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"The Lure of War": Reconsidering the Motivations of Nurses to Volunteer in the First World War

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Abstract: This article argues that the motivations for British women to volunteer for the First World War was more nuanced and complicated than the formulaic binaries of patriotism versus pacifism. It reads the war-time memoirs of two women in military medical care, May Sinclair's *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium* and Olive Dent's *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front* to demonstrate how understanding of gender roles and nationalist affiliations rendered complexity to the reasons why certain women volunteered for war-work. These two women volunteered very early in the war and published their life-writing during the war (1915 and 1917 respectively). Consequently, they did not have the advantage of hindsight, and their writings were very much the product of the immediate pressures of the war environment. By reading the memoirs of these women and unpacking their overt motives to volunteer, this article reveals the nuances in the reasons women volunteered to engage in military medical work during the First World War.

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> The highest privilege goes to the man who may fight his country's battles, give his life for his King, risk living a maimed man to the end of his days; next comes the privilege of being of use to these men who are defending us and all we love.[1]

For the nurses of the First World War, the act of participation in treatment and care in field hospitals, as well as in hospitals at the Home Front, was fraught with contradiction: if the "angels in white" volunteered to go to the Front, would that imply that they approved of the War? The figure of the nurse in white as a gentle Madonna of mercy tending to a wounded soldier—an image that Florence Nightingale had firmly established in British public memory in the previous century—would not necessarily fit in naturally with the emancipatory nature of the work that volunteer nurses of the First World War had to undertake. Nightingale herself left for the battlefront in Crimea to "confront that whole world of horror and misery" in order to "minister" wounded British soldiers.[2] However, as the nurses and Quakers involved in medical care of First World War eventually showed, it was possible (though problematic) to work at the Front while being a staunch pacifist. Besides, working under the auspices of the Geneva Convention, the nurses had to make sure that (at least in theory) the nature of care that they meted out was strictly neutral. This complicated (and often contradictory) character of war nursing can be seen in the nature of the writing of British nurses such as Vera Brittain, Elsie Knocker, Olive Dent, and many others.

The purpose of this article is to problematise the concept of 'patriotism' as motivation for nursing as war-work for these women. An examination of war memoirs and diaries of nurses and ambulance drivers will reveal very different motivations for volunteering. Contrary to Christine Hallett's claim that, "Many of those who nursed the wounded, however, wrote little about the war itself or about either feminism or pacifism. They simply saw their work as a humanitarian service", I will question whether the argument of patriotism versus pacifism is as unambiguous as it appears to be. Some other critics too have questioned this unambiguity: Krisztina Robert, for instance, points out the lack of nuance in certain feminist scholarship which contends that "women's services reproduced rather than challenged the

existing gender order, including the belief that war was exclusively the business of men."[3] At a time when women had not been granted the vote, and which symbolically denied them citizenship, it could be argued that women in Britain were trying to relate their gendered identities to the available roles in wartime, in an attempt to overcome, in Vera Brittain's words, "a permanent impediment to understanding" the "barrier of indescribable experience between men and the women whom they loved".[4] Nevertheless, this binary of bellicosity versus pacifism in terms of the motivations for involvement with war work is too formulaic, and needs to be examined from positions of gender and political affiliation. Aligning with pacifism or engaging in vigorous patriotism were the ends of the spectrum of the various ways these nurses negotiated with or cooperated with the system of the institution. For many of these volunteers, no single motivation ignited their passion for and dedication to war work through the duration of the conflict. The lived realities of the Front as well as the fierce nature of propaganda back home shaped their responses to combat and affected their motivations to succeed in their work.

This article will critically examine these layers of motivations to volunteer by reading memoirs of two women, both of whom volunteered to work in related areas of military medical care: May Sinclair's *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium* and V.A.D. Olive Dent's *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front.* My reasons for selecting these two women are manifold: they volunteer early in the war, and they publish their life-writing during the war (Sinclair publishes *A Journal* in 1915 and Dent in 1917); unlike other writers who published their war memoirs retrospectively (such as Vera Brittain's *Testament of Youth* in 1933, Baroness de T'Serclaes' *Flanders and Other Fields* published in 1964), these two women did not have the advantage of hindsight, and their writings were very much the product of the immediate pressures of the war environment, catering not only to a particular wartime market, but also being subject to wartime censorship. By unpacking their overt motives to

volunteer—militarism for Sinclair and patriotism for Dent—this article will reveal the nuances in the reasons women volunteered to engage in military medical work during the First World War. While large numbers of men volunteered to do their "patriotic duty" to fight a "righteous war" or gave in to the growing social pressure of "patriotic enthusiasm", for many women these were not the outright reasons to contribute to the war effort in the first instance.[5] Considerable work has been done to unfold women's contributions during the First World War.[6] Gail Braybon's seminal study *Women Workers in the First World War* does not consider the work of the VADs because most of them were "primarily middle-class".[7] However it also ignores the work of trained nurses, ambulance drivers, and the services of women employed in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), many of whom were working-class. Claire Tylee, on the other hand, demonstrates how women reclaimed their "access to military institutions and the martial zone" through their war-work.[8] Sharon Ouditt notes an "ambivalence" in the women's construction of identity through the work they undertook during and immediately after the First World War.[9] This article positions itself alongside this scholarship and fills the gaps between these arguments by reading the life-writings of two specific women whose varying war experience and different reasons to volunteer provides complication and nuance: by looking at the broader arena of military medical care, it takes into account the heterogeneity of the class system; it is wary of the "militaristic" construct; and it addresses the ambivalence that is at play in the roles that these women choose for themselves. Ultimately, this article reflects on the motivations of these women to volunteer early in the war and demonstrate how the writings of their experiences during the war differed from postwar women's writings. Answering these questions is important because it contributes to the greater historical record of women's volunteer-work during the First World War.

