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## Girls in Motion: World War I as a Catalyst for Change in the Cultural and Fictive Landscape of American Girlhood

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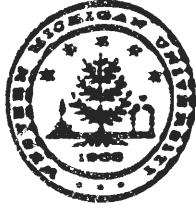
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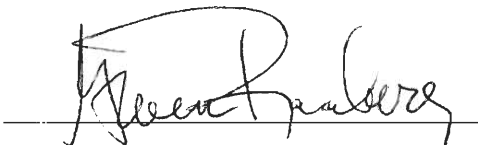
Emily Honey, having been admitted to the Carl and Winifred Lee Honors College in Fall 1998 successfully presented the Lee Honors College Thesis on February 8, 2002.

The title of the paper is:

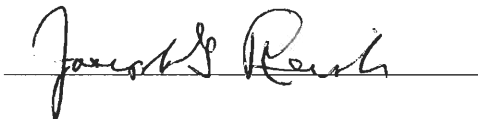
"Girls in Motion: World War I as a Catalyst for Change in the Cultural and Fictive Landscape of American Girlhood"



Dr. Gwen Tarbox, Department of English



Dr. Gwen Raaberg, Department of English & Women's Studies



Dr. Joseph Reish, Dean of the Lee Honors College

Emily Honey

Lee Honors College April 2002 Graduation Survey

1.) In what ways have the following components of the Lee Honors College impacted you?

A. Learning Communities/Clusters

My two clusters were wonderful. Through the cluster my freshman year, I made good friends, and in both clusters I came into contact with some of my best professors: Dr. Bob Hinkel, Dr. Deborah McGrady, Dr. Gwen Raaberg, and Dr. Mark Richardson. Dr. Raaberg eventually became part of my thesis committee.

B. Single Course Offerings/Upper-level Seminars

The single course of Phil 220, with its special honors section, definitely made the course material more manageable and easier to understand. My 300-level course in medical history made an excellent and highly interesting follow-up to MDOL 145, Heroes and Villains.

C. Honors Thesis

Where do I begin? Putting together my honors thesis gave me a direction for a future career in academia, a direction for my future research, and a chance to synthesize all the skills and information I learned as an undergraduate. In addition, I found in my advisor, Gwen Tarbox, a wonderful friend and a valuable mentor.

D. Independent Study, Field Experience, Foreign Study, Research Project

My four weeks in England were truly the best time of my life. Without the Medallion scholarship, I could never have fulfilled that dream, and I will always be grateful that I had that opportunity. It has rooted in me a determination to return if I can, sometime in the future.

E. Student Life Activities (HSA), Community Service, Eldridge/Fox (Honors Residence Halls)

Eldridge provided a very welcoming and supportive community for me my freshman year - it definitely made the transition to college easier.

- 2.) **Any positive memories (classes, events, faculty members, staff members) that stand out in your mind?**

My first year cluster was a marvelous experience. I had Myth and Folk Literature with Dr. Bob Hinkel, and Medieval Heroes and Villains with Dr. Deborah McGrady. Both of them were wonderful professors, and the members of the class became good friends, particularly my friends Ben Hungerford and Leah Krznarich, who I still see and talk to.

- 3.) **How did the LHC assist you in attaining your professional/personal goals?**

**What avenues of support did you find through the LHC?** In countless ways.

It was through LHC classes that I first had Dr. Gwen Raaberg and Dr. Mark Richardson as professors, both of whom wrote me letters of recommendations for grad school. Dr. Raaberg was on my thesis committee and introduced me to my advisor. In addition, the Dean's Summer Research Grant enabled me to spend last summer writing my thesis. Since I had it essentially finished in the fall, I was able to send it to graduate schools as my writing sample.

- 4.) **Please provide suggestions of way that the Lee Honors College could have served you better.**

I can't think of a one - I only wish that I would have had time to take more honors classes! They were almost always my favorites in any given semester.

- 5.) **What are your plans for post-graduate life (attending now or later graduate or professional school, seeking or having a job opportunity, etc.)?**

I plan to attend graduate school in the fall, although where I will be is still an open question. I have received acceptances from York and Warwick universities in England, and from the University of Michigan. I still have to hear from Minnesota, Maryland, and Emory. Wherever I go, I will be pursuing a Ph.D. in some combination of English and Women's Studies. I plan to teach college after completion.

**Girls in Motion: World War I as a Catalyst for Change in the  
Cultural and Fictive Landscape of American Girlhood**

Emily Honey

Lee Honors College

Western Michigan University

Honors Thesis

2001-02

*Girls in Motion: World War I as a  
Catalyst for Change in the Cultural and  
Fictive Landscape of American Girlhood*



*By Emily Honey*

In 1917, journalist and war correspondent Mabel Potter Daggett wrote the following to the press bureau of France after she was denied permission to go to the front:

‘ . . . You see, gentlemen, in the country from which I come, we have a feminism that is neither an ideal nor a theory, but a working reality. In America, there were when I left, four million women citizens, and the State legislatures every little while making more. These are, gentlemen, four million citizens with a vote, whose wishes must be consulted by Congress at Washington in determining the war policy of the United States. Their sympathies help to determine the amount of the war relief contributions that may come across the Atlantic. These are four million women who count, gentlemen, please understand, exactly the same as four million men.

‘ . . . Believe me, gentlemen, the opportunity for propaganda that I offer you is unparalleled. . . ’ (46)

Daggett knew that the four million women citizens of her country had done more than just serve their own at home, and that the feminists she wrote of were making full use of the new opportunities the Great War was providing for them. Approximately 25,000 American women went overseas to serve during World War I. Many of them went long before the U.S. actually entered the war, putting in several years of service. They served in every capacity imaginable, as nurses, occupational and physical therapists, telephone operators for the Signal Corps, entertainers, dentists, contract surgeons, canteeners, correspondents, YMCA, YWCA, Red Cross, and Salvation Army workers, and chauffeurs, making themselves indispensable to the war effort and the efficient functioning of the war machine (Schneider and Schneider, Breach 11-13).

These opportunities brought about a major change in the roles of women in society. While it may have been true that most Americans still did not approve of women entering the public sphere, there was a need for workers that had to be filled. Suddenly,

women were allowed to work, to earn, to be productive, all in the name of patriotism. Their numbers were not as large as they would be during the Second World War, but their presence was felt, nonetheless. Bringing women into the workforce for the war effort cleared the path for the suffrage movement and the ratification of the 19th amendment. Attempting to understand how the First World War shaped not only the women involved and the suffrage movement as a whole, but also the girls' fiction written during that time period, is crucial to understanding both the mentality of the 1920s and 1930s and the absolute reversal of women's roles that followed the Second World War. Through these stories, young women were encouraged to have their own ambitions and dream of being more than just a wife and mother. American patriarchy was giving way in the face of American patriotism.

