Book Review/ Compte rendu

Grayzel, Susan R. and **Tammy M. Proctor**, eds. *Gender and the Great War*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. xii-286, $30.00 paper, (9780190271084).

The title and the contents of this interesting book indicate that gender analysis has rightly become an important feature of studying the First World War. Although men make some rather brief appearances here and there, the emphasis is clearly on women's lives, in particular on the many active roles (besides the continued performance of their domestic tasks) they took on during the war. The choice of two female ambulance drivers on the cover of the book further highlights that preference. Unfortunately, as is often the case with a volume of collected papers, some contributions are much stronger than others.

Still, there is good quality in this anthology. Kimberly Jensen's "Gender and Citizenship" contends that, during the war, many women tested the connections among military service, masculinity, and citizenship; in particular, they claimed that home and war front service to their respective nation-states had earned them the right to a more complete citizenship status, one that would give them the right to vote. The results were mixed, the author concludes. Deborah Thom's "Gender and Work" shows how, with men enlisting and fighting, the war challenged the sexual division of labour; indeed, not only did it give women new roles in factories, offices, schools, on farms, and in the transport sector, it also called into question their inequality at work. Richard S. Fogarty submits that gender and race intersected in many ways during a war that was global and that brought to Europe more than a million nonwhite people, who served as soldiers and workers. A multiracial experience on an unprecedented scale was thus generated, one that challenged notions and hierarchies of both gender and race, as well as lines of colonial authority. Such interactions inevitably created tensions over sex and love, for example, since some women blurred the colour line via their mixed-race children. In "Gender and Age", Tammy M. Proctor states that women experienced the war differently depending on their location, their age, their marital status, and their generational expectations. For many women, the war was a deeply unsettling experience, one that

left approximately 3 million of them widows, which challenged their sense of their place in society.

Jovana Knežević has arguably written the strongest chapter – "Gender and Occupation". A symbol of the shame of defeat, occupation covered a wide expanse of territory in Europe and involved hundreds of thousands of people. Furthermore, it severely curtailed liberties and presented multiple challenges, from the difficult economic circumstances and the anxieties born of uncertainty, to the need for civilians to be wary of the occupiers' policies and their own duty to the nation. As a rule, women were overrepresented in an occupied population, while men predominantly composed the occupying regime – a gendered power dynamic that placed the former in a position of inferiority. For women, who were central to the occupation narrative, the situation was quite serious: indeed, the lived experience of invasion and occupation forced them to make difficult choices in order to survive an imposed and constricting situation. Furthermore, accusations of accommodation more often than not "employed moral terms and reflected national anxiety about the conquest or co-optation of women as being symbolic of the broader conquest of the nation" (134). Such fear was rooted in the perception of the occupier as brutal and barbaric and of women as weak, and therefore vulnerable, both physically and morally. Thus, the vulnerability of the violated woman embodied the vulnerability of the invaded nation. In other words, victimized women represented a feminized nation that was fighting a defensive war to liberate itself from barbaric Prussianism. Though more pronounced during the invasion, violence against women continued under occupation. For example, the shooting of nurse Edith Cavell in 1915, the young girls from Lille deported to the countryside in 1916, and the gynecological examinations and rapes to which French women were subjected by the Germans. Women were also judged by the way they related to the occupier: fraternizations with occupying troops—usually born of the necessity to endure and survive—were perceived as transgressions of a moral code and violations of prevalent conceptions of femininity as well as women's place in society. Prostitution, for example, became a question of patriotism and treason since, even in the most trying circumstances, women "had to uphold national virtue by upholding their own" (143). Allied propaganda depicted the victimization of women with moral outrage in order to exhibit the Germans' lack of humanity and, as importantly, the moral authority of a nation's war cause. Knežević rightly concludes that women "were not just the embodiment of the symbols externally ascribed to them. They were humans endur-

ing one of the greatest forms of hardship that can be imposed by war" (146). That intellectuals and governments appropriated and ascribed a symbolic value that served a national purpose to the plights of so many women came as a small consolation, one that did not alter the reality of their daily struggles for survival.

Karen Hunt's perceptive "Gender and Everyday Life", which draws on newspapers reports and diary entries, focuses on the importance of the struggle for food, the most basic necessity of daily life. In a context of poor distribution, escalating prices, and dearth of fuel, this proved to be a relentless challenge. Nevertheless women, responsible for adequately feeding their households and conscious that what was at stake was nothing less than survival, bore the brunt of this everyday struggle. Women showed great resourcefulness and imagination in developing various strategies in order to cope with these shortages, from the food queue through communal kitchens and foraging expeditions to the countryside to violent food riots. Michelle Moyd's "Gender and Violence" takes the reader to German East Africa, where Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck mobilized some 2 million Africans as workers or soldiers who, while constantly on the march in order to avoid the enemy, inflicted violence on women and children, destroyed food supplies, and spread disease. Joy Damousi's "Gender and Mourning" first notes that the Great War produced unprecedented scales of individual and collective mourning, then explores the shifting patterns of mourning across societies, nations, and cultures. She shows how the reality of mourning challenged traditional gender stereotypes that associated femininity with pain, anguish, and emotion, and masculinity with restraint and stoicism. Finally, Karen Petrone's "Gender and Memory" argues that gender plays a key role in the construction of war memory.

Alternatively, the authors of "Gender and Sexuality" have achieved the rare feat of writing an article that many readers will find incomprehensible and "Gender and Resistance", for its part, is quite poorly structured.

In spite of some inevitable repetitions given the format of the book, this unequal collection of articles explores the role of gender in wartime and supplements a previous initiative along roughly similar lines: Christa Hämmerle et al. (Eds). *Gender and the First World War* (2014). It also illustrates how warfare shaped and reshaped gender during the years 1914-1918 and it fittingly pays tribute to women. Indeed, all participant states demanded loyalty and sacrifice from them; most authors here make it very clear that they responded with generosity and enthusiasm to these calls. Such a commitment proved to be vital to sus-

taining the war effort of their respective nations. *Gender and the Great War*, a welcome addition to First World War scholarship, includes a rich bibliography that opens up new veins of scholarly inquiry.

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