

From Memory to Reality: Remembering the Great War in Portugal and Gender Perspectives¹

Similar to many other countries, there has been a growing popular, scholarly and media interest in Portugal in gaining a deeper understanding of the history of the Great War. From 2014, and even more so from 2016 onwards (the year that marked the centenary of the country's official entry into this global conflict), the initiatives designed to remember the years of the war and its consequences on a social, political, cultural and military level have multiplied. At the time of writing this article – in November 2017 –, exhibitions and conferences have been and continue to be held, Collection Days are being promoted, academic and journalistic articles, monographs and fiction books are being published, memoirs and diaries reprinted, new research topics pursued in universities, documentaries broadcasted on radio and TV. However, despite this unprecedented dynamic, the emphasis of the remembrance of the Great War in terms of gender has mainly focused on male perspectives.

Contrary to what might be expected, Portuguese historiography continues to be more interested in the politico-diplomatic, military and economic context of the war than its impact on civil society. The main focus is placed on politico-diplomatic aspects that led to Portugal's entrance into the war, on how the expeditionary troops were prepared for participating in the conflict and on the question of whether and to what extent the war contributed to the deterioration of the country's economy. The historical narrative mainly focuses on the soldier who went to the war front, who put his life at risk, who suffered the hardships of captivity, who died in the battlefield or returned home maimed.

Thus, apart from some exceptions, women's contributions to the war effort and changes of women's status in family and society as a result of the conflict are still uncharted territory. As Michelle Perrot has highlighted years ago, “[i]n the theatre of memory, women are tenuous shadows. The traditional historical narrative does not leave them much space, specifically insofar as it favours the public arena – politics, war –

1 This work was supported by FCT – Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (IF/00631/2014/CP1221/CT0004).

where they barely seem to appear.² In Portugal's case, the theatre of memory of the Great War is mainly dominated by male voices and perspectives representing the remembrance of 1914–1918 in academic publications and events.

In this article, we examine how and to what extent gender perspectives have been taken into consideration in the context of the remembrance of the Great War in Portugal. We will focus on those activities promoted since 2014 which include women,³ because soldiers' and veterans' masculinities and sexualities have been completely forgotten in commemorative activities. Then, we will attempt to give possible reasons for the marginalisation of gender aspects by Portuguese historiography. Finally, we will discuss potential topics for further research.

1. The Centenary and Portuguese Women

It should be noted that Portugal entered the Great War alongside the Triple Entente. From August 1914 onwards, there were multiple conflicts between German and Portuguese troops in the south of Angola and the north of Mozambique. By declaring itself non-neutral and non-belligerent, Portugal attempted to maintain its African territories and increased its military presence in these places by sending 49,000 men between 1914 and 1918. After Germany declared war on Portugal on 9 March 1916, over 56,000 men were sent to France and about 50 women were deployed as nurses.⁴ The Portuguese involvement in the world conflict was also seen as an opportunity to strengthen the young and unstable republic, and to reinforce its diplomatic role in Europe. However, this intervention resulted in next to 8,000 deaths⁵ and almost as many imprisonments in the African and European war theatres, and led to political, economic and social consequences that were felt throughout the following decades.

As stated above, with the centenary of the First World War, the number of commemorative activities has increased, mainly after 2016. The official remembrance programme, organised by the national Coordinating Committee of the Remembrance of the World War I Centenary,⁶ arranged by Lieutenant General Mário Oliveira Cardoso and under the direction of the Ministry of National Defence, mainly contained events and publications dedicated to politico-military topics, expressing a lack of interest for gender perspectives, and especially for women. Thus, many of the initiatives

2 Michelle Perrot, *Práticas da Memória Feminina [Practices of Female Memory]*, in: *Revista Brasileira de História*, 9, 18 (1989), 9–18, 9.

3 Due to the limited amount of space available, we cannot include the analysis of fictional texts or conferences, although this would be interesting as well.

4 Cf. Aniceto Afonso and Carlos de Matos Gomes, *Portugal e a Grande Guerra. 1914–1918 [Portugal and the Great War]*, Vila do Conde 2013, 103–106, 522.

5 Cf. www.memorialvirtual.defesa.pt/EN/Paginas/PurposeMore.aspx; access: 16 April 2018.

6 Cf. www.portugalgrandeguerra.defesa.pt/Paginas/default.aspx; access: 2 October 2017.

we will describe in this article regarding the role of Portuguese women in the Great War have been developed in an academic context or by private institutions.