Ouditt points out how the nurses were expected to practise an "active involvement in the war effort through a conservative form of romantic passivity."[10] This ambivalence is reflected in the memoirs of some British nurses, who reveal a distinct strain of pacifism, despite volunteering to actively serve in the War. Vera Brittain seeks "exhilaration" from the War, and admits to be "suffering like so many women in 1914, from an inferiority complex", at being unable to contribute to the War effort like their lovers or brothers.[11] For her, and other women like her, joining up at first appeared to be an "emotional antidote", bringing them one step closer to their lovers in terms of sacrifice.[12] For certain other nurses like Thekla Bowser, volunteering during the War was the privilege and opportunity they were waiting for—to be able finally to contribute to the public sphere, and be recognised for their contribution, despite, or because of, their gender. In both these instances, the common note in their life-writing is their sense of inferiority. For Bowser, the services and sacrifices of the women "can never come within sight of paying our debt to the men who have borne the heat and the burden of the day."[13] On the other hand, for the vast majority of women from the working classes volunteering for the WAAC, the greatest motivation to sign up was the promise of a fixed salary and independence. From her camp kitchen somewhere in the Western Front, Helen Zenna Smith records the "truth", which is that "the greater percentage enlisted because of the pay, which was good, considering they are rationed and uniformed free.[14] Incidentally, the change from home life is not to be despised." She quotes "Cheery", one of her fellow camp-kitchen mates, "I'm a grown woman an' I can enjoy meself if I like an' 'ow I like!"[15] Class is a complicated marker, since it is easy to isolate working-class WAACs from their upper-class compatriots, as having volunteered out of need for money and not out of a sense of patriotism. As Robert points out, "socialist scholars" make a problematic argument regarding the influence of wartime propaganda on working-class women volunteers, who seem to be merely "objects" of it.[16] The assumption that working-class

women who volunteered for war and received a salary did it *solely* for the financial benefit and not out of a sense of patriotism unlike middle-class VADs looks at the question of motivation once again through binaries.

"She called to me from her battle-places,/ She flung before me the curved lightning of her shells for a lure;"[17]

Most readers of First World War British nursing memoirs, enriched by the pacifist discourses of Vera Brittain or Irene Rathbone, identify a strain of pacifism and conscientious objection in their work. However, I hope to pry open the immense military and patriotic ardour generated by women, for women, that swept across Britain during the War, which influenced female volunteers to sign up in large numbers—an ardour that gets suppressed in the postwar "Never again" spirit, or obscured by the strain of moral superiority so intrinsic to the victorious nation. It is important to acknowledge that the patriotic fervour did not fizzle out completely after the "over by Christmas" spirit of the initial months. An example is the war memoir of Nurse Olive Dent, who begins her 1917 account with the lines:

> What have I done for you,
>
> England, my England?
>
> What is there I would not do,
>
> England my own?[18]

The prevailing female militarism is best demonstrated by *The Little Mother's Letter*, which shows how in 1916, too, strong patriotic feelings permeated the society, with many women

staunchly supporting the War. It is not entirely coincidental that the publication of *The Little Mother's Letter* followed the introduction of military conscription in Britain in January 1916. At this juncture, it would be well to question whether the rise in enlistment numbers among women after the introduction of male conscription is the result of this militarist propaganda, and how a sense of solidarity for male conscription affected women's enlistment numbers.[19]

However, it is important to remember that not all women drifted naturally to a pro-war, militaristic stance because of deeply-entrenched patriotism. For many women, aware of their own lack of agency in every public sphere of society, the War was finally a chance to mark their presence; and they supported the War because it enabled them to actively participate in actions which had always been barred to them. Women replaced men in their jobs as the latter went to fight; and nurses were seen as equivalent to soldiers in their contribution. However, the memoir that I discuss in this section is also permeated by an intense anxiety, originating from a desperate desire to contribute, to be a part of the 'real' world, in the thick of things, and to prove their usefulness. Another common strain here is the heightened sense of shame these women felt for their gender, which appeared to prevent them from actively contributing to the national emergency. As I will demonstrate, most of these memoirs begin with a sense of regret at simply not being as good as a man, and are tinged with a sense of sexual jealousy at being unable to participate as freely in combat as the men. Suzanne Raitt writes how patriarchies at war pour financial, emotional and cultural resources into the maintenance of military masculinity.[20] For some of these women, the War appeared an opportunity to mingle and contribute freely in the public sphere and to come to terms with their sexual shame; and this they achieved by supporting this military masculinity. For them, patriotism became a mode of asserting a newly empowered sense of self-definition.

May Sinclair was one of the fifty-four British writers who had signed the 'Author's Manifesto' of 1914, pledging their support for the War. The manifesto declared that after the German atrocities in Belgium, "Great Britain could not without dishonour have refused to take part in the present war."[21] The language of the manifesto is fantastic, verging on self-righteousness and stressing the moral superiority of a group of British writers, who felt it incumbent upon themselves to preserve the safety and integrity of "weak, small nations" and "the free and law-abiding ideals of Western Europe". Yet there is a great and implicit irony in this manifesto:

> Many of us have dear friends in Germany, many of us regard German culture with the highest respect and gratitude; but we cannot admit that any nation has the right by brute force to impose its culture upon other nations, nor that the iron military bureaucracy of Prussia represents a higher form of human society than the free Constitutions of Western Europe.[22]

The irony here is manifold: a group of British intellectuals signing a declaration with these words, when this is exactly what Britain had been carrying out in its colonies for two centuries—a mission elucidated by Thomas Babington Macaulay in 'Minute on Education', and the intellectuals forgetting about the atrocities and "brute force" that Belgium carried out in the Belgian Congo.[23] By signing the Authors' Manifesto, May Sinclair proclaims herself a patriot.

May Sinclair was fifty-one years old when the War broke out. She went to Belgium as part of a group set up to help Belgian refugees and drive ambulances; she worked as a secretary and reporter for a Motor Ambulance Unit, made up of a commandant, two doctors, a trained nurse and midwife, three emergency nurses, three stretcher-bearers, and two

chauffeurs. In 1915, Sinclair published *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium*, about her experience of war. Her long dedication "To a Field Ambulance in Flanders" describes how she felt the "lure" of the battlefield, wished she could have been able to participate more actively, and in celebrating (and sentimentalising) combat, aligned herself—a famous writer—to the mainstream glorification of combat and militarism:

> I do not call you comrades,
>
> You,
>
> Who did what I only dreamed.
>
> Though you have taken my dream,
>
> And dressed yourselves in its beauty and its glory,
>
> Your faces are turned aside as you pass by.
>
> I am nothing to you,
>
> For I have done no more than dream.[24]

In the dedication, May Sinclair stresses on the privilege of men for being able to fight for their country, and the restrictions to a woman's capacity to contribute in any equal measure to the War. Such a view of women's contribution is naive, as she only looks at the war as a "dream" of active service for women. This is especially disturbing in the case of May Sinclair, who, unlike most of the young V.A.D.s and ambulance drivers of the First World War, had already lived through a major combat, the Boer War, and had a brother, Joseph, who served during the Basuto Rebellion. She was also not unfamiliar with bereavement: three of her nephews were mobilised, two of whom died in 1915, aged thirty-four and twenty-five

respectively; the third was held prisoner in a POW camp until 1918, who then arrived at Sinclair's London house with severe pneumonia, and required dedicated nursing. Yet none of these experiences lessened the fervour of Sinclair's support for the War—she published *A Journal* in 1915, and continued writing about the attractions of combat even in the novels that she published throughout the War and after, beginning with *Tasker Jevons: The Real Story* (1916) and *The Tree of Heaven* (1917) which feature nurses in the Front, and continuing with *The Romantic* (1920) and *Anne Severn and the Fieldings* which deal with ambulance units in Belgium.

