 Many have neither the time nor the inclination to keep a full Diary. But
236 out of the multitude of matters that crowd the experience of each day, there
237 is always something that intelligent people desire not to let slip, but seek to
238 hold 'to awaken memory' in days to come. What a record of experiments
239 such a book may be made! – things accomplished, things attempted, suc-
240 cesses, failures, joys and sorrows.

241 For just such a record this book is designed, and it is so planned that each
242 day may be compared with the corresponding one in any year for five years.
243 Five years hence, if you have kept your record faithfully, you will undoubt-
244 edly be deeply interested and delighted to open the book anywhere and see
245 how wonderfully the web of your life has been woven. It will be a complete
246 story, for you will come to rejoice in briefly expressing what you wish to
247 record, and treasure it in proportion to its brevity, easily recognising and
248 sifting the important from the comparatively trivial. (iv)

249 Furthermore, the format also provides the reader with a greater variety
250 of reading options than is typical. The Walker prefatory material continues:

251 To illustrate how it should be used. You may commence any day of the year,
252 but suppose that you begin January 1; under that day, in the first space, add
253 the proper figure for the year. On the next day, January 2, do likewise, and
254 so on throughout the year. When the year is ended begin again under
255 January 1 for the second year, add the appropriate figure in each of the sec-
256 ond spaces, and so right on through the remaining years. (iv)

257 As a result of this system, Alice Lighthall's war diary 'begins' (for the
258 reader) on 3 January 1919, with what are chronologically her last two
259 entries. Paratextually, the first entry details Lighthall meeting a friend at
260 Bridgwater railway station, Somerset, at the end of the war, before sailing
261 home to Canada. To begin a war diary with the author's discharge from
262 military duty, holidaying in England, is atypical (although there is a certain
263 symmetry with Lighthall's chronological first entries, when she visited a
264 series of friends in Montreal and London before beginning her training as
265 a VAD). The abrupt contrast with the entry for 11 January 1917 (which
266 mentions 'rumours of zepp. [zeppelin] raid', is clear. Such a format also
267 encourages the reader to approach Lighthall's text repeatedly, and from
268 multiple directions. Should one read each entry chronologically, by calen-
269 dar composition? Does one start on 1 January, and read each date page,
270 comparing multiple years at a time? Similarly, how should the reader
271 respond to authorial restructuring of diaries? Clare Gass thriflily re-used

her 1915 diary to incorporate her observations during 1916, altering the days as 1916 was a leap year (Mann 2000: xli). These are also questions for the publisher and editor: Susan Mann, in editing *The War Diary of Clare Gass* (2000), explicitly states that she chose to follow a chronological, entry-by-entry system in publishing Gass's diaries—cutting out the multi-year structure entirely. Mann summarises this editorial decision as follows: 'I have chosen not to impose [Gass's] practical but idiosyncratic and occasionally confusing format on the readers of this publication; I have also checked her sign-posts to ensure that the two years are distinct' (Mann 2000: xli). While this choice makes for a simpler and more coherent reading experience, I suggest that nonetheless it alters a key element of the paratext, and thus the content of Gass's diaries.

I have described both Gass's and Lighthall's diaries as concerned with military, medical, and personal experience during their respective service in France. In Lighthall's papers, examples of this combined content includes her early account, on 19 February 1917, of the funerals of a VAD from No. 9 General Hospital and a nursing sister from No. 11 General Hospital:

Funeral of V.A.D. [...] and an Australian Sister [...] both of whom had died of spinal meningitis. Buried in our part of the cemetery here. Saw graves of several Canadians there, among them Major Moss, 3rd Battalion. Mostly from Langemarck [Third Battle of Ypres], or the push last autumn.

Rush began today. Convoys in continually from now on. Ports closed, so none out. Most cases surgical. Five tressles [sic] put down in each ward.