1.1 Books

As would be expected, several Portuguese publishers have taken advantage of the interest in the Great War and issued books on this subject. Some of them are of great academic quality, but few refer to the history of women. A good example is the seminal book “Portugal e a Grande Guerra. 1914–1918”,⁷ of about 600 pages; only three pages even mention women. More specifically, they concern female organisations or those in which Portuguese women played a prominent role (such as the Portuguese Red Cross) and that provided support for the soldiers and their families.⁸ A different perspective on the war years is presented by Jorge Pedro Sousa in his two-volume work “Portugal na Grande Guerra. Uma Crónica Visual”.⁹ The author examines how the armed conflict was covered by the weekly magazine “Ilustração Portuguesa” [Portuguese Illustration], one of the most important journals of that time and an essential source to understand Portugal during that era. According to Sousa, this periodical gave short shrift to issues regarding the situation of women, but still mentions, for example, the female nurses of the Portuguese Red Cross and the initiatives organised by the Portuguese Women’s Crusade (Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas), founded in March 1916 by a group of women to support the Portuguese war effort.¹⁰ It also examines how the fact that thousands of men left for the battlefields and more women were employed impacted the job market.

The book “Prisioneiros Portugueses da Primeira Guerra Mundial. Frente Europeia – 1917/1918” by Maria José Oliveira,¹¹ on the other hand, presents itself as groundbreaking study and even a revelation in the Portuguese historiographical context. Not only does it address an under-researched topic – prisoners of war –, it also includes new source material, namely letters written by women to their imprisoned relatives that never reached their addressees, as they were confiscated by the military censorship. Although the book fails to critically analyse these sources that are merely reproduced,

7 See note 4.

8 Cf. Luís Alves de Fraga, *Organizações femininas portuguesas [Female Portuguese Organisations]*, in: Afonso/Matos Gomes, *Portugal e a Grande Guerra*, see note 4, 103–106, 504–506.

9 Jorge Pedro de Sousa, *Portugal na Grande Guerra. Uma Crónica Visual [Portugal in the Great War. A Visual Chronicle]*, Vol. I and II, Porto 2013.

10 The organisation was established immediately after Germany officially declared war on Portugal, by several women such as Elzira de Dantas Machado, wife of the president of the republic, and other relatives of the republican political elite. The Portuguese Women’s Crusade played an important role in supporting deployed soldiers and their families until the 1930s.

11 Cf. Maria José Oliveira, *Prisioneiros Portugueses da Primeira Guerra Mundial. Frente Europeia – 1917/1918 [Portuguese Prisoners of War. European Front]*, Porto Salvo 2017.

the letters allow us to collect valuable information about the women's perspectives on the collective and individual life in Portugal at that time.

The centenary was also an opportunity to reprint diaries and memoirs of soldiers and politicians. Among them, the August 2017 edition of "Vagabunda: Seguimento às memórias de uma atriz. 1908–1919", first published by Mercedes Blasco in 1920, should be mentioned.¹² The second part of the book is entirely dedicated to the narrative of the four years of war lived by Mercedes Blasco, her husband and their two children in the Belgian city of Liège, occupied by the Germans at that time. It includes some pictures of the author with former Portuguese prisoners (whom she treated as a Belgian Red Cross nurse, taken after their release) and letters they sent to her describing the horrors they experienced in the detention camps.

As we can see, the lack of books on women and the Great War in Portugal is evident. Those that somehow touch upon gender issues do so in a limited way, failing to examine known sources and to present new perspectives or interpretations on the issue. This is probably due to the absence of extensive academic studies on this subject.

1.2 Academic Theses and Scientific Articles

The centenary brought several subject areas related to the First World War to the attention of Masters and PhD students, but women's studies proved to be an exception. The Portuguese National Register of Doctoral Dissertations in Progress,¹³ lists a thesis by Natividade Monteiro titled "Mobilização das Mulheres Portuguesas durante a Grande Guerra" [Mobilisation of Portuguese Women During the Great War]. In the context of this thesis, Monteiro has published several scientific articles of high historiographic value, highlighting the role of Portuguese women in the context of the conflict, which summarise fundamental ideas¹⁴ and provide biographical information on some relevant figures.¹⁵

Although not exclusively dedicated to the issue of women in the Great War, João Albuquerque's research on the role of civilian institutions for the support of Portuguese war prisoners also addresses this topic. He mentions some associations where Portu-

12 Cf. Mercedes Blasco, *Vagabunda: Seguimento às memórias de uma atriz. 1908–1919* [Vagabond: Follow-Up to the Memories of an Actress], Lisboa 1920, re-edited by Fátima Mariano, Isabel Lousada and João Miguel Palma Serrão Martins, Mértola 2017.