Dr. Rosalie Slaughter Morton was appointed the chairman of the Medical Women's National Association's War Service Committee, and organized the American Women's Hospitals to be sent overseas. The firmness and resolve in Morton's eyes (Figure 1) indicates how challenging such a task must have been in an era when having women in any medical position higher than nurse was almost unheard of. Women physicians could only be "contract surgeons" (hired civilians) with the American Army, but they went overseas and served with the French Army and with private organizations like the AWH and the American Fund for French Wounded (Gavin 157-58). The American Ambulance Hospital in Paris was established and funded by American citizens living in France, staffed by American nurses and American, British, and French volunteers (see Figure 2). Once the U.S. entered the war and the Red Cross took over the relief work, it was Red Cross Military Hospital #1 (Schneider and Schneider, Breach 87-88).

Back home, women also took advantage of the opportunity to put themselves in the public sphere. Not only did they form relief organizations for the war, they were enlisted into the U.S. Navy and Marines to serve as clerks, secretaries, and recruiters



(Gavin, 1-37). They took over jobs that men had left behind, becoming streetcar operators and train car operators, working in factories to assemble explosives, plane parts, and armaments, and becoming employed in refineries, blast furnaces, and foundries (Schneider and Schneider, Progressive Era 224-25).

Moreover, the United States was not the only country to mobilize their women in this fashion. Contemporary accounts, including Daggett's Women Wanted and Madeleine Doty's Short Rations, tell of women in England, France, and Germany undertaking all kinds of work, both traditional and non-traditional, in order to keep their countries running in wartime and keep themselves fed while the men were gone. Dr. Louisa Anderson and more than one hundred women of the Women's Hospital Corps formed the heart of the Endel Street War Hospital in London (see Figure 3). Like the women in other countries, German women took on jobs cleaning sewers, running trains and trolleys, and working in paper and munitions factories (Doty 129, 190-96; see Figure 4).

If Daggett had to nudge the French government into utilizing the opportunity for propaganda in U.S. books and magazines, the publishers in the States were taking full advantage of it. During the course of the war, there had been a steady stream of propaganda issued to the American people, building up support for U.S. participation. Women were a primary tool in the idealistic posters, essays, and books that were published, being portrayed as wholesome and virtuous creatures who were protected by their chivalrous male counterparts. This can be seen in the frontispiece from The Outdoor Girls at the Hostess House (see Figure 5).

The girls' series fiction of the First World War is particularly adept at portraying both the service of women and their idealization, simultaneously encouraging young women to go out into the workforce in the name of patriotism and discouraging them from giving up their roles as the traditional caretakers of men. The books were filled with patriotic propaganda clearly intended to encourage young women to support the war and

the men overseas, but the work the vast majority of the fiction encouraged was of a very limited and “feminine” type. The girls of the U.S. were being called on in mass numbers to do work for their country, but the women who worked in traditionally “masculine” occupations were generally not profiled in the contemporary fiction. I have not found one series that focuses on a female reporter, munitions worker, Yeoman (F), Marine Reserve (F), or telephone operator, even though the latter, nicknamed “Hello Girls,” were some of the most celebrated female war workers (see Figure 6). The girls in these books are YWCA volunteers and Red Cross workers. This kind of occupational stereotyping is particularly true of the series published by the Stratemeyer Syndicate, but two notable exceptions to it can be found outside of the Stratemeyer collection, in the Grace Harlowe and Khaki Girls series. Grace begins as a Red Cross worker, but eventually becomes an ambulance driver, while the Khaki Girls, Valerie Ward and Joan Mason, join the Liberty Motor Corps and then join a company of female ambulance drivers. However, even in their “female” occupations, Stratemeyer’s Ruth Fielding and Outdoor Girls manage to transcend some of the typical gender roles. The war put these heroines in the public realm and allowed them to make a place for themselves because war work was accepted and encouraged by the American public. This is even acknowledged occasionally by the authors.

Here is told how two of America’s best little women, withdrew from everything attractive at home, not excluding the very worthiest war work, that they might ‘get across’ and do full time service on the fields of France. . . .the really marvelous exploits of the girls include such experiences as could not have been accurately put down in a book of girls’ adventures before the war gave the new and remarkable opportunities. (Brooks, Windsor Barracks 3)

As Martha Banta points out in Imaging American Women, the New Woman that had emerged shortly before the war was a conglomeration of three variations -- the Beautiful Charmer, the Outdoors Pal, and the New England Woman. The Beautiful

Charmer is exactly what her name implies - a pretty girl who is used to having her own way and determined to get what she wants, but at the same time is practical, socially adept, and unquestionably chaste. The Outdoors Pal was the physically active girl who had the free spirit expected of American women, both freedom of body and freedom of mind (but who, of course, still upheld the morality of America). The New England Woman is conscientious and spiritual, passionate, intelligent, and industrious, always doing what is expected of her. Merging these three types led to the image of the New Woman. Further evolution led to the New Woman being translated into the Protecting Angel and the Amazon Warrior on World War I propaganda posters. Men fought to protect and save the Angels, and fought under the idealized figurehead of the Warriors (46-53, 85-88, 484-94).

The Outdoor Girls series is the first one I will examine, because it is the most conservative of all the ones I have researched. It is the least unusual because the four protagonists stay within acceptably feminine boundaries and do not challenge the conventional role of women very much. However, the merits of the Outdoor Girls' war work lies in the fact that women working outside the home for a common cause was something new, different, and exciting.

The very name "Outdoor Girls" suggests that the four girl friends from Deepdale - Betty, Mollie, Amy, and Grace - are modeled on the variation of the American Girl that Banta calls the Outdoors Pal. These girls are energetic, cheerful, full of life, and have no scruples about joining their male friends - Allen, Will, Roy, and Frank - in sports or other physical activities. Banta describes the dynamic this way:

Fun between the sexes was predicated on an instant recognition of everyone's gender. . . All the figures are alike in the physical zest they display and in their readiness to mug, and no pronounced cultural distinctions separate feminine from masculine, but which are women and which are men is easy enough to determine. . . The image of the girl who went cycling might not raise a

finger to urge the vote for women, but her *image* as the type of the American Girl became part of the process that altered social perceptions and formed new conceptions of what it was possible for females to do and to be. (88, 258)

In the books before the war, Betty, Mollie, Amy, and Grace are part of a slowly evolving new picture of female intelligence, strength, and usefulness. When the war comes, they are ready to take that new image and turn it into fact by doing their part in the war effort. They do so in The Outdoor Girls in Army Service and The Outdoor Girls at the Hostess House, dividing their work between the Deepdale Red Cross and the YWCA. In the first book, they hold a large lawn party as a fundraiser for the Red Cross, and put on a play with the help of the boys. Then they repeat the performance for the YWCA, and come up with the idea of setting up a Hostess House at Camp Liberty, where the boys are training.