The references to specific diagnoses and cause of death—spinal meningitis—are characteristic, as is the reference to 'tressles', or how overcrowded Lighthall's ward was, with additional stretchers placed on trestles in the aisles in lieu of beds. A subsequent entry on 21 February 1917 refers to how Lighthall 'was to have had half-day, but "convoy" blew during second lunch hour, so that was off. Seven patients received in 15. Six extra tressles [sic] ordered raising our capacity to 42. All of patients and two admissions put on tressles.' This pattern of brief narratives of limited medical supply (precisely detailed) and human injury continues in Lighthall's entries for March and April 1917, tracking the medical development of the war, with a 'suspected case of Scarlet Fever in 15', where the soldier was 'isolated in side-ward, and taken away [...] in evening', before the ward was placed under 10 days' quarantine (3 March 1917). The double-spread for 11 and 12 April 1917 details 'surgical convoys

309 nearly all day. 17 admitted to 15. Heavy cases and light mixed. [...] 15
 310 Ward completely filled. Operations and dressings all day.’ In terms of the
 311 history of disease and infection in the First World War, cerebro-spinal
 312 meningitis and sepsis were common causes of death (with epidemics of
 313 meningitis across Europe and North America during the First World War),
 314 and scarlet fever was prevalent. Most significantly, in terms of medical and
 315 world history, Lighthall describes the outbreak of Spanish Flu, which
 316 would kill over 20 million people worldwide (Weitzman 2001; Ash 2014):

317 Largest death-toll tonight that the hospital has ever had. More convoys of
 318 the new ‘flu’, almost like Pneumonic Plague. Starts with head symptoms
 319 [...] then develops into violent pneumonia, with infamous and wild delir-
 320 ium. Temps turn 104 and 105 for a day or two, then death follows. 3 Ward
 321 is to be taken over for it next. All the medical side is crowded with it, also
 322 Wards 1 and 2. Gas marquees [sic] busy. (Smith moved there.) All wounds
 323 where it is are isolated, nurses wear gauze masks.

324 Unofficial news tonight that Austria has surrendered unconditionally.
 325 Can it be true? No more drafts from here being sent at the time. (1
 326 November 1918)

327 The description of a flu ‘almost like Pneumonic Plague’, and the
 328 increasingly detailed accounts of symptoms and medical responsibility are
 329 particularly jarring given the earlier entry, from 1 November 1916: ‘Went
 330 to the cemetery, and put fresh flowers on the graves of all the Canadians I
 331 could find (Major Moss [...] the only officer among them.) All the French
 332 graves wonderfully decorated, and people making pilgrimages to them.’
 333 In the 1916 entries, Lighthall had the time and inclination to visit the
 334 graves of her countrymen; in 1918, not only had she had ‘no time to write
 335 all summer’ (20 October 1918), but her entries are markedly less likely to
 336 mention the class of her patients, and the proportion of officers to privates
 337 and NCOs in the ward. Instead, Lighthall’s comments are focused on
 338 medical precautions, and brief speculations on the development of the
 339 wider war effort.

340 A similarly contrasting pattern is seen in Lighthall’s diary entries for late
 341 March. In the same double-paged spread, Lighthall refers to:

342 [The] ward filled to overflowing. Extra bed put in, five stretchers put down
 343 centre of ward. Dressing all day, up till 9pm. More refugee sisters arrived.
 344 Sister Blades told me it was wise to be ready to pack up at short notice,
 345 because we might possibly have to evacuate if Amiens falls. (28 March 1918)