13 Cf. www.dgeec.mec.pt/np4/40/; access: 2 October 2017.

14 Cf. Natividade Monteiro, *Mulheres portuguesas em tempo de guerra (1914–1916)* [Portuguese Women in Wartime], in: *IDN Nação e Defesa*, 145, (2016), 109–121, at: www.idn.gov.pt/publicacoes/nacaodefesa/resumo_abstract/NeDef145_Abstract_NatividadeMonteiro.pdf; access: 2 October 2017.

15 Cf. Marília Viterbo de Freitas and Natividade Monteiro, *(Auto)retrato de Ana José Guedes da Costa* [(Self)portray of Ana José Guedes da Costa], in: *Faces de Eva*, 33 (2015), 171–177, at: www.scielo.mec.pt/pdf/eva/n33/n33a17.pdf; access: 2 October 2017.

guese women played a prominent role. However, this short research project is excessively descriptive and fails to thoroughly analyse these institutions or the women who collaborated with them.¹⁶

In addition to the works of these two researchers, several other academic articles were published, namely about the women's fight for the release of their imprisoned relatives¹⁷ and the relationship between feminism, pacifism and the Great War.¹⁸ A recent article in the context of a research project on health and the Great War is also worth mentioning. It addresses the establishment of a unit of war nurses mobilised by the army for the Portuguese Women's Crusade, highlighting the journey of several women and the obstacles they had to overcome to serve in Portuguese hospitals in France.¹⁹

To sum up: there is an overall lack of scholars, especially senior academics, who address the subject of women in the First World War, which narrows scientific production. For example, there have been no special issues of Portuguese journals on social history or gender studies about the topic of women and the First World War.

1.3 Exhibitions

To celebrate the centenary of the establishment of the Portuguese Women's Crusade (1916), the Portuguese National Library organised an exhibition²⁰ followed by a colloquium and the publication of an exhibition catalogue. The colloquium was attended by four lecturers who outlined the role of the Crusade in the military context, among them gender historians Isabel Lousada and Natividade Monteiro.²¹ Their papers were

16 João Nuno Saraiva Mota Albuquerque, *Prisioneiros de guerra portugueses no quadro da Grande Guerra. O papel das instituições cívicas de apoio* [Portuguese War Prisoners in the Great War. The Role of Civilian Support Institutions], Final Research Work, Instituto Universitário Militar, 2016, at: <http://hdl.handle.net/10400.26/14612>; access: 13 November 2017.

17 Cf. Fátima Mariano, "Devolvam os nossos maridos". A luta das mulheres portuguesas pela libertação dos prisioneiros de guerra ["Give us back our Husbands". Portuguese Women's Fight for the Release of War Prisoners], in: Isabel Henriques Jesus et al. (eds.), *Falar de mulheres. Dez anos depois* [Speaking about Women. Ten Years Later], Vila Nova de Famalicão 2016, 339–348.

18 Cf. Fátima Mariano, *Pacifismo e feminismo em Portugal nas vésperas da 1.ª Guerra Mundial* [Pacifism and Feminism in Portugal on the Eve of the First World War], in: Maria Manuela Tavares Ribeiro et al. (eds.), *Pela Paz! For Peace! Pour la Paix!* (1849–1939), Bruxelles 2014, 277–288.

19 Cf. Helena da Silva, *As enfermeiras de guerra da Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas (1916–1919)* [War Nurses of the Portuguese Women's Crusade], in: *Revista CEPHIS*, 7 (2017), 341–364.

20 *No centenário da Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas* [At the Centenary of the Portuguese Women's Crusade], exhibited at the Portuguese National Library, Lisbon, from 28 January to 30 April 2016.