These “Hostess Houses” did actually exist. They were one of the projects undertaken by the YWCA once the U.S. entered the war. The houses were places where mother, wives, sisters, and sweethearts could stay while they were visiting their soldiers at the training camps. They were the models for eighteen similar facilities set up overseas that served soldiers, war brides, and other American women (Schneider and Schneider, Breach 140-44). The four Outdoor Girls perform such duties as helping the foreign soldiers learn English, writing letters for soldiers who cannot write, entertaining relatives who are waiting for their boys to get off duty, setting up entertainment in which the soldiers participate, and canvassing area residents for rooms when the camp is full and more lodgings are needed.

These two books hold perhaps the best examples I have found of patriotic propaganda aimed at “women’s work.” The girls do not really step out of the female mold. They are doing work for men and for the families of men, only now they are doing it in a patriotic context. There is not much male supervision in either book, but there does not need to be. The girls are still in their typical roles, acting them out in a different

setting. They are being set up as perfect examples of American womanhood, as combinations of the Beautiful Charmer and Outdoors Pal types that the soldiers leave behind and fight to protect. However, it is the war that makes it possible for the four girls to break into a public setting and make themselves and their typical duties useful to the outside world. At one point, the girls' YWCA director, Mrs. Wilson, commends them for their work at the Hostess House, saying:

‘It isn’t a small thing, you know - sending thousands of our boys away cheered and strengthened, armed to meet the future - better men, just for having met you. And the mothers and wives and sweethearts who have been entertained so royally and permitted to say goodbye to their loved ones under the very best and cheeriest conditions possible. . . that’s the spirit that has made your work here such a wonderful success.’ (Hope, Hostess House 165)

In The Outdoor Girls in Army Service, the girls discuss their place in the war, and come to some interesting and conservative conclusions, ones that actively discourage girls from doing anything out of the ordinary realm of service. The quartet briefly considers going overseas as nurses, in order to be near their male counterparts, but dismisses the option almost instantly. As Betty says, “. . . we’d probably be sent to another part of the field entirely, and probably wouldn’t see them from the beginning of the war to the end. No, I guess we’ll just have to keep on knitting for them” (105).

It should be noted that this statement is entirely out of keeping with Betty’s character. Betty is the “Little Captain” of the foursome, and leads the girls in almost every instance, whether they are trying to catch a thief, bring a spy to justice, or do work to help the war effort. She is always the one to push the girls a step further and remind them of their duty. It is more plausible that she would be the one to try and persuade them to go overseas, but in this instance it is clear that patriarchal politics took precedence over character consistency.

Betty's statement also furthers the idea that the girls should not look at their war work as an adventure, but as another way to serve their men, albeit a patriotic one. Betty, Mollie, Amy, and Grace do not take on either the Protecting Angel or Amazon Warrior personas. They remain on the homefront as the quintessential American Girls that the boys are fighting for, as an ultimate ideal for men to both long for and take comfort in

The American Girl expressed many of the qualities Americans liked best - the type of youth, physical attractiveness, charm, energy, and independence. But it remained for the pure Type, the Ideal unattached to daily life, to represent that final space the mind aspires to when there is no place else on earth to go. (Banta 417)

It is possible that the Stratemeyer Syndicate was trying to appeal to the girls who did have to stay at home, those without means to go overseas. A great many young women did not have the resources, despite the significant number that managed to go. But it is nevertheless interesting to note statements like Betty's that actively discourage girls from going to the battle zone, an area that has been considered exclusively male for so long, even though women have been there since the Civil War. Nurses like Clara Barton, Annie Etheridge, and Molly Pitcher nursed soldiers from both sides. Women like Sarah Emma Edmonds became soldiers. Later, Florence Nightingale turned nursing into a profession during the Crimean War, when she took a group of 36 women, composed of nuns and hospital nurses, to Turkey to nurse wounded English soldiers. The difference between the earlier wars and the Great War, however, was the *mobility* of women. Women were able to travel farther and in greater numbers than they ever had before, thanks to the advances in technology that brought steamships and automobiles into existence. All the women who went over to France and other parts of Europe went by steamship. The Outdoor Girls between them had two automobiles. It would certainly have been possible for them to go, had they really wanted to. Whatever strategies were

behind the way their adventures were written, they clearly were not conducive with the idea of girls leaving U.S. soil.

Stratemeyer became somewhat more daring with the Ruth Fielding series, taking the war work of women a step farther and beginning to push the boundaries of what was acceptable. Before the war, Ruth is educated at Ardmore College (the Outdoor Girls were not the “college girls” that Shirley Marchalonis talks about; even there they stayed close to the more conservative values of the time), and begins a career for herself as a screenwriter and director of moving pictures. When the war breaks out, Ruth becomes a Red Cross volunteer and goes overseas to France as a hospital supply worker. There, not only does she perform the female duties of nursing, comforting, etc., but she finds herself caught up in tangles typically dealt with by males.

In Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross, for example, Ruth is working in a U.S. hospital at Robinsburg when she is assigned to go overseas with a base hospital supply unit (see frontispiece, Figure 7). She is eventually sent to the base hospital in Clair, France. While there, she keeps track of all the hospital supplies, getting more when necessary, she watches the recovery wards when the wounded men come in, and she writes letters for the soldiers. Over the course of her work, she grows suspicious of her supervisor, Rose Mantel, who was the chief bookkeeper for the State Red Cross at Robinsburg, and then the supervisor for the hospital supply unit. It was Mrs. Mantel’s supposed carelessness that wrecked all the Robinsburg financial records in a fire. She left all the ledgers on a desk instead of putting them back in the safe, and the fire ruined them. Ruth begins to suspect then that there were discrepancies in the books, and that the ledgers were intentionally destroyed. After supply problems occur at the hospital at Lyse, Ruth succeeds in uncovering a ring of thieves, of which Mrs. Mantel is one, that has been diverting medical supplies from the hospital and selling them to private dealers.

Thus, on the one hand, Ruth acts as a traditional American female by serving as a hospital volunteer and nurses’ aide of sorts. On the other hand, she defies the typical

“weak” image of the female, using her intelligence to catch a group of thieves. However, Ruth does have some fears about telling her suspicions to the police. She does not want to interfere where she is not wanted. She is not presented as a “forward” girl in any sense. None of her adventures defy the military organization of the war or the patriarchal organization of society. Mrs. Mantel is a woman, making it easier for Ruth to turn her in. Her male accomplices are, according to the thinking of the time, of the small-minded class of men that put profit over patriotism and service. There is not any sort of “unmasking” of men who were thought to be upstanding and respectable; it is made clear from the beginning that these men and their female leader are not worthy of respect.