- Meanwhile, on 29 March 1917: 346
- Wild discussion broke out in the ward among English, Scotch and Australian men, about who were the bravest soldiers in France. They gave that honour to the Canadians, as having held the hottest front of the British line longer than anyone else. McGeachan told me about the 2nd battle of Ypres, and of how the Canadians lost their guns, and then won them back again, and immediately turned them on the Germans. He said that was the only time the Germans had used a gas [...], as it proved too dangerous to themselves. 347
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- The uncomplicated patriotic fervour of Lighthall's entries for 1916 and early 1917 do not feature in her chronologically later entries, as her responsibilities and the death toll rose. While a shift in perspective is hardly uncommon in war diaries and accounts, this contrast is rendered particularly striking and obvious by the multi-year format of Lighthall's diaries. The relative optimism of the chronologically earlier entries, and the narrative significance of the multi-year form are most obvious in the short double-spread of 15 and 16 November: 354
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- 15 Nov 1918: Put in application to have my contract cancelled. 362
- 16 Nov 1916: Signed on for the next six months, or the duration of the war, whichever terminates first. 363
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- Writing about VAD narratives and personal writings, Linda J. Quiney comments how in addition to Governmental censorship, 'hospital convention imposed its own censorship, well understood by the nurses and impressed upon the VADs, that they were not to discuss the private details of the patients or procedures' (Quiney 2017: 9). Quiney summarises many of these self-censored narratives as 'a cheery letter home to family or friends describing the delights of an afternoon outing with colleagues or the beauty of the French countryside, with no mention of the stresses or tensions of the hospital ward' (Quiney 2017: 9). While some of Gass's and Lighthall's writing does conform to this 'cheery' description, there are also longer narrative pieces and poetic extracts to both texts—and their self-editing is historiographically significant. Lighthall's main entry for 14 August 1918 reads as follows: 365
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- Air raid last night shortly after eleven. I hadn't gone to sleep, though Bundett had. Both had to get up and dress and go out to our trenches. Could hear machines plainly for a long time right overhead. Barrage was 378
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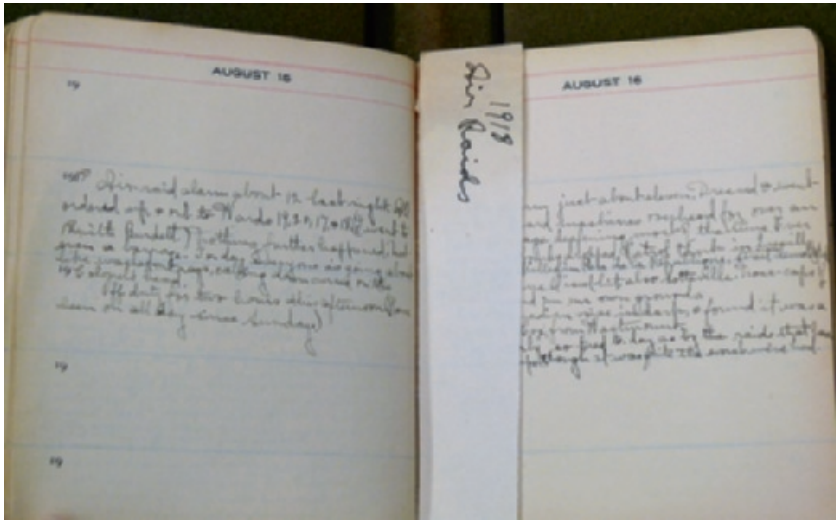
381 lively, especially machine guns just across the road. Dropped an incendiary
 382 bomb which lit up the whole place. (Heard today that it hit the Rue Verte
 383 station.) Trenches very uncomfortable. Word came after everything had
 384 been quiet about 15 minutes to get out of them. Went up, only to be sent
 385 back by Matron. Then someone fainted further along, so in about twenty
 386 minutes we were bellowed to come out to go to our rooms. Told to go to
 387 medical wards if another alarm.

388 Second alarm about half-past twelve. Machines close at hand again. Got up
 389 and went to Ward 13. (Bundett wouldn't come then.) Found Bundett with
 390 a flash-light, very nervous, patients sleeping quietly although the noise out-
 391 side was terrific. Soaked a blanket under kitchen tap in case of fire. Both the
 392 day orderlies were there [...] We all went to sit in the bunk until the noise
 393 stopped. Nothing seemed to be hit near us. Heard Capt. Lang ordering his
 394 patients to "stay where they were until the 'All Clear' blown". They seemed
 395 to be in the trenches outside 11 Ward. Went home about one mostly dead
 396 with sleep. Found everyone else had come back earlier.