21 Isabel Lousada, *Elas ... Pela Pátria* [They ... for the Country]; Maria Alice Samara, *O contexto da I Guerra Mundial e a Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas* [The Context of the First World War and the Portuguese Women's Crusade]; Maria Lúcia Brito de Moura, *As Guerras da Cruzada* [Crusade's War] and Natividade Monteiro, *A Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas e a Assistência aos Feridos e Mutilados de Guerra* [The Portuguese Women's Crusade and the Assistance to the Injured and Maimed of the War], papers presented at the colloquium entitled "No centenário da Cruzada das

published in the catalogue,²² as well as other studies about this feminist organisation, commemorating some historical aspects and displaying parts of the Portuguese National Library's collection.

"Tudo se desmorona" [Everything Is Collapsing]²³ is another exhibition about the impact of the Great War on Portuguese society and culture that addresses the situation of women. It includes aspects of Portuguese Red Cross nurses, war widows and the role women played in fundraising campaigns to help deployed soldiers and their families. Although this exhibition made several aspects of Portuguese women in the Great War known to the public, some objects and images could have been explored in greater detail and accompanied by more comprehensive explanatory texts.

The exhibition "Os intelectuais portugueses e a Guerra 1914–1918" [Portuguese Intellectuals and the War 1914–1918], shown in the Portuguese National Library between January and April 2016, should also be mentioned in this context. It included some books, written by women, about the world conflict and Portugal's involvement, a topic that is largely ignored by Portuguese historiography. After the exhibition, a catalogue²⁴ was published. However, although it lists all the exhibited books, including those written by women, the chapter's title "Os intelectuais portugueses e a Guerra" fails to mention women's intellectual contribution.

1.4 Media

Unlike the situation outlined above, Portuguese media paid great attention to women issues, particularly between 2014 and 2016. The TV show "Postal da Grande Guerra" [Postcards of the Great War], aired on channel two of the public broadcaster (RTP2), devoted three episodes²⁵ to this topic. The public radio station, Antena 1, also dedicated one of the fourteen parts²⁶ of the programme "Cem Mil Portugueses na Primeira Guerra" [One Hundred Thousand Portuguese in the First War] to women's con-

Mulheres Portuguesas" [At the Centenary of the Portuguese Women's Crusade], Portuguese National Library, Lisbon, 16 March 2016.

22 Cf. Luís Sá and Manuela Rêgo (eds.), *Cruzada das mulheres portuguesas* [Portuguese Women's Crusade], Lisboa 2016.

23 *Tudo se desmorona* [Everything Is Collapsing], exhibited at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon, from 30 June to 4 September 2017.

24 Cf. Luís Augusto Costa Dias, *Os intelectuais portugueses e a Guerra 1914–1918* [Portuguese Intellectuals and the War], Lisboa 2016.

25 A show with 49 episodes, each accompanied by text and images, available online. Cf. www.rtp.pt/noticias/portugal-na-1-grande-guerra/as-portuguesas-na-frente_es948192, www.rtp.pt/noticias/portugal-na-1-grande-guerra/a-cruzada-das-mulheres_es953039, www.rtp.pt/noticias/portugal-na-1-grande-guerra/cruzada-das-mulheres-ii_es957448; access: 2 October 2017.

26 Cf. www.rtp.pt/play/p3175/e284150/cem-mil-portugueses-na-primeira-guerra; access: 2 October 2017.

tribution to the war effort including an interview with the historian Natividade Monteiro.

Similarly, Portuguese periodicals have devoted several articles to women's participation in the Great War. Some address different aspects of the Portuguese female effort during and after the conflict, delving into topics that have rarely been researched, such as marriage to maimed soldiers²⁷ and to the events in several belligerent countries, including Portugal, in the post-war period.²⁸ Other articles have been more specific, for example about the Portuguese Women's Crusade²⁹ or the Portuguese Red Cross nurses,³⁰ recycling information and data already published in other studies. The topic of correspondence and love letters gave rise to another publication in the "Sábado"³¹ [Saturday] magazine, which was also addressed in the TV show "Postal da Grande Guerra". These media narratives on Portuguese women somehow perpetuate the international view of women during wartime: the nurse that cares for the maimed soldier and the young woman in love with a soldier, who she hopes to marry.

2. Reasons for This Scenario

There are several factors that have contributed to the rather marginal interest in female perspectives and a predominantly male-centred focus of Portuguese historiography on politico-diplomatic and military aspects, as reflected by the events and publications to commemorate the Great War.