There are a few other noteworthy elements in this particular volume, including the reactions of various types of Americans when the U.S. first entered the war. Ruth’s friend Helen Cameron initially sees the war as a nuisance or a lark. She is immensely concerned for her brother Tom, but she resents the fact that the war has interfered with her life at Ardmore College. She also has difficulty getting past her own upper-class upbringing and understanding why Ruth can sympathize with soldiers who are so rough and poor. In contrast, Jennie Stone, another friend, delves into war work almost immediately and establishes a convalescent home in Paris.

The work that Ruth does for the Red Cross, as well as where and how she does it, is very accurate when compared to the historical facts. The Red Cross was involved in nearly every aspect of medical and relief service once the United States entered the war. They had 50 base hospital units, a Children’s Bureau, 20,000 nurses, canteens, and the Hospital and Home Communication Service. Wealthy society women organized the Red Cross branches and the relief work, while the nurses and nurses’ aides were volunteers (Gavin 179-198). The nurses and their aides probably caused the most friction over gender roles, since they were near the battle lines out of necessity and had the authority to be there, even though their authority consisted of “relative rank,” or rank in name only



(Gavin 43). Sandra Gilbert suggests in her essay "Soldier's Heart" that this friction could have been caused by a reversal of sexual and patriarchal roles.

Even the most conventionally angelic of women's wartime ministrations, however, must have suggested to many members of both sexes that, while men were now invalid and maybe in-valid, their sisters were triumphant survivors and destined inheritors. Certainly both the rhetoric and the iconography of nursing would seem to imply such points. . . .the figure of the nurse ultimately takes on a majesty which hints that she is mistress rather than slave, goddess rather than supplicant. After all, when men are immobilized and dehumanized, it is only these women who possess the old (matriarchal) formulas for survival. (210-11)

There is an interesting split between the reality of the wounded men and the idealism of the war in these novels. While Ruth, Grace, Valerie, and Joan all see wounded men on a daily basis, the men's wounds are spoken of in the abstract. The actual physical damage that the battlefield inflicted on men is very rarely discussed. The after effects of the war for these men is never touched upon, because none of the heroines end up with a man who is less than whole. The Outdoor Girls' significant others are all said to be improved by their war experience. They come back taller, more handsome, and more masculine after being in the trenches. Although Will Ford is wounded at one point, not one of the four boys loses a limb or suffers permanent damage. The ideal of the strong and fearless American soldier would be marred if this kind of reality was allowed into the plot. This ideal is exemplified in the scene where the boys come home:

There were three soldiers coming down the road, broad-shouldered, vital looking fellows who swung along toward the astonished girls as though they owned the world.

. . . 'Girls, it's the boys, it's the boys, it's the boys!' she yelled. 'They're all tanned and they're at least ten inches taller, but it's the boys just the same.'  
(Hope, Wild Rose Lodge 154).

Despite the large number of women pacifists who worked to achieve peace and protested the war, by the time these books were published there was no mention of pacifism. This was probably due to the fact that in June 1917, President Wilson declared that opponents of the war were disloyal U.S. citizens and issued the Espionage Act, which made writing, speaking, or organizing against the war an offense. Many of the female pacifists, such as Jane Addams and Carrie Chapman Catt, were forced to stop their work after that declaration, and compromise as best they could by selecting war work that did not support violence, such as the relief work of the Red Cross (Rowbotham 98). A publisher would not have gotten away with printing any anti-war material, even if he or she had wanted to.

This split between reality and idealism can also be seen in the psychology of the heroines. While they are horrified by the mutilation that war is inflicting on the men, they acknowledge enjoying the opportunity to work and serve. Despite seeing firsthand the devastation that the war produces, they almost never question the necessity of the war. It is presented as an essential exercise to save democracy and rid the world of evil. Ruth, Jennie, and Helen, for instance, are staunch patriots through and through. They do not question U.S. involvement in the war, and are completely supportive of the cause for which the Allies are fighting.

The Ruth Fielding series does not manage to completely defy the typical gender roles assigned to women and men. Ruth comes closest to assuming a man's role in Ruth Fielding at the War Front, when she is forced to undertake a mission of espionage to save her best friend Tom Cameron. Tom is accused of betraying the American troops and giving information to the German army. Ruth learns that the sons of her friend the Countess Marchand, Allaire and Henri, are spies behind the lines who send information to the American troops. Through them, she finds out not only that Tom is innocent and has in fact been helping the American army, but also that he had been arrested and is being held as a suspect. Ruth decides to try and rescue him, with the help of the Count

and his brother. She takes on several disguises to get across No Man's Land, both male and female. At first she dons a trench helmet, and is taken right into some of the trenches - masculine territory if there ever was any. Then she dons a soldier's waterproof suit to go through a swamp, crossing into the German lines. Once there, she becomes a male Sub-Leutnant of the German Army, and finally puts on the traditional dress of a German female. Ultimately, she succeeds in her mission to rescue Tom.

None of these episodes illustrates situations that females would have ordinarily found themselves in, yet Ruth's resourcefulness and patriotism are praised. Her actions are necessary and noteworthy in wartime, so the fact that they might be threatening to the male establishment is overlooked. This threat is also circumvented because Ruth is put into these positions by circumstances outside of her control; she is not intentionally trying to do any work that would ordinarily be done by males. Saving Tom Cameron is the possible exception to this, but even here we are given to understand that Ruth undertakes to save him for the purely feminine, "ideal" morals of love, friendship, and patriotism, not because she has any wish for adventure or power. Ruth is allowed to take on this "masculine" work for the sake of friend and country. In both volumes, her atypical adventures allow her to transcend gender roles and prove her worth. Women involved in the war often expressed this kind of satisfaction connected with being useful, productive, and empowered.

How is it, though, that Ruth's disguises and her venture into "male" territory are not seen as a threat to the male establishment? She goes much further into the public, "male" sphere than any of the Outdoor Girls, and no objection is offered. There are several carefully constructed plot elements that make this possible. One of these, as aforesaid, is the *motive* for Ruth's adventure across the lines. She is not attempting to be a soldier, but to save one; not attempting to become a female spy, but to save a male one. In a greater sense, she is working for the American cause, by saving a man who is one of its sources of information. Ruth is performing a service for the sake of male individuals,

male organizations, and male causes. She is helping Tom Cameron, the soldiers that make up the American army, the American army as an organization, and the male-directed-and-organized Allied cause. Another element is that, in order to accomplish her mission, Ruth is assisted completely by men. She is still within patriarchal boundaries because there are men guiding her actions. Finally, it is likely that Ruth's assuming a male disguise and then re-emerging as a woman served to confirm her femininity and only brand it more deeply on the minds of those who read about her.