In the introduction of her *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium*, Sinclair urges her readers to look elsewhere (she provides a list of books to that effect) for "accurate and substantial information about Belgium, or about the War, or about Field Ambulances and Hospital Work"; she claims only a "psychological accuracy" of her impressions, some of which were "insubstantial to the last degree".[25] Her multiple usage of the word "dream" in her dedication, also suggests a certain amount of fictionality in her text. Rebecca West, Sinclair's ardent admirer, in her review of the book, writes, "one cannot imagine Miss Sinclair presuming to express an opinion upon international affairs. Yet by her mysterious subterranean methods she makes one ache for Belgium."[26] Apart from her signing of the Authors' Manifesto, Sinclair does not indulge in any political comment regarding the War, engaging, rather, in a romantic rhetoric to glorify warfare. At one point she writes, "We turn our eyes with longing towards Antwerp, so soon to be battered by the siege-guns from Namur."[27] She longs to be in Antwerp to participate in the combat, but feels left out because of her gender. Claire M. Tylee rightly claims that Sinclair's "concern becomes increasingly the emotional effect that her experiences have on her, and these are almost gloated over".[28] Writing only about the thrill of the battlefield from second-hand experience, questionable imagination, and gross sentimentalising, *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium* was misleading

in terms of the conditions that medical workers had to face in Belgium at the beginning of the War. On the first day after her arrival in Ostend, she experiences "the first visible intimation that the enemy may be anywhere":

> A curious excitement comes to you. I suppose it is excitement, though it doesn't feel like it. You have been drunk, very slightly drunk, with the speed of the car. But now you are sober. Your heart beats quietly, steadily, but with a little creeping, mounting thrill in the beat. The sensation is distinctly pleasurable. You say to yourself, "It is coming. Now—or the next minute—perhaps at the end of the road." You have one moment of regret. "After all, it would be a pity if it came too soon, before we'd even begun our job." But the thrill, mounting steadily, overtakes the regret. It is only a little thrill, so far (for you don't really believe there is any danger), but you can imagine the thing growing, growing steadily, till it becomes ecstasy. Not that you imagine anything at the moment. At the moment you are no longer an observing, reflecting being; you have ceased to be aware of yourself; you exist only in that quiet, steady thrill that is so unlike any excitement that you have ever known. Presently you get used to it. "What a fool I should have been if I hadn't come. I wouldn't have missed this run for the world."[29]

Sinclair's portrayal of real combat is extremely romantic. She only talks about the thrill and anticipation of being caught in the fighting, and her writing about the War is peppered with words like 'ache', 'lure', 'thrill', and 'excitement', often comparing warfare to games. The language of her mounting thrill is reminiscent of Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto, published eight years before *A Journal* and with which she was doubtless acquainted—both Marinetti

and Sinclair contributed to *The New Age*. The glorification of war and the celebration of militarism was a major focal point for Futurist writers.[30] In fact Sinclair's intoxication with the speed of the motorcar finds its echoes in Marinetti: "The raging broom of madness swept us out of ourselves and drove us through streets as rough and deep as the bed of torrents." Sinclair was not trained in nursing, and her desire for action borders on transgression. At one point, she wishes to go out and search for the wounded under shell-fire, but she suppresses herself from mentioning this desire to Dr. Munro, because she is aware of the unjustifiability of her desire, and that awareness fills her with a sense of the thrill of an illicit romance.

At this point it is important to pause and historicise her intense patriotism while working in the Munro Corps. In her analysis of the war-work of the volunteer corps, Robert asserts that "The founders of the volunteer corps meant by patriotism the obligation to serve as the state, and they sought equal opportunities to do so with the men."[31] Indeed, the Women's Volunteer Reserve noted that "Public opinion must rouse the conscience of every British subject to 'do their bit' in defence of the country; women as well as men deemed the privilege and opportunity for unalloyed patriotic service."[32] This "service" would ultimately give them the opportunity to crystallize "into outward form the ardent patriotism of women and give[s] them a distinct place in the service of the State."[33] Sinclair was channelling this form of ardent patriotism in the "opportunity" that she received, as a member of the Munro Corps. As an extension of this argument, Susan Grayzel points out the symbolic importance of the khaki colour worn by women in military services (and indeed by Sinclair and her fellow corps-member Elsie Knocker, who vibrantly documents her experience of wearing the uniform) as "the wearing of khaki was linked to heroism, patriotic participation in the war, and military avenues for male national service."[34] In writing about these women, Sandra Gilbert describes the "delight" and the "glamourously dramatic rather than a gloomily dangerous counterpoint to adventure."[35]

May Sinclair has, at several times by later critics, been called "greedy" for her desire for military action. Suzanne Raitt writes that May Sinclair was looking to "express and satisfy both her own greedy sense of herself as a woman, and the needs of Europe at war".[36] However, it was the War which gave Sinclair—a famous feminist and suffragist—to a world in which men and women mingled freely for the first time, though in an atmosphere of heightened awareness and urgency. Like many other writers, she reminiscences how as a woman she was always barred from participating in men's activities:

> It is with the game of war as it was with the game of football I used to play with my big brothers in the garden. The women may play it if they're fit enough, up to a certain point, very much as I played football in the garden. The big brothers let their little sister kick off; they let her run away with the ball; they stood back and let her make goal after goal; but when it came to the scrimmage, they took hold of her and gently but firmly moved her to one side. If she persisted, she became an infernal nuisance. And if those big brothers over there only knew what I was after they would make arrangements for my immediate removal from the seat of war.[37]