Contrary to the situation of various other belligerent countries, the Portuguese metropolitan territory was not invaded by enemy armies. Except for the confrontations between Portuguese and German forces in the north of Mozambique and the south of Angola (Portuguese colonies at the time) and the attack on the city of Ponta Delgada in the Azores archipelago by a German submarine on 4 July 1917, national autonomy was

27 Cf. Fátima Mariano, *Como elas combaterem* [How They Fought], in: *Visão História*, 25 (2014), 28–33.

28 Cf. Anne Cova, *As mulheres foram activistas na guerra, depois voltaram ao lar* [Women Were Activists During the War, Then They Went Back Home], in: *Público* (20 August 2014), at: www.publico.pt/2014/08/20/culturaipilon/noticia/do-activismo-das-mulheres-na-retaguarda-ate-ao-ressao-ao-lar-1666852; access: 3 October 2017.

29 Cf. Manuela Goucha Soares, *Quando as nossas avós marcharam para a guerra* [When Our Grandmothers Marched to War], in: *Expresso* (17 March 2016), at: <http://expresso.sapo.pt/cultura/2016-03-17-Quando-as-nossas-avos-marcharam-para-a-guerra>; access: 3 October 2017.

30 Cf. Rita Garcia, *As damas da alta sociedade na Primeira Guerra* [High-Society Ladies in the First War], in: *Sábado* [Saturday] (8 January 2015), at: www.sabado.pt/vida/pessoas/detalhe/as-damas-da-alta-sociedade-na-i-guerra?ref=DET_relacionadas_vida; access: 3 October 2017.

31 Cf. Pedro Jorge Castro, *Grande Guerra: As mais belas cartas de amor que não chegaram ao destino* [The Great War: The Most Beautiful Love Letters That Did Not Reach Their Destination], in: *Sábado* [Saturday], 618 (4 March 2016), at: www.sabado.pt/vida/detalhe/grande-guerra-as-mais-belas-cartas-de-amor-que-nao-chegaram-ao-destino; access: 4 October 2017.

never at stake. For the majority of the civilian population in the mainland, the military conflict was happening many thousands of miles away and, as such, the only impact of the war was felt indirectly, for example through an increase of living costs. In Portugal, there were no deportations to prison camps, military occupations, lootings, murders or rapes, images that are associated with the impact of war on the civilian population elsewhere. These topics, although recurrent in the home front historiography, cannot be considered in the Portuguese case.

Moreover, Portugal did not even come close to the massive number of deployed French soldiers in proportional terms. While only about 3.5 percent of the Portuguese male population went to the front, it was 20 percent in France.³² Therefore, the social consequences of the deployments were less profound in Portugal. Thus, topics such as war marriages, separation of couples, mothers who were left alone or brides that remained unmarried, would be barely addressed by Portuguese historiography. In comparison with France, where the entire society was mobilised, for example, by political appeals urging women to contribute to the war effort by actively working in agriculture, industry and services.³³ Whereas the Great War severed the social and family order in France, allowing women to access new jobs and responsibilities, the situation was quite different on the Portuguese home front. Françoise Thébaud has quoted the weekly publication “*La Vie Féminine*” on this matter, stating that “[t]he Great War had been necessary for humanity to take notice of its other half”.³⁴ However, it seems that Portugal was still far from discovering its female half through the war, since the opening of traditionally male jobs to women was limited during the period of the conflict.

This situation is exacerbated by the lack of source material and archives on the female participation in the Great War, such as, for example, relevant documents written by Portuguese women on how they lived during the years of the war. It should be borne in mind that eight in ten Portuguese women were then illiterate, which reduces the probability of finding a significant number of testimonies.³⁵ However, men wrote several books about their experience of the Great War, despite the high illiteracy rate among the male population (seven in ten Portuguese men could not read and write).³⁶

32 Cf. Direcção Geral de Estatística, Censo da população de Portugal: no 1.º de Dezembro de 1911 (5.º recenseamento geral da população) [Census of the Population of Portugal as of 1 December 1911 (5th General Census of the Population)], Lisboa 1913, 4–5, at: http://censos.ine.pt/xportal/xmain?xpid=INE&xpgid=censos_historia_pt_1911; access: 5 September 2017.