Impersonation and gender-switching were not an uncommon amusement around the turn of the century. There were several men who became stars of the stage doing female impersonations, including actor Julian Eltinge. Actresses Vesta Tilly and Florenze Tempest, among others, were famous for their performances in which they dressed as men. Novels such as The Princess Passes by C.N. and A.M. Williamson played with the idea of women disguising themselves as boys and entering the male world. Photograph studios of the day would take pictures of girls dressed in men's clothing (Banta 250-75). As long as all characters involved became their "rightful" selves by the end of the story, it was amusing and non-threatening. As Banta says:

Those who did not really mind the advent of the New Woman and those who only mildly disliked the type were free to enjoy inversion narratives; in either case not much was at stake when switches in gender roles were shown as essentially silly. . . .For those who were at ease with the changes taking place on every side, stories that inverted gender signs simply confirmed that men were men and women (old or new) were females after all. (280).

For those who were comfortable with women of Ruth's type, her adventures were enjoyable, and for those who were not, the fact that she assumes her "correct" role as a woman in the end served to calm their fears about women overthrowing patriarchal society. Combined with the patriotic fervor that gripped America during the war, the necessity of the work women were doing, and the number of women who were working

overseas, some small and temporary transgressions involving gender roles and boundaries were easily overlooked.

However, there were those outside of the Stratemeyer Syndicate who dared to cross the gender boundary lines and have their female characters come completely into the public, “masculine” sphere. The Khaki Girls series by Edna Brooks and the Grace Harlowe series by Jessie Graham Flower are two cases in point.

Setting her teeth, Joan drove the ambulance forward. Thanks to bursting shells, which continued to explode, some of them uncomfortably close to the ambulance, she could see her way quite plainly.

‘If I can only get away from this section, I can make the hospital. I know I can,’ she muttered determinedly.

What had happened to the rest of the detail was the frantic thought that crossed her mind? She dismissed it instantly. She must think only of her own situation. She had been entrusted with the care of three wounded men. Their welfare must now be her sole consideration.

Putting on all the speed she dared under the circumstances, Joan valiantly gripped the wheel. Her first feeling of panic had vanished the instant she realized that she was under fire. The flash and roar of the opening bombardment had dismayed her but briefly. She was now cool and collected. She would race Death and beat him. (Brooks, Behind the Lines 142-143; see frontispiece, Figure 8)

This passage illustrates one of the more daring occupations of American women during World War I. Female ambulance drivers came from many places to drive for the British and French armies and transport wounded men from the battlefield to the hospitals, including Britain, Newfoundland, Canada, and the United States. There is not a lot of historical information to be had on American women who drove ambulances and motor cars. No small part of this is due to the fact that they were working overseas for the British and French armies. The American army would not take female drivers, for

ambulances or otherwise. The female chauffeurs performed all sorts of duties, driving supplies to the big hospitals, taking doctors on their rounds through multiple villages, and transporting patients when necessary. The ambulance drivers were some of the few women who got close to the battle line, bringing wounded men from the dressing stations near the trenches back to the base hospitals. They were frequently exposed to raids and shell fire, as well, risking both their own lives and those of the wounded soldiers on their trips back and forth (Schneider and Schneider, Breach 98-101). The Khaki Girls, Valerie Ward and Joan Mason, take on Secret Service work and become ambulance drivers near the front lines. Grace Harlowe also drives an ambulance and manages to round up several enemy spies; in one case she is appointed as a member of the Intelligence Department. All of these occupations are generally male-dominated, yet the girls hold their own and prove their worth in the public sector by making significant contributions to the war effort. Mobility once again plays an important part in the work these girls do and contributes to their freedom and independence. Gilbert writes:

To women who managed to get to the front, moreover, the war did frequently offer the delight of (female) mobilization. . . Finally given a chance to take the wheel, these post-Victorian girls raced motorcars along foreign roads like adventurers exploring new lands, while their brothers dug deeper into the mud of France. Retrieving the wounded and the dead from deadly positions, these once-decorous daughters had at last been allowed to prove their valor, and they swooped over the wastelands of the war with the energetic love of Wagnerian Valkyries, their mobility alone transporting countless immobilized heroes to safe havens. (214)

Grace Harlowe can be used as one of the best examples of an intelligent and resourceful female in girls' fiction. She has her share of adventures, but she uses brain power more often than physical strength to solve the problems and mysteries she encounters. In Grace Harlowe with the Red Cross in France, she gets caught up in a

signaling mystery. The hospital has been frequently bombed by the Germans, and one night when Grace is up late, she notices a green light shining from the chateau roof. A short time after, on a different night, she sees a red light. Then a report of a green and white light together is circulated. Grace begins to suspect that the lights are signals to the Germans, letting them know when to bomb the hospital. The green light means a raid on the hospital, and the red stops the raid. She also eventually realizes that the green and white lights together target her specifically, for there are two separate occasions when the bombs are aimed at her tent, and the second time the tent is hit and demolished.

One night Grace decides to test her theory about the lights and climbs up to the hospital roof with a red lantern, hoping to stop an oncoming raid. She is caught by Sergeant Binet and Corporal Stevenson, and taken to Major Clowes for a hearing. During this hearing, Grace realizes that Sergeant Binet is actually a man named Andre, a famous enemy spy whose voice she heard on another case. She never saw him, and he escaped the authorities. She uncovers his identity and clears herself in the process. André tries to run, but is held by Corporal Stevenson, who is actually from the Intelligence Bureau. All of this is done without a great deal of physical work and little violence of any kind. Grace simply observes and puts together the facts as one might put together puzzle pieces. As a result of this case, she is given a commission as an ambulance driver.

Her mental and observational powers also come in handy in another volume, Grace Harlowe with the American Army on the Rhine. First, Grace observes carrier pigeons that are being flown toward enemy lines. Then an ammunition dump is blown up in the village where she is staying, and the explosion ruins the canteen building where Grace has been working. Next, a fire breaks out in one of the army barracks. Grace becomes suspicious of Dr. Klein, the German in whose house she is staying while the army occupies the village. She repeatedly hears voices coming from the cellar through the floor of her room. By listening through a hole she has drilled in the floor, she gathers a good deal of information on a German spy ring. She feeds her information piece by

piece to Capt. Boucher, who is with the Intelligence Department. He makes her a member of the Intelligence Department, and they begin to work together. Through Grace's information, his men capture both the doctor and his accomplice and prevent the destruction of the entire village.

Grace manages to cross most of the gender boundary lines in these books, the one exception being the lack of any physical action that puts her on a par with the men of the battlefield. Grace experiences every part of war, doing work that is both "masculine" and "feminine." She starts out as a Red Cross worker, works her way up to becoming an ambulance driver at the front, does canteen work, and is made a member of the U.S. Intelligence Department, a field that is almost completely male-dominated. She is absolutely determined to do what she perceives to be right and just, even when it goes against the orders of those ranked higher than she. In the end, she wins approval for her actions by what she has accomplished. She holds nothing back, and the men in the books openly admire her integrity and intelligence.