Although she unfortunately characterises war as a game, she otherwise she paints a fair picture to show how patriarchal society made women feel redundant; hence finding herself, a middle-aged woman with no training in nursing, at the front, appeared to Sinclair first and foremost, an act of transgression. Her longing to witness real combat was an even greater act of transgression, because she was aware that her sex and her age made her a trespasser. In *A Journal* femininity is constantly embodied as shame, especially at times of crisis, and Sinclair is hopelessly ashamed of being herself. Apart from the Introduction, she does not refer to the jealousy—so common among the writings of other volunteers—about the opportunities

available to men to contribute to the national emergency; but rather she fantasises about the ecstasy of war. May Sinclair's support for militarism and her intense passion for warfare can be understood in the light of her wanting to contribute as a woman, to the essentially male combat zone. Yet, as I have demonstrated, her account is flawed. She sees all *British* combatants as heroes—it is necessary to emphasise the nationality to show how her love for militarism does not extend to enemy combatants. Her hero-worship overlooks the real hardships and travails of combat, as Evadne Price's character Helen Zenna Smith, an ambulance driver in Belgium, eloquently portrays in *Not So Quiet* . . . It is for this reason that Claire Tylee calls *A Journal* "narcissistic and myopic".[38] Unfortunately, for May Sinclair the War only alternates between being a "clean and fiery passion and contagious ecstasy", and the ground to finally express female consciousness:

> [the war] came to us when we needed it most, as an opportune postponement if not the end of our internal dissensions—the struggle between Unionists and Nationalists, between Capital and Labour, between the Suffragettes and the Government, between Man and Woman.[39]

Written by a famous middle-aged author, *A Journal* appeared to be a tract documenting the nature of hospital work, which would have inspired many young women to volunteer for medical services during the War. Rebecca West reviews *A Journal* in glowing terms,

> It is entirely characteristic of Miss Sinclair that this record of seventeen days spent in Belgium, which is largely a record of humiliations, and is told with the extremest timidity and a trembling meticulosity about the lightest facts, should be one of the few books of permanent value produced by the war.[40]

Sinclair was sent back to England after only seventeen days in Belgium. Her performance at the war-zone was criticised by the nurse Elsie Knocker (Mrs Torrence in *A Journal*):

> May Sinclair, an older woman, was well-known as a novelist; she was a very intellectual, highly strung woman who managed to survive only for a few weeks before the horrors of war overcame her and she was sent home. Her functions were not entirely clear: I think she was to act as secretary to Dr Munro, though she could only have had the effect of making his own confusion slightly worse, and there was an idea that she might help to swell the corps' tiny finances by writing articles for the Press about its work. [41]

Unlike Rose Macaulay, May Sinclair does not change her stance on the military paradigm as the War progressed: the characters of her 1917 novel *The Tree of Heaven* reject suffrage, pacifism, and movements for political justice in favour of an almost religious devotion to "the Great War of Redemption".[42] Sharon Ouditt writes how May Sinclair was "rapidly seduced by the alternative glories of warfare", and was in love with the "power" that war represents.[43] Yet, despite her questionable ideologies, her flaws, and her failure at the Front, May Sinclair's seventeen days at Belgium are important both for women's voluntary services during the War as well as for the history of British women in the early twentieth century. Her enthusiasm for actual combat first of all quells the assumption that women volunteered during the War only for the sake of the men, or out of love for their country, or for the financial independence which their salary would give them. Sinclair does little bellicose flag-waving, and only desires action. That in itself is at the opposite spectrum to what Vera Brittain and her friends wanted out of the War. Even more importantly, May Sinclair confronts the prevalent ideas concerning the redundancy of women in a patriarchal

society, and suffers ridicule in an attempt to prove that a wholly feminine agency can enter and work in an established masculine sphere. She was ashamed, and her records eventually proved to be a "record of humiliations", but she did brave it out in the Front, trying to match enthusiasm and romance to training and discipline—all in order to establish women's right to a public persona.

"What is there I would not do/ England my own?"

While Sinclair's path to the war was enabled by joining an ambulance unit, Olive Dent joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment to contribute to the war effort. Dent reacts to the news of the outbreak of the First World War with shock and immediately engages in imperialist language to convey her surprise:

> War! *ENGLAND* at war! It couldn't be. It must be some frightful mistake. War was the prerogative, the privilege, the amusement of the vague, restless, little kingdoms, of the small, quarrelsome, European States and far-distant, half-breed peoples. War was an unreality not to be brought to *our* land, not to be in any way associated with England, with *our* country.[44]

From the very beginning of her 1917 book *A VAD in France*, she comes across as a staunch patriot.[45] Her patriotism makes her look down upon "small, quarrelsome, European States" and employ eugenicist language: "far-distant, half-breed people" who are not English, and for whom war is "the prerogative, the privilege" and "the amusement". Edward Said writes that "European culture as a whole identified itself positively as being different from non-European regions and cultures, which for the most part were given a negative value."[46] He elucidates how "In time, culture comes to be associated, often aggressively, with the nation or

the state; this differentiates 'us' from 'them', almost always with some degree of xenophobia."[47] In this passage, Dent separates England from the rest of Europe and asserts that war should not be "brought to *our* land." Her double emphasis on "our" sheds light on her militant patriotism that sets the tone for the rest of her war diary. In *Culture and Society*, Raymond Williams demonstrates how culture acquired "an affirmatively nationalist cast":

> [. . .] first, the recognition of the practical separation of certain moral and intellectual activities from the driven impetus of a new kind of society; second the emphasis of these activities, as a court of human appeal, to be set over the processes of practical, social judgement and yet to offer itself as a mitigating and rallying alternative. [. . .] The idea of *culture* [. . .] was also, quite evidently, a response to the new political and social developments, to *Democracy*.[48]

Dent's insistence on keeping war out of the borders of England and to have her country disassociated from any of its effects stresses her nationalist spirit. The underlying idea is also the preservation of English culture, which she stresses, is very different from that of the "half-breed peoples" elsewhere. This notion of "purity" is repeated throughout her diary. She continues with her emotional outpouring for England at the brink of war:

> One looked at one's dear ones at home with a passion of over-mastering love. One caught one's self looking at strangers in the street, on the bus, and in the railway train,—at that worn little mother with the tired, trouble-haunted eyes, the laughing girl-child with the soft, rounded limbs, the crooning baby with his whole, wondrous future before him.[49]

She captures the feeling of helplessness among the most vulnerable people—mothers, children, babies—who could not fight in the war, but would be severely affected by it. The

powerless members of the population she focuses on are notably female: the "little mother" who is possibly "worn" out by the strain and fear of war, and the claims it will make on the male members of her family; the innocence of the "laughing girl-child", whose "soft, rounded limbs" starkly contrast with the looming destruction that war entails; and ultimately the "crooning baby" whose "whole, wondrous future" might be destroyed by war. The reason for Dent to concentrate on the vulnerability of women and children is to progress to her next question, "Who was to defend them all?"[50] Ouditt writes that "If the men were hurrying to transform themselves into parcels of patriotism it was clear that their female counterparts were equally anxious to seek a similar identity."[51] The defence of one's country in wartime, especially the defence of mothers and children, carries with it the promise of nobility and bravery. With this realisation, Dent too, languishes in the similar strain of shame and feelings of redundancy as May Sinclair, because of her gender:

> For the first time in a happy, even life one felt bitterly resentful of one's sex. Defence was the only consideration in the popular mind in those early August days. And defence was a man's job, and I, unfortunately, was a woman.[52]

Dent openly admits that she is "bitterly resentful" of her gender, and considers being a woman as unfortunate, because it bars her from actively participating in and serving her country during war. However, her resentment makes her align herself with the very patriarchal society that enforced these boundaries on the basis of gender. Dent thinks of gender in binaries: "defence was a man's job", not a woman's. However, she is aware of the limitations of such binaries as imposed by the society, when she compares the brutal result of the cultural impositions of such gender boundaries:

> And then our own fighting men came back from the war, *our* boys with shattered limbs, gaping flesh wounds, bruised, battered bodies. [. . .] England had taken and

> broken them, and still there were so very many of us women doing nothing of value, nothing that counted.

Once again her emphasis on "our boys" demonstrates her patriotic filiation with England. The phrase "doing nothing of value, nothing that counted" is important to note. Dent believes that offering bodies to be "bruised" and "battered" with "gaping" wounds and "shattered" limbs, for the preservation of one's country, is the ultimate sacrifice; and the helplessness of women against such selfless sacrifice of men spectacularly stands out as "nothing of value". At the same time, her emphasis on "*our* boys" reflects possessiveness for the boys and their bodies, and the implication that the nation has taken the boys away from these women and broken their bodies. Ultimately, the frustration of doing "nothing of value" seeps into a sense of war guilt. As she dwells on the corporeal effect of war, Dent's language becomes uncomfortably eugenicist:

> We think of the poor, maimed bodies, all that remain of that grace of English youth and comeliness, of the beauty that is consumed away, of man turned to destruction. [. . .] Our age has paid its price for the nation and the race.[53]

Nevertheless she is desperate to contribute, and like May Sinclair, Dent finds herself part of one of those eager committees so common in the initial days of the war, and so bitterly criticised by Vera Brittain for their propagation of "bloodthirsty armchair patriotism":[54]

> Some few of us registered the names of, and arranged visits to, the families of soldiers and sailors immediately called up for service, and the sight of those pitiful, pathetic, utterly helpless families made our hearts ache and

> strengthened our determination to be up and doing. There came a call for men and more men.[55]

Olive Dent knew that the New Army would need a New Army of nurses. On signing up to be a nurse, she calls herself a 'Kitchener nurse', named after the new army created on the recommendation of the Secretary of State for War, and composed entirely of volunteers. By being a nurse, she can care for the "maimed bodies" that are remnants of the "grace of English youth and comeliness". It is interesting that Dent sees her nursing duties as a service equivalent to that of a soldier fighting in the Front. Like May Sinclair, Dent too is engrossed in the romantic idea of "fire, slaughter, dripping bayonet, shrieking shell", but unlike Sinclair's energetic desire to look for wounded soldiers amid shell-fire, Dent devotes the initial days to "resurrecting" and buying nursing books, attending St. John's Ambulance lectures and practices, joining a Detachment whose members visited hospitals on observation tours, and offering service at civil hospitals. She "offers" her body to be broken just like the men's:

'Ever the faith endures,

England, my England:

Take and break us: we are yours,

England, my own.'[56]

Olive Dent left for V.A.D. service in France in late summer 1915, a few weeks after she had to "regretfully" refuse service in Egypt for "private reasons", which she does not elucidate.[57] She publishes *A VAD in France* in 1917 based on the diary she keeps while serving there. In the meantime, she also voraciously publishes despatches from her Front Hospital which

appear in British press such as *Daily Mail*, *Evening News*, *Yorkshire Evening Post* and *The Lady*. Jane Potter writes that while Dent's "perceptions on the reality of war-nursing change, her perceptions about the meaning of the war alter very little, except, perhaps, to strengthen her resolve about it, a resolve inseparable from her devotion to the 'boys'."[58] This strain is noticeable in all her publications: her experience of war nursing is "fascinating and interesting", there is much laughter and light-heartedness while treating wounds, and every death is "worth" it for "our country". She dedicates her book "to all the brave Boys whom it has been my privilege and pleasure to Nurse", and her love for her country and her admiration for the "Boys" colour the nature of care that she imparts.[59]

It is necessary to dwell on the nature of Dent's patriotism. Unlike Sinclair, whose demonstration of patriotism actually concealed her need to prove her worth as a woman, Dent's patriotism is separate from her sense of shame for her gender. Her demonstration of patriotism is also inherently public: her publishing productivity was directly targeted at the Home Front and she appeased her readers by providing them with what they wanted to hear. Not only do her records of war carry with them no gruesome details of fighting, wounding, and death, but they also bear a strong nationalistic strain intended to pacify the Home Front into believing that it was all "worth it": "Ours is a country worth fighting for, worth dying for, worth being maimed for. A funny thing—love of one's native land."[60] Researchers of political psychology have shown that patriotism is "often defined in behavioral terms, identifying the sorts of sacrifice the individual is obliged to make in defense of the country's freedom and democracy."[61] Dent's patriotism too is aligned to this matrix of action as demonstration of love; the physical wounding is a collateral damage. Nicoletta Gullace explains how women themselves turned into "a form of propaganda", through propaganda's "deployment of gendered images and in its ability to instigate female behavior".[62] Dent used her prolific publishing record during the War as a means to dispense that propaganda. In fact,

her celebration of traditional gender roles, the way she upholds the division between the genders even in the allocation of war-work hinges on the idea of protection of traditional values, as Gullace notes that they represented "both the traditional values that the British were apparently fighting to defend and the modes of gendered behavior that seemed necessary to wage war successfully."[63]

To appease her readers, Dent paints a rosy picture of war nursing:

> On the nursing side one has the pleasure and satisfaction of quick results and rapid progress. A jaw case, say, comes in with some of the flesh shot away by high explosive, the surrounding skin spotted with small black patches, clotted and caked with blood, dust and clay in the moustache.[64]

Having given a rudimentary sketch of a soldier's wounds, she indulges in some technical details for the treatment:

> One syringes and washes the wound with peroxide followed by a lotion, shaves the face where necessary, washes the skin with hydrogen peroxide, or ether soap and warm water, continues to syringe the wound frequently and dress it with eusol, until, at the end of a few days,--three or four, perhaps, for jaw cases are notoriously quick in healing owing to the good circulation of blood in the face,--the patient is ready for evacuation to England.[65]