33 Cf. Laura Lee Downs, War work, in: Jay Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, Vol. 3, Cambridge 2014, 72–95, 77–79; Margaret H. Darrow, *French Women and the First World War: War Stories from the Home Front*, Oxford/New York 2000.

34 “Il a fallu la Grande Guerre pour que l’humanité prit conscience de sa moitié”, Françoise Thébaud, *Les femmes au temps de la guerre de 14*, Paris 2013, 22.

35 Cf. Direcção Geral de Estatística, Censo, see note 32, 4–5.

36 To name but a few examples: Alexandre Malheiro, *Da Flandres ao Hanover e Meckenburg* (notas de um prisioneiro) [From Flanders to Hanover and Meckenburg (notes from a prisoner)], Porto 1919;

It is possible to find some isolated newspaper articles or letters written by women, but these sources are difficult to analyse because they contain little information about their authors. The website of the project “Fly – Forgotten Letters Years 1900–1974”³⁷, organised by the Centre of Linguistics of the University of Lisbon, has some correspondence written by women during the years of the war available. However, these testimonies are sparse and difficult to contextualise, analyse and compare with other sources.

Up to today, no diaries or memoirs have surfaced written by the “lady nurses” of the Portuguese Red Cross or the Portuguese Expeditionary Corps who worked in hospitals in France, where they witnessed the horrors of war, or in hospitals in Portugal, where they treated sick and mutilated soldiers. Whilst in other countries nurses’ diaries are still been found, sources produced by women are a rare occurrence in Portugal. In this context, it should be stressed again that Portugal, compared with other belligerent countries, only sent a very small number of nurses to the frontlines.

Moreover, the Portuguese Army did not deploy female doctors, soldiers, spies or women with other auxiliary functions, such as cooks or drivers. There are also no records of religious women³⁸, female journalists³⁹ or photographers who volunteered to go to war. Thus, there is hardly any evidence that Portuguese women actively participated on the frontlines in any way.⁴⁰

In contrast, male politicians and soldiers left diaries and memoirs describing their personal experiences (some of which have been reprinted and analysed).⁴¹ Even in the

Augusto Casimiro, *Nas trincheiras da Flandres* [In Flanders’ Trenches], Porto 1919; David Magno, *Livro da Guerra de Portugal na Flandres* [Book of Portuguese War in Flanders], Porto 1921; Humberto d’Almeida, *Memórias dum expedicionário a França. 1917–1918* [Memories of an Expeditionary to France], Porto 1919; or Carlos Olavo, *Diário de um prisioneiro de guerra na Alemanha* [Diary of a Prisoner of War in Germany], Lisboa 1919.

37 Cf. <http://fly.clul.ul.pt/index.php>; access: 4 September 2017.

38 Military pastoral care in the Portuguese army was carried out exclusively by men in the rank equivalent to ensigns. Cf. Maria Lúcia de Brito de Moura, *Nas Trincheiras da Flandres. Com Deus ou sem Deus, eis a questão* [In the Trenches of Flanders. With or Without God, That Is the Question], Lisboa 2010.

39 The study on Portuguese war correspondents only refers to male journalists in the chapter on the Great War. Cf. José Rodrigues dos Santos, *Crónicas de Guerra. Da Crimeia a Dachau* [Chronicles of War. From Crimea to Dachau], Lisboa 2001, 39–163. Although there were many women writing for general newspapers at that time, they devoted themselves mainly to the writing of chronicles. Female writers covering news, articles and interviews emerged not before the 1960s. Cf. Sara I. Magalhães, *Teresa Alvarez, Mulheres e Media* [Women and Media], Lisboa 2014.

40 Cf. Margaret R. Higonnet, *At the front*, in: *Winter*, Cambridge History, see note 33, 121–152, 152.

41 Since 2014, the Coordinating Committee of the Remembrance of the World War One Centenary, in collaboration with the Directorate of History and Military Culture has been reediting books written by frontline soldiers: Jaime Cortesão, *Memórias da Grande Guerra. 1916–1919* [Memories of the Great War]; André Brun, *A Malta das Trincheiras. Mígalhas da Grande Guerra. 1917–1918* [The Guys from the Trenches. Bits of the Great War]; Augusto Casimiro, *Nas Trincheiras da Flandres. 1917* [In the Trenches of Flanders] and Américo Olavo, *Na Grande Guerra. 1917–1918* [In the Great War]. The reissue of Ferreira do Amaral’s “A mentira da Flandres e o medo” [The

last few years, when the remembrance of the war centenary has led several families to search private archives for traces of that past, the writings that have emerged to the public eye are those written by men.