One of the most interesting passages in Grace Harlowe with the Red Cross in France is one where Grace questions her independent spirit, and wonders whether it is an appropriate female trait, telling her friend Elfreda that she wonders "'if [ she hasn't] too much self-reliance, if such a trait is unwomanly.'"

'Unwomanly!' exclaim[s] Elfreda. 'That would be impossible. If all the women I know possessed your sweet womanliness, your gentle heart and manner, they surely would grace their little worlds. However, so long as you please Tom and are true to yourself you will be all that any man or woman could desire.'

(227-28)

In two instances in the last sentence, it is the men who are put first. Does Elfreda's comment imply that Grace should please Tom before she is true to herself? By saying that Grace will be all that any *man or woman* could desire, in that order, does the author mean to suggest that it is most important to please the men? Grace's actions



throughout the book suggest otherwise. She follows her heart first and orders second, doing what she believes to be right and dealing with the consequences afterward. Ultimately, this course of action wins her commendation, which is noteworthy for two reasons. One, it shows instances where what is right takes precedence over someone's authority, and wins the day. Two, this is a case where both male and female authority is defied by a female, and in the end, that female is acknowledged to have been right and rewarded for her actions.

Published in four volumes between 1918 and 1920, the Khaki Girls series bridges that final gap between the young women working at the front lines and the young men on the battlefield. Valerie and Joan begin their war work by joining the Liberty Motor Corps and serving as drivers in the States. I have found no historical record of a female motor corps under that name or any other, but once again, proper records are limited. If it was completely made up for story purposes, the fact still remains that American women were serving in that capacity. Valerie and Joan find plenty of work to do. Valerie becomes an ambulance driver, and Joan participates in some Secret Service work. With Valerie's help, she manages to round up a ring of anti-government agents known as the Bund.

In The Khaki Girls Behind the Lines, the two girls are permitted to join the "Trusty Twenty" ambulance corps, made up of girls from Windsor College. This is also based in historical fact; five of the Seven Sisters either sponsored groups of alumnae or sent over whole relief units to serve in various ways. The Smith College Relief Unit was the largest of them, containing seventeen women who worked together for the duration of their time overseas (Schneider, Breach 71-78). There is no record of any of these units being specifically made up of ambulance drivers, so it was probably a useful adaptation for the book. The vacancies in the "Trusty Twenty" are due to one girl being killed and another injured and sent home. Due to their previous experience and exceptional work back home, the Khaki Girls are sent to France to fill those places.

Over the course of their work in the French village, the girls have their hands full. Joan grows suspicious of a girl known as the “Crossroads Princess,” a member of the English Auxiliary Army Corps who directs traffic between the village and the barracks. When Joan’s ambulance gets a flat after a detail to the trenches, she stops a passing limousine. The passenger refuses to allow her chauffeur to help, but Joan recognizes the woman as the “Princess.” Later, she hears a story from Marcelle, the corps’ cook and maid, that connects the Princess to a local wealthy family. The Princess had been staying with the wealthy woman and her children. While she was there, the house was raided and the family killed by the Germans. Everything of value was taken, the house burned, and even the location of a buried casket of jewels was known. The casket was dug up and taken away. Marcelle suspects that the Princess is the one who told the Germans its location.

Finally, on her way back to the corps barracks one night, Joan is asked for help by a woman in a shawl. The woman wishes Joan to take her aunt, who has a broken arm, to the hospital. Joan realizes that the “aunt” is the same peasant woman she saw talking with the Crossroads Princess. When the woman climbs into Joan’s ambulance, Joan puts on extra speed and attempts to drive past the cottage. The woman begins to strike her, falls out of the ambulance, and is knocked unconscious. Joan retrieves her, and it is then that she learns that the woman is in fact the Crossroads Princess. She decides to take her back to the barracks. Next, a man drives up next to her ambulance and jumps in, trying to capture her. Joan pulls her revolver from its holster and shoots him through the shoulder. Eventually, it is discovered that the “Princess” is a German noblewoman and highly placed spy, and that the man is her cousin.

All sensational and unrealistic occurrences aside, these passages are notable in that the heroines are near the front lines and under fire - a feat few women accomplished. Moreover, the ambulance girls carry revolvers as a matter of course and use them when necessary, another unusual feature of these texts. Before the war, few women would have

handled a gun for any reason, yet Joan ends up shooting a man who is trying to harm her, an action that is equal in every way with those of the men on the battlefield. This incident with firearms is not the only one that is recounted in the story. One of the other girls in the corps, Georgia Stevens, recounts to Valerie and Joan a time when she got lost and ran into a German patrol. One of the men climbed up into the ambulance to try to capture her, and she shot and killed him in order to get away. She completely defends her right to do so, while admitting she did not like having to do it: “It was either his life or a prison camp for me. . . I was glad I killed him, but sorry I had to do it. It doesn’t *seem* just right for women to kill, even in self-defense. It *is* right, though” (132-133).

In the next volume of the series, The Khaki Girls at Windsor Barracks, Valerie and Joan are both wounded while they are trying to get information to the front. A wounded soldier they pick up has important information for the Allies about the next attack, and he gives the information to Valerie and Joan, trusting them to meet the courier. The pair are informed by the courier, who is also hurt, that the advance patrol is missing. He tells them where to take the information, and they continue on. When they reach the woods, the two girls are hit by shrapnel from the stray shell of an enemy plane. It wounds Joan’s shoulder and Valerie’s ankle, but they find a member of the advance patrol who is able to signal an Allied plane and send the message to the front, as well as get help for the three of them.

Valerie and Joan’s experiences temporarily put them on a completely equal footing with the men in the war zone. They are forced to shoot and wound or kill a man in order to protect themselves. They have no one else around to protect them, male or female, and they must rely on their own wits and resources in order to survive. In addition, when they are wounded, it is just as any soldier at the front might have been, with a shell from an enemy plane. They are cited for saving the Allied offensive with the coded message they carried. They are completely independent, free of any sort of constraint, and admired for their own work and merits.

It is worth noticing, too, that Valerie and Joan have no men in their own lives to influence them. The only mentions of men are references to the girls' fathers and Every Soldier, who the girls work for but are not attached to in any romantic sense. If one examines the line of series in this paper, from conservative to liberal, one can see the presence of significant others declining more and more. The four soldiers who belong to the Outdoor Girls are present in every book, and the girls tend to center their lives on what is happening to their men, rather than what is happening to them. This is also somewhat true of the Ruth Fielding books, although to a lesser degree. Tom is present in every book, but Ruth does not center her life around him. Her life is centered on her work, and it is only when Tom needs her that the focus shifts to him.