Her deftness is meant to sound impressive to the readers back home. The simplicity of the treatment and the harmlessness of the wound would assure family members back in England whose sons and husbands were fighting in the Front. However, the ease and proficiency that Dent depicts here was not entirely true. American nurse Ellen N. La Motte at *Hôpital* Chirurgical Mobile No. 1 in the Belgian Zone, wrote of a soldier who had shot himself in the

mouth: “The ball tore out of his left eye, and then lodged somewhere under his skull [. . .] his left eye rolled about loosely upon his cheek, and from his bleeding mouth he shot great clots of stagnant blood.”[66] La Motte’s frank portrayal of war is absent in Dent’s text. All the wounded soldiers in Dent’s war diary are happy and grateful to serve their country, and Dent along with the other nurses only feel “pleasure and delight” in their work:

> the work has been thoroughly enjoyable, but now comes the little disappointment of active-service nursing. One does not see the completion of the case, the subsequent grafting and building which ultimately makes so wonderful a cure for the poor boy.[67]

Instead of severe wounds and pain, Dent records a lot of light-hearted conversation supposedly happening in her hospital, for her readers back home. However, she often pairs medical treatment (seemingly simple and painless) with laughter:

> ‘Now, little chappie, swinging the lead, eh? We’ll soon fix this up. Nothing very much the matter, is there?’ and with a soak of hydrogen peroxide and warm, sterile water, caked dressings soon give way. The clay-covered, blood-splattered surrounding skin is washed with the same lotion or with ether soap and, possibly, an area shaved—as in the case of head and calf wounds—and the wound itself is cleaned and dressed.[68]

The purpose of such a passage (her text is interspersed with similar exchanges) is manifold. They show that not only are English soldiers thriving well in the battlefield, but if they are wounded, they also get treated by expert carers. Her cheeriness is the verbal version of treating the wounds—the laughter washes away the pain. The exchanges also reveal that there

is no flagging of morale of the troops in the battlefields. Some of her other exchanges with the soldiers are especially "cheerful":

> 'Sister, may I take you tobogganing this afternoon?' asks one boy with a bandaged head and broken femur, but otherwise very cheerful. 'Thanks so much. I should love it, and Jock will take me skiing, won't you?' I retort, whereas Jock laughs, for he is but very slowly 'coming round' again after 'making a meal of a few bits of shrapnel,' as he terms his poor abdominal injuries. 'And you others—well, I think we might manage a bob-sleigh party, eh?' 'Oh, rather, sister!' says a boy, peering over the top of his bed-cradle, which, by the way, he will need for many long weeks.[69]

We do not know how true these exchanges are. While they seem endearing to read at a difficult time in history, they are used to censor the reality of war wounds, and the true nature of military medical care. Irene Rathbone's 1932 war novel *We That Were Young*, based on her own experiences as a First World War nurse, records the reality of war wounds in 1st London General at Camberwell. Receiving the horrendously wounded soldiers from the Somme in 1916, Joan encounters one patient suffering from a similar wound to Dent's patient: "his right leg was fractured at the thigh, and was swung clear of the bed in a long cradle-like splint."[70] Rathbone gives a detailed account of McNeil's wound and the expression of his pain in a long passage:

> A large area of raw flesh lay revealed, with two pieces of rubber tubing embedded in it for drainage purposes. Each tube was drawn out with a little glooping noise and dropped into a dish. [. . .] It was when it came to the probing that he had to shut his eyes and clutch Joan's arm. Sickening even to watch that simple little bodkin-shaped instrument working about among the lacerated muscles, and to *feel*

> it almost unendurable. But the bits of loose bone had to be found, otherwise they set up inflammation.[71]

Dent's book is free of such gruesome depictions of the war's reality on human bodies mainly because it is a treatise on patriotic duty, a display of intense nationalistic pride, designed to make minds ready to put that pride to action when needed, despite gender conventions. Her text is a justification of her eagerness to serve and be useful for her country in spite of her gender. Hence she regularly describes her pride in her work:

> It is our privilege, pleasure and pride to dispel that fear,--a pride which actually grows to a conceit. It is very feminine to enjoy rising above expectations, and to hear stumbling expressions of gratitude after a dressing,--to be assured that 'it feels luvly' or 'I was dreading that, sister, and it didn't hurt a bit'—is as the sound of music in one's ears. It is a form of vanity of which we are not ashamed, indeed, we revel in it.[72]

Here Dent refers to the "little fear of hospitals [that] is engendered" among soldiers, ascribing that fear to the "inaccurate accounts" that their parents had given them.[73] Her expertise in her job enables her to dispel the fears of her wounded patients. However, she fashions her expertise in gendered terms. She finds it "very feminine" to enjoy the rise above the expectations of her gender in performing her professional role. The soldiers' expressions of gratitude are validations for her work, and hence they are like "music" to her ears; their words give recognition to her war-work and her successful fulfilment of duty towards her country. At the same time, even within the framework of a professional role, Dent performs her gender: "Here, there are so many demands on one's pity, one's womanliness, one's protection, one's self-reliance."[74]Thus by choosing a stereotypically feminine role—that of the "ministering angel", the nurse—as her contribution during the war, Dent turns round the

very barrier that had prevented her from demonstrating her love for her country in the first place. In *Gender Trouble* Judith Butler writes of gender as "a *corporeal style*, an 'act', as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where 'performative' suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning", clarifying that, "As in other social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*."[75] Having procured the role that she wanted for the duration of the war, Dent performs it according to her gender. In addition to administering bandages soaked with hydrogen peroxide, she is generous with her "womanliness" and her feminine "pity", fitting perfectly into the role that society expects of her:

> 'I know now why you nurses are called "sisters." You *are* sisters to us boys.'
> With a lump in the throat, and stinging tears at the back of the eyes one could only silently hope to be ever worthy of the name.[76]

Dent's patriotism is affective: she actively demonstrates her love for her country and reacts emotionally to its symbols.[77] Her celebration of England, and her desperation to keep the war outside its borders can be ironically compared to the *Heimatschutz* (literally: homeland protection) movement that swept Germany and Austria during and immediately after the First World War.[78] She romantically describes her homeland as a country with "red-roofed farms, trim, well-built dwelling houses, orderly little towns, and—adorable little English children" and with "the reds and russets", "the golds and bronzes", "the browns and dark greens" of the wooded copses, which need to be protected from the destructiveness of war.[79] She uses the pastoral and countryside aesthetic to define nationhood and defend it. In his essay, 'Heimatschutz: Ruckschau und Ausblick', Karl Giannoni, one of the proponents of the movements, argued for the necessity of the *Heimat* to be beautiful, as beautiful signifies virtue:

> "The beautiful is the symbol for the good," said Kant; this holds true in the negative as well, and we can say: The ugly is the symbol of the evil. Therefore the thinking observer can see the outward traits of this *Heimat* as clear signs of the world he lives in; both are inseparable. And getting used to bad appearances, and thus to their continual repetition, only produces more bad conditions, just as the forming of good ones creates good ones.[80]

Dent even offers death as a justification for the protection of the beautiful English land and English "race":

> No matter what consolation is proffered, death is always an irreparable loss. But surely it is better to have it come when doing work that counts, work of national and racial weight, than to live on until old and unwanted. [81]

Springing into existence as nationalistic militia groups during the First World War, the *Heimatschutz* movement eventually merged with the Nazi party in the 1930s and "prepared the way for the penetration of conceptions of landscape protection into the road-building plans of the Nazis."[82] It would be incorrect to claim that Dent's nationalism prefigures Nazi ideology, but setting her patriotic writing in comparison with the postwar Heimatschutz movement places it within a long tradition of wartime patriotic publications: Dent published prolifically throughout the War, and in all her writings she stressed on the unique English rural countryside and home inhabited by the English "race", as the epitome of aesthetics, purity and nationalism, which need to be "protected". Her nationalistic strain motivated her to volunteer for war nursing.

A V.A.D. in France ends with the words "We are proceeding forthwith."[83] After twenty months in the Front, the hospital was taken over by American authorities, and Dent records

that they had to leave. We do not know where she went or what she did for the rest of the war. Her writings appear again immediately after the war, in *The War Illustrated*. Between October and November 1918, she publishes three articles in the magazine, where she is introduced as 'Author of the Popular Book, "A V.A.D. in France"'. Her first column titled 'The 'Sisters' and their 'Boys'' is interesting to read. Despite serving as a nurse and witnessing first-hand the ravages of war on the human body, even in October 1918, Olive Dent celebrated the war as an opportunity to be "utilised fully, actively."[84] The article appeared in a publication that produced weekly issues describing in details the activities in the different Fronts. Since the battle front was an exclusively masculine space, *The War Illustrated* too covered exclusively masculine exploits, with some issues publishing some illustrations on nursing work. Aware of the nature of the magazine, Dent strives in her article to give a detailed picture of V.A.D. work, justifying the work they did as war work, while still retaining traditional gender stereotypes in their professional roles. She declares that,

> The V.A.D.s won through simply because they were British and had the grit, the characteristic faculty for "sticking it" which is commonly associated with our men, but less often with our women, though the latter just as certainly possess it.[85]

Her nationalistic pride is unchanged. Here she hints at equality between the sexes when it comes to "grit", and as if to return to traditional gender roles of women being subservient to men, she quickly declares:

> Possibly one factor in helping to "stick it" is the simple one that we have all been so busy thinking of "the boys" and their bigness that we have not had time to think of ourselves and our dwarfed doings.[86]

She ends her piece in *The War Illustrated* by relapsing into the familiar trope of gender roles:

> For when they, our brave defenders, are wounded and hurt, and come to us to be tended and comforted, when they trust themselves and their poor torn flesh to our keeping, what wonder they make us feel big and protective and motherly—despite the fact that they may be years older than we. They are still our "boys".[87]

In writing about female gender performativity in the context of war, Rita Stephan describes how "womanhood" can be used as a "source of empowerment".[88] Both Stephan and Cynthia Enloe argue that patriarchal society sees men as "natural controllers", and this structure persists at the outbreak of war when men are "responsible for the security of women and children".[89] Nurses like Olive Dent had to negotiate their love for their country with the social barriers imposed upon them by the patriarchal society. One way of overcoming the barrier was to project the accepted stereotypes and attributes of their gender into their professional roles. Instead of declaring how these women mended the bodies of the very men who were expected to defend them, Dent dilutes their own expertise by focussing on the nurturing side expected from their gender, implying that their "brave defenders" gained succour by the motherliness of their female nurses in hospitals.

These accounts reveal women's complicated reasons for volunteering in the First World War, that went beyond the model of seeing "themselves as patriots, offering their professional skills to the 'cause' of securing an Allied victory" versus being "pacifists, who argued that a greater female participation in politics (which, for the time being, also meant engaging in war) would, ultimately, lead to the eradication of warfare."[90] Their motivations were psychological, political, and personal. Sinclair's "dream" was to feel the thrill of war, from which she had been barred from participating because of her gender. Her presence in Belgium is what Tylee identifies as "women's entry into that exclusive part of national culture which has previously been forbidden to women."[91] *A Journal of Impressions in*

Belgium is significant because it records both the woman's presence and non-presence in armed conflict: Sinclair was present very close to combat zones in Belgium, but she was kept away from actual battle sites. Her longing to witness and participate in battle is symbolic of all the other areas of public life where women were not granted access. Olive Dent articulates a nationalist pride that leads her to be both ashamed of her own gender and to develop a masochistic strain that makes her wish for a broken body like that of the wounded soldiers. Her motivation to volunteer in war emanates from affective patriotism; her romantic glorification of the country and her zeal to keep war outside its borders relate to her notions of racial superiority. Thus the reasons for volunteering early on in 1914—1915 were layered and complicated, and their responses to combat and changes in attitude once in service were also heterogeneous.

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[1] Thekla Bowser, *Britain's Civilian Volunteers: Authorized Story of British Voluntary Aid Detachment Work in the Great War* (New York: Moffat, Yard and Company, 1917), 4.
[2] A. W. Kinglake, *The Invasion of the Crimea: Its Origin, and an Account of its Progress Down to the Death of Lord Raglan*, vol. VII (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1863–1887).
[3] Krisztina Robert, "Gender, Class and Patriotism: Women's Paramilitary Units in First World War Britain," *The International History Review* 19, no. 1 (1997): 55.
[4] Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, 143.
At this point, it is important to point out, that not all women who participated in women's war services had, in fact, taken part in the pre-war suffrage campaign. See: Robert, "Gender, Class and Patriotism," 55.
[5] https://theconversation.com/your-country-needs-you-why-did-so-many-volunteer-in-1914-30443 Accessed: April 29th, 2018.
[6] See: Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War: the British Experience* (London: Croom Helm, 1981); Deborah Hom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War I* (London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2000); Angela K. Smith, *The Second Battlefield: Women, Modernism and the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Claire M. Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness: Images of Militarism and Womanhood in Women's Writings 1914—64* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990); Sharon Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War* (London: Routledge, 1994); Trudi Tate, *Modernism, History and the First World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).
[7] Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, 11.
[8] Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness*, 14.
[9] Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women*, 5.
[10] Sharon Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War* (London: Routledge, 1994), 3.
[11] Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 104.
[12] Ibid, 140.