397 Third alarm blew about half past two I think. Dressed again, but didn't go
 398 out. Machines further away. Barrage not heavy. "All Clear" blew in about
 399 half an hour.

400 [Written up the spine:] Heard today that the [illegible] Hospital was hit,
 401 also the theatre in the Rue de la République. Bombs dropped in R. de la R.
 402 and Rue Verte besides.

403 In addition to the framing of these air raids as a fleshed-out first-person
 404 narrative, Lighthall's focus on patient outcomes as well as personal experi-
 405 ence is clear. Elsewhere, Lighthall mentions a colleague's account of air
 406 raids at the No. 8 Scottish General Hospital, where 'patients, barely able
 407 to walk themselves, helped to get the wounded out, and carry them to
 408 cellars', and in the aftermath of three weeks of bombing 'some of the
 409 VADs were shell-shocked, and [were] sent home on leave' (28 October
 410 1917). These air raids were evidently an episode that Lighthall revisited—
 411 firstly, in a pencilled note in the margins of her entry for 14 August 1918,
 412 that 'Think this was the Rive Gauche [Left Bank] station, which was
 413 wrecked', with an arrow pointing to the hospital named in the main entry.
 414 Additionally, Lighthall inserted a bookmark into page spread for 15 and
 415 16 August, marked '1918 Air Raids' (see Fig. 8.2). Such additions, far
 416 from damaging the original text, demonstrate a self-conscious desire to
 417 present a historically accurate personal account. Evidence of careful and
 418 deliberate archiving is evident elsewhere in Lighthall's papers: in the entry



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Fig. 8.2 Lighthall Papers, August 15th–16th

for 8 April 1917, Lighthall wrote ‘See May 8. Mistake in dates’—presumably with an audience other than herself in mind, and a desire for a coherent narrative. 419
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These bookmarks are the final point of paratextual control in Lighthall’s diaries—seen in the entries for 14–16 August 1918, but also throughout the text. Functioning as historical and personal chapter divisions, they include titles such as ‘1918 Amiens Push’ (25 March), ‘1917 Passchendaele/1918 Ward 5’ (6 August), ‘1916 Departure’ (17 September), ‘1916 Arrival in France’ (18 October), and ‘Armistice Day’ (11 November). Gérard Genette categorises this kind of material as ‘*intimate epitext*’—or ‘any message bearing directly or indirectly on an author’s own past, present, or future work which the author addresses to himself, with or without the intention of publishing it later’ (Genette 1997: 387). I suggest that while these bookmarks—and, indeed, all of the paratextual material comprising Lighthall’s self-archiving and editing of her papers—can be considered in these terms, there is something more political to the act of self-archiving, for both Gass and Lighthall, and their contemporary nurse-writers. In clearly presenting their work as the account of nursing practitioners, observing and participating in military 422
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438 and medical history—both masculine-dominated zones—their careful
 439 attention to paratextual detail indicates authorial recognition and control
 440 of the significance of their narratives.

441 Both Gass and Lighthall operated within a context that undervalued
 442 their work and viewed their writing and medical practice as socially prob-
 443 lematic. As such, it is not surprising that few nursing diaries were pub-
 444 lished in the aftermath of the First World War. However, the continued
 445 archival and publishing neglect of war nursing diaries also raises the ques-
 446 tion of whether we are still ill-prepared to publish the paratextual features
 447 that complicate these texts. Digitisation offers one solution to the paratex-
 448 tual problems of publishing war diaries and their associated insertions and
 449 additions; but, as Robert McLean discusses in chapter “Medical Marginalia
 450 in the Early Printed Books of University of Glasgow Library” in this col-
 451 lection, the politics of prioritisation for both cataloguing and digitisation
 452 remain an issue.

NOTE

453
 454 1. With thanks to Alice Kelly for directing me to these letters in the La Motte
 455 Collection.

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