The Grace Harlowe series goes a step farther. Grace's significant other becomes a ghost figure. She is married, and it is acknowledged that her husband, Tom Gray, is in the army, but he does not make any sort of appearance in the novels. He is only mentioned occasionally. The final step, once again, is taken by the Khaki Girls series. Valerie and Joan are not attached to any men at the outset of the books, and make a point of not becoming attached to any, since it is against the regulations of their work to become involved with soldiers. Their work for the Allied Cause is their first priority, and that work requires freedom from the male ties that formerly restrained them.

This type of freedom and independence was celebrated and enjoyed by women who were working in the war, and later lamented when the war ended. It was not the end of the war they were sorry for, but the end of the independence and freedom that the war had brought to them. Having acted under it for so long, the lack of it made it difficult for some women to adjust back to the old pattern when they came home. In May 1919, novelist Mary Lee wrote in a letter: "I wish something would *happen*. This is the last little gasp of war, and it *is* fun if you are right up where things are happening. I suppose the Germans will sign peace tomorrow and life will start again on the dull slothfulness of another era of peace and prosperity." Journalist Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant, in her

published journal about her two years in a hospital during the end of the war, summed up the feelings of the women war workers: "The almost fourth-dimensional sense of power and service which sustained such women is gone. They are physically and mentally drained to the dregs; yet they don't dare to stop and rest; that means reflection" (Schneider and Schneider, Breach 279).

Sadness over the loss of their work and independence is not felt nearly as deeply by the heroines of the girls' fiction. When the Outdoor Girls are sent home for a furlough, Amy and Mollie do express their boredom and their wish to be back at Camp Liberty doing their work at the Hostess House. Before they are able to return, though, the house is burned in a fire, and a few months later the war is over. Ruth Fielding, too, is sent home shortly before the end of the war, having been wounded. She expresses sincere regret at leaving her work, but a letter from home tells her that she is also needed there. Aunt Alvira Boggs is the housekeeper for Ruth's Uncle Jabez, and she has become ill. Aunt Alvira looks upon Ruth almost as a daughter, and Ruth is needed to help her get well. So the girl workers, for one reason or another, are called back to their regular lives, and while they express some regret, they do not seem discontent. They simply turn to the next task at hand, find other work to do, and are grateful when the war finally ends and their men come home.

In reality, not all of the women workers went back to the domestic life, although a good number of them did. The women of the U.S. Army were all released by July 1919, and the female Marines were all disenrolled by 1922. The physical therapists were given the choice of resigning or being assigned to an army hospital in the States. (Gavin 16, 35, 116). The female factory and clerical workers on the homefront had an experience that would be reenacted in larger numbers after WWII. Their jobs were either phased out until they did not exist or given back to the men who came home. (Schneider and Schneider, Progressive Era 228). However, a few women here and there managed to stay on as civilian employees of the government, or continued their careers as physicians and

nurses. The suffragists saw their highest ambition realized when American women were given the vote in 1920.

In a similar fashion, the heroines of girls series' fiction were allowed to have the new and exciting experiences that the war made possible, and therefore encouraged a younger generation of women to make their way into the public realm. Granted, the fictitious adventures were somewhat narrow in scope, for the books did not cover half of the ways that women actually participated in the war. Nevertheless, the books brought women's work in the war to the forefront and showed what an important contribution women could make in the public sphere if they were given the chance. For the short time that the United States participated in the Great War, a number of American women had the chance to be on an equal footing with men, and earn the respect of the soldiers, the government, and the world at large through their service. This spirit is illustrated perfectly in the frontispiece from The Outdoor Girls in Army Service (see Figure 9). "In area after area, risk-taking women had gained more control and more confidence. They had moved from women who shouldn't to women who could" (Schneider and Schneider, Progressive Era 246). This new confidence and control were communicated to the girls of that generation through fiction, further encouraging them to pursue work and recognition in the public realm. The inheritance of those young women would become evident in the next decade, when they would grow up to become the ambitious and assertive flappers of the 1920s.



Fig. 1. Resolute eyes: Dr. Rosalie Slaughter Morton, chairman of the Medical Women's National Association War Service Committee. Daggett, Mabel Potter. Women Wanted. New York: George H. Doran, 1918.



Fig. 2. Nurses at the American Ambulance Hospital in Neuilly. Doty, Madeleine Z. Short Rations: An American Woman in Germany, 1915-1916. New York: A.L. Burt, 1917.



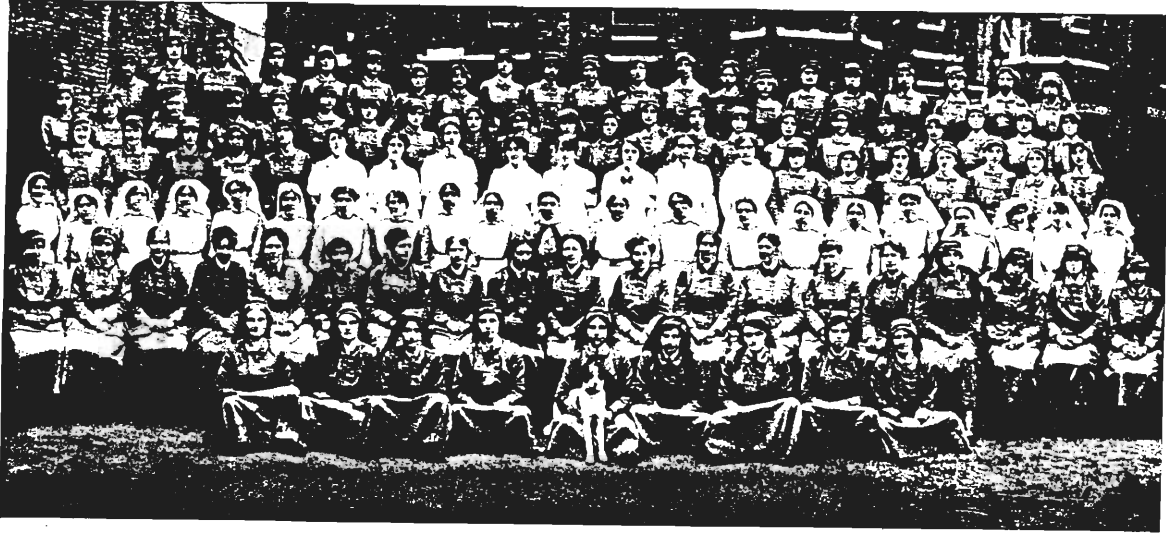


Fig. 3 Members of the Women's Hospital Corps, staffing the Endel Street Hospital in London. Daggett, Mabel Potter. Women Wanted. New York: George H. Doran, 1918.