[13] Bowser, *Britain's Civilian Volunteers*, 4.
[14] I quote Helen Zenna Smith (Evadne Price) deliberately here, although her book, *Not So Quiet . . .* is a fictionalised memoir, a reworking of the private diaries of a First World War nurse. This is because *Not So Quiet . . .* carries an openness in its portrayal of class and complexities of gender that many other "true" life-writings hinted at.
[15] Helen Zenna Smith, *Not So Quiet . . . Stepdaughters of the War* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1989), 220—221.
[16] Robert, "Gender, Class and Patriotism," 55
[17] May Sinclair, *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium* (New York: Macmillan, 1915).
[18] Olive Dent, *A V.A.D. in France* (London: Grant Richards, 1917), 13.
[19] See: Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Women and War* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995), 192—94; Ouditt, *Fighting Forces*, 134—5; Christopher Martin, "The Date and Authorship of the Letter from 'A Little Mother'" *Notes and Queries* 62, no. 3 (2015).
[20] Suzanne Raitt and Trudi Tate (eds), *Women's Fiction and the Great War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 66.
[21] Full text: https://thewpb.wordpress.com/2014/05/13/100d-1-the-authors-declaration/ Last accessed: April 29th, 2018.
[22] Ibid.
[23] "I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is indeed fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education. [. . .] It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England." W. Nassau Lees, *Indian Musalmáns: being three letters reprinted from the "Times" ; with an article on the late Prince Consort and four articles on education reprinted from the "Calcutta Englishman" : with an appendix containing Lord Macaulay's Minute* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1871).
[24] May Sinclair, *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium* (New York: Macmillan, 1915).
[25] Ibid.
[26] Jane Marcus (ed.), *The Young Rebecca: Writings of Rebecca West 1911—1917* (London: Virago Press, 1983), 305.
[27] Sinclair, *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium.*
[28] Claire M. Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness* (Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1990), 28.
[29] Sinclair, *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium*, 12—13.
[30] See: Selena Daly *Italian Futurism and the First World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016).
[31] Robert, "Gender, Class and Patriotism," 63.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Susan Grayzel, "'The Outward and Visible Sign of her Patriotism': Women, Uniforms, and National Service during the First World War," *Twentieth Century British History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 149.
[35] Sandra Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," in Margaret Randolph Higonnet, Jane Jenson, Sonya Michel and Margaret Collins Weitz (eds) *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989): 214–15.
[36] Raitt and Tate (eds), *Women's Fiction and the Great War*, 65.
[37] Sinclair, *A Journal of Impressions in Belgium.*
[38] Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness*, 30.
[39] Raitt and Tate (eds), *Women's Fiction and the Great War*, 69.
[40] Marcus (ed.), *The Young Rebecca*, 305.
[41] Baroness de T'Seracles, *Flanders and Other Fields, memoirs of the Baroness de T' Serclaes, M. M.*, (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd, 1964), 37—38.
[42] Laura Marcus, 'Corpus/ Corps? Corpse: Writing the Body In/ At War' in Helen Zenna Smith, *Not So Quiet . . . Stepdaughters of the War* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1989), 256.
[43] Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women*, 34.
[44] Olive Dent, *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front* (London: Virgin Books, 2014), 1.
[45] Her memoirs were republished as *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front* in 2014. All references to the text are from that edition.
[46] Edward Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 174.
[47] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage Books, 1994), xiii.

[48] Ibid; Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780—1950* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1960), xvi.
[49] Dent, *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front*, 2.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women*, 17.
[52] Dent, *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front*, 2.
[53] Ibid, 12—13.
[54] Brittain, *Testament of Youth*, 167.
[55] Dent, *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front*, 3.
[56] Ibid, 5.
[57] Ibid, 6.
[58] Raitt and Tate (eds), *Women's Fiction and the Great War*, 103.
[59] Dent, *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front*
[60] Ibid, 106.
[61] See: Richard K. Herrmann, Pierangelo Isernia and Paolo Segatti, "Attachment to the Nation and International Relations: Dimensions of Identity and their Relationship to War and Peace", *Political Psychology* 30, no. 5 (2009); M. Viroli, *For love of country: An essay on patriotism and nationalism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
[62] Nicoletta F. Gullace, "White Feathers and Wounded Men: Female Patriotism and the memory of the Great War," *Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 1 (1997): 185.
[63] Ibid.
[64] Dent, *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front*, 24—25.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ellen N. La Motte, *The Backwash of War* (New York: Putnam, 1934), 8.
[67] Dent, *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front*, 25.
[68] Ibid, 35.
[69] Ibid, 40.
[70] Irene Rathbone, *We That Were Young* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1988), 196.
[71] Ibid, 197.
[72] Dent, *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front*, 34—35.
[73] Ibid, 34.
[74] Ibid, 257.
[75] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990) 190—191.
[76] Dent, *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front*, 37.
[77] For the psychology of patriotism see: Jennifer Wolak and Ryan Dawkins, "The Roots of Patriotism across Political Contexts" *Political Psychology* 38 no. 3 (2017); Herrmann, Isernia and Segatti, "Attachment to the Nation and International Relations"; Steve Reicher and Nick Hopkins, *Self and Nation: Categorisation, Contestation and Mobilisation* (London: Sage Books, 2001).
[78] See: Peter Bickle, *Heimat: A Critical Theory of the German Idea of Homeland* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002).
[79] Dent, *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front*, 106.
[80] Bickle, *Heimat*, 133.
[81] Dent, *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front*, 165.
[82] Thomas Zeller, *Driving Germany: The Landscape of the German Autobahn, 1930—1970* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), 22.
[83] Dent, *A Volunteer Nurse on the Western Front*, 289.
[84] Olive Dent, "The 'Sisters' and their 'Boys'", *The War Illustrated*, 9, no. 217 (2018): 143.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.
[88] Rita Stephan, "War and Gender Performance" *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 16, no. 2 (2014).
[89] Cynthia Enloe, *Globalization and Militarism: Feminists Make the Link* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 61.
[90] Hallett, *Veiled Warriors*, 3.
[91] Tylee, *The Great War and Women's Consciousness*, 14.