In fact, the historian Natividade Monteiro has been struggling with this issue in her PhD thesis on Portuguese women in the Great War. In an interview on the TV show “Cem Mil Portugueses na Primeira Guerra” of Antena 1 radio station, she deplors:

“The archives are lacking in documents on women. It is very difficult to find evidence of women’s participation in the war. The only thing we have are periodicals. [...] They sometimes mention not only women’s organisations established to support soldiers, families and orphans, and nurses who went to the battlefield or stayed in the rear, in hospitals, etc., but also anonymous women’s committees organised locally to raise money and to gather and make warm clothing for the soldiers.”⁴²

Furthermore, it is important to highlight that many female organisations that were established during the Great War ceased their operations, in general, after the war. Except for one or two organisations, such as the Portuguese Women’s Crusade,⁴³ whose surviving documentation remains in the headquarters of the Combatants League in Lisbon, all other archives and documentation are lost. Without relevant source material, it is difficult to reconstruct the day-to-day lives of Portuguese women at the home front. State archives, particularly military institutions, hold countless documents written by men for men, minimising women’s roles and reinforcing the idea that war belongs exclusively to the male sphere.

Due to the fact that the memories of the Great War were passed from generation to generation, memory politics is generally associated with men’s achievements. On several Collection Days,⁴⁴ organised since 2014 by the Institute of Contemporary History of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities of the New University of Lisbon, it was mainly the descendants of frontline soldiers who came to share their family memories. Thus, it is their narrated experiences that have survived within the family remembrance until today. When people were asked about what happened to women who stayed in Portugal, the answers show that these issues were never really discussed. The history of the family in the years of the war is narrated from a male perspective, which means that women are also barely present in oral sources.

It is also noteworthy that the issue of women in the Great War was already explored (although not in depth) in 2010/2011, on the occasion of the centenary of the establishment of the Republic of Portugal. Many female associations and their main

Flanders’ Lie and the Fear] and Menezes de Ferreira’s “João-Ninguém, Soldado da Grande Guerra” [Joe Nobody, Soldier of the Great War] is forthcoming.

42 Cf. www.rtp.pt/play/p3175/e284150/cem-mil-portugueses-na-primeira-guerra; access: 4 September 2017.

43 This organisation was absorbed by the Combatants League in 1933, with whom it shared its headquarters.

44 Cf. www.portugal1914.org/portal/pt/memorias/dias-da-memoria; access: 8 September 2017.

leaders were connected to the republican movement, which is why during the celebration of the 100 years anniversary of the Portuguese Republic a great deal was written and said about these women.⁴⁵ This might explain why the interest in this topic is so scant, although there has been and still is only little investigation on Catholic and monarchist women.

3. Possible Future Developments

We have identified a set of issues that deserve to be addressed or pursued further for a better understanding of the role of Portuguese women in the four years of the Great War and its aftermath. First, female associations and women who were connected to the Catholic and monarchist movement should be examined. Portuguese historiography has focused too much on republican women who are more visible in the public sphere and whose role is better documented. However, Catholic and monarchic women also played a very relevant role in supporting deployed soldiers and their families, which should be investigated in greater depth.

Besides, there are barely any studies on the participation of Portuguese women in the labour market during the conflict. Even without a strong male absence, Portugal felt the impact of the war. For example, the country was one of the biggest producers of canned goods, for which demand grew rapidly during the military conflict, and this industry mainly employed women. In both this and other fields, Portuguese women were called into work. Only few studies have addressed this issue and the repercussions of this development on the post-war period.

The “godmothers of war” is another interesting research field. Usually been highlighted in the context of the Colonial War between 1961 and 1974 and still not sufficiently investigated, “godmothers of war” appeared for the first time in the conflict of 1914–1918. Historians have not yet explored this topic, despite the public interest, the existence of source material and the many related issues that it opens up. Who were the “godmothers of war”, and what relations did they establish with their “godsons” during and after the war?