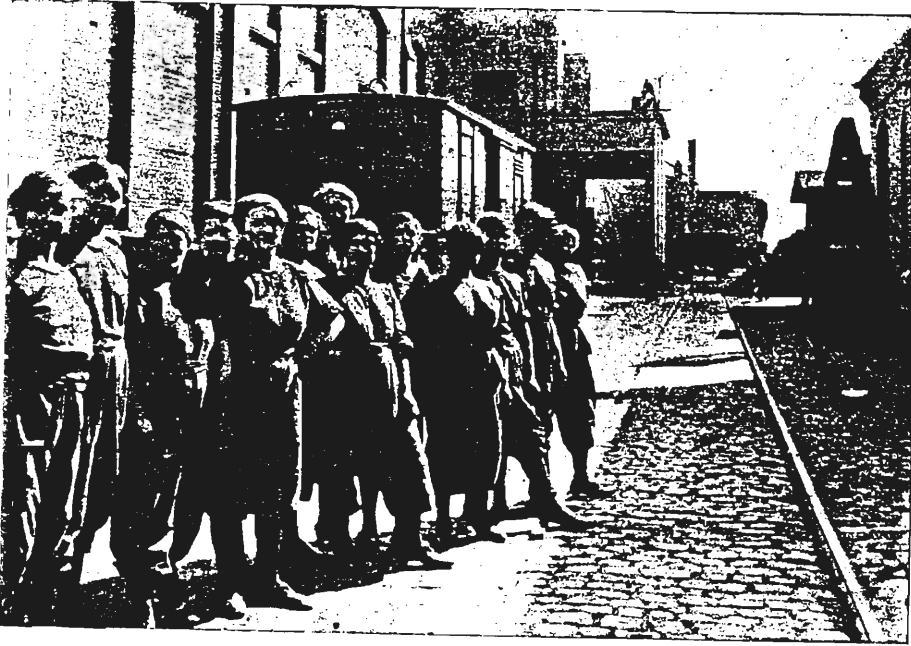


Fig. 4. Female factory workers in Germany. Doty, Madeleine Z. Short Rations: An American Woman in Germany, 1915-1916. New York: A.L. Burt, 1917.



Fig. 5. Protecting America's women. The chivalry of American soldiers was part of the war propaganda in girls' fiction. Hope, Laura Lee. The Outdoor Girls at the Hostess House. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1919.

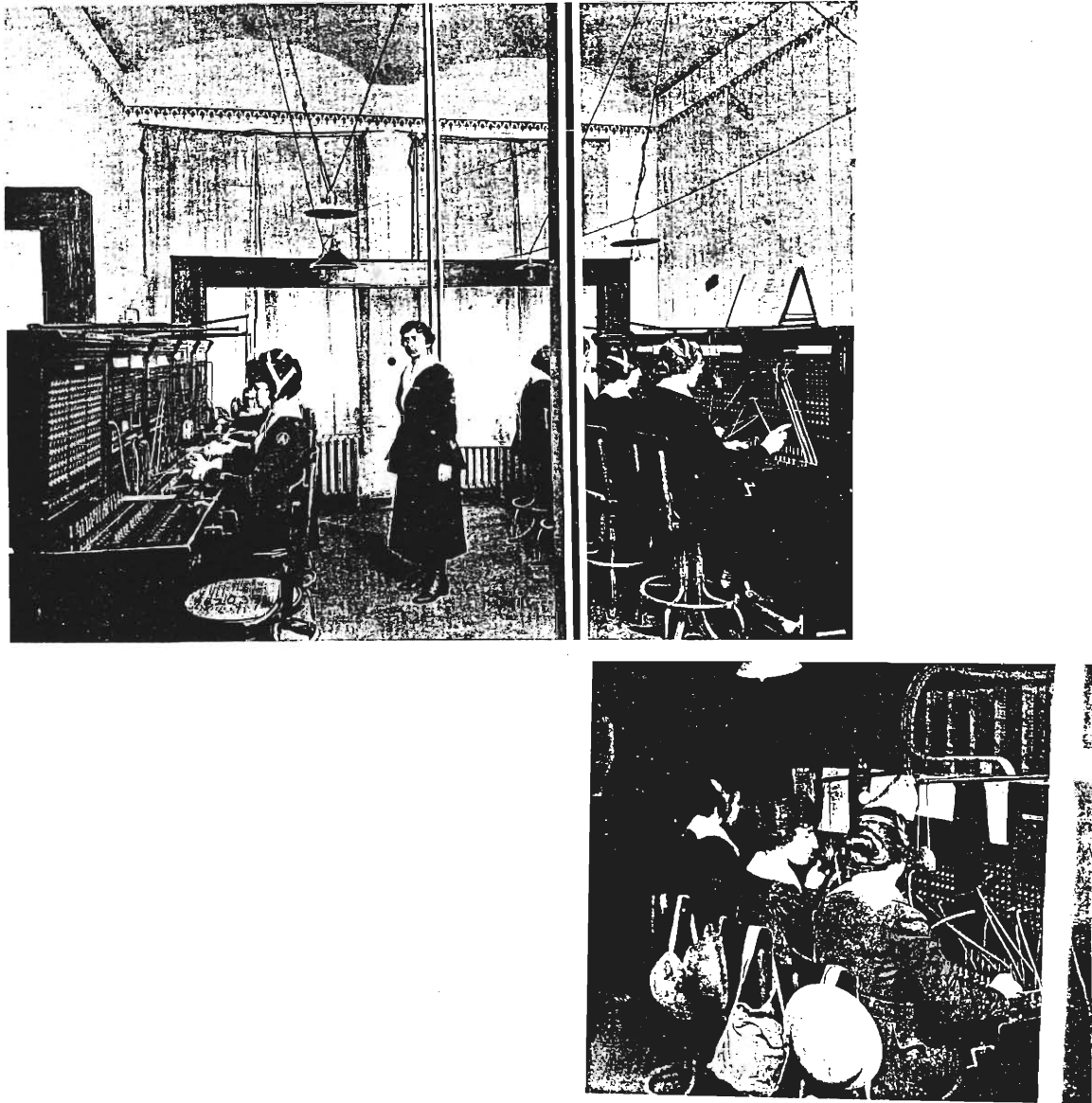


Fig. 6. The Hello Girls. Top: The telephone exchange at the Third Army Headquarters in Coblenz, Germany, June 1919. Bottom: Hello Girls at the switchboard in Souilly, France, during the Argonne campaign. Gavin, Lettie. American Women in World War I: They Also Served. Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1997.



Fig. 7. Working at a hospital in France. Emerson, Alice B. Ruth Fielding in the Red Cross. New York: Cupples & Leon, 1918.



Fig. 8. Driving an ambulance near the front lines. Brooks, Edna. The Khaki Girls Behind the Lines. New York: Cupples & Leon, 1918.



Fig. 9. On equal footing. Hope, Laura Lee. The Outdoor Girls in Army Service. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1918.

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