Another open question is that of the war widows. Their number is still unknown. Historical research on grief and mourning as well as on the challenges these women

45 Isabel Lousada, *Pela Pátria: A Cruzada das Mulheres Portuguesas (1916–1938)* [For the Motherland: The Portuguese Women’s Crusade]. Paper presented at XIX Colóquio de História Militar: 100 Anos do Regime Republicano. Políticas, rupturas e continuidades [XIX Colloquium of Military History: 100 Years of the Republican Regime. Politics, Breaks and Continuities], 16–18 November 2010; Natividade Monteiro, “Pela Pátria e Pela República”. *As Mulheres Republicanas na I Guerra Mundial* [“For the Motherland and for the Republic”. Republican Women in the First World War], in: Zília Osório de Castro, João Esteves and Natividade Monteiro (ed.), *Mulheres na I República* [Women in the First Republic], Lisboa 2011.

faced in the post-war period are sparse. More studies such as those by Karin Hausen,⁴⁶ Erika Kuhlman⁴⁷ or Peggy Bette,⁴⁸ among others, are needed to understand how Portuguese widows dealt with their financial difficulties, taking into account that they no longer had their husbands' salary, how they fought for the "blood pensions" and what support they had to raise their children. Did they remarry? Did they get a job or multiple jobs? Did they move from the countryside to the city?

It would also be interesting to understand how the return of the soldiers affected womanhood and women's marital relationships by analysing divorce, marriage and birth rates. The research projects that have been carried out in Portugal so far focus too much on the period between 1914 and 1918 and do not give enough attention to the medium and long-term effects that resulted from the years of war. What role did women (wives, mothers or daughters) play when the sick and maimed soldiers came back home?

Furthermore, studies that focus on Portuguese women and the First World War predominantly present a general framework, missing local and regional realities and the individual stories of the women's organisations that materially and morally supported the soldiers and their families. It is well known that these organisations based in the bigger cities of the country had branches in multiple locations and that several women mobilised themselves locally to contribute to the war effort. However, there is no information on who these women were, what activities they developed, what obstacles they faced, whether and how they were supported or what happened to them in the post-war period.

Finally, the topic of gender perspectives can still be developed by approaching, for instance, the concepts of soldiers' and veterans' masculinities or the construction of masculinities, which were subjects completely left aside in the context of the remembrance activities.

4. Conclusion

While gender issues were not entirely pushed aside from the set of initiatives promoted from 2014 onwards to commemorate the Great War centenary, they were not addressed as much or as in-depth as other subjects, namely those of a politico-military nature. Overall, Portuguese historiography has failed to develop new topics and interpretations

46 Cf. Karin Hausen, *The German Nation's Obligations to the Heroes' Widows*, in: Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al. (eds.), *Behind the Lines. Gender and the Two World Wars*, New Haven/London 1987, 126–140.

47 Cf. Erika Kuhlman, *Of Little Comfort: War Widow, Fallen Soldiers, and the Remaking of the Nation after the Great War*, New York 2012.

48 Cf. Peggy Bette, *Veuves et veuvages de la première guerre mondiale, Lyon (1914–1924)*, in: *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d'Histoire*, 98 (2008), 191–202.

regarding the abovementioned issues, although new archives and sources have been made available to researchers. Thus, in the Portuguese case, the centenary of the Great War was not used as a catalyst for research on gender perspectives. The focus remained on the consequences of the conflict in the context of national history and male narratives, neglecting the female presence during and after the war. With few exceptions, Portuguese women and the First World War stayed in the background of the remembrance of the centenary and their roles remained complementary. As a consequence, the opportunity to redirect research towards gender perspectives was lost.

In addition, the topic of Portuguese women in the Great War has been mainly addressed by researchers who regularly focus on gender studies in their work, and no new name arose. More importantly, the research centres and academic journals dedicated to this field practically ignored the centenary of the Great War, and, in so doing, missed an opportunity to stimulate new research. There was a lack of funding for projects specifically addressing First World War and gender, which could have attracted more postgraduates to explore new research topics.

With the end of the commemoration period approaching, the issue might, once again, be forgotten. Meaningful dates like this have the effect of propelling studies on the historical event that is being remembered. The centenary of the Great War is no exception, even though, as we have seen, gender perspectives were widely ignored in Portugal. However, we hope that, in the post-centenary period, new works on the topic emerge, supported by new documental sources that have come to light during the last four years.