and Watt, Potts, and Scott-Manderville seem more explorations of autobiography – about teaching, learning and living across private/professional as well as racial divides – that foreground friendship rather than experiences of friendship beyond the narrow confines of academia and the lenses of a select group of women's lives. Montague and Andrew assess the ethics of friendship in a professional context, in particular the issue of drawing on their friendship for constructing a 'living biography' for a teaching session.

This book will prove indispensable to anyone embarking on friendship research: its bibliography provides an invaluable resource and is one of its most exciting features.

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'Woman, your hour is sounding' continuity and change in French women's great war fiction, 1914–19

Nancy Sloan Goldberg; Macmillan, Houndmills and London, 1999, £32.50, ISBN: 0-333-913 892 (Hbk)

War literature, in France as elsewhere, was long assumed to be a masculine genre, and clearly the attempt to come to terms imaginatively with the direct experience of warfare – at least in the 1914–8 war – was the task of male writers. However, women's lives were also turned upside down by war, and (as several recent feminist studies have demonstrated) fiction was extensively used as a space where women writers and readers could explore the practical dilemmas and the changed moral landscape of their lives. With no French equivalent of the Virago Press – the women-only publishing company *des femmes* has never shown much interest in popular or middlebrow texts – and little French academic interest in rediscovering women's best-sellers now lost from history, virtually all the French female-authored fiction of World War I remains out of print, and the study of it has been mainly undertaken by British or American feminists. Nancy Goldberg has unearthed a huge corpus of now virtually unknown 'women's' novels that were widely read in the war period, while their female authors were often garlanded with prizes and honours. The use of such a large and little known set of texts carries a cost, in that argument is inevitably outweighed in some sections by a great deal of plot summary and explanation, but the book's guiding thesis always resurfaces, and its contribution to the archaeology of women's writing is extremely valuable. Quotations from the novels are translated into English, but also (sensibly) given in the original French in the footnotes.

In the pre-war years, the French feminist movement had reached its peak of influence and popularity, and it was widely – and, as it turned out, quite wrongly –

assumed that women's suffrage would soon be achieved. However, the movement was dominated – with a few magnificently radical exceptions such as Madeleine Pelletier and Nelly Roussel – by a moderate, reformist vision of gendered rights, which Goldberg characterizes above all as adherence to the doctrine of Republican motherhood. Women claimed civil rights on the grounds that they made an equal, but different, contribution to the nation's health: women were as strong and capable as men, but their strength took the form of domestic management, motherhood, moral and emotional support, not only at the micro-level of the family, but also as the educators and the moral conscience of the nation as a whole. Goldberg argues that this same ideal of feminine identity underpinned most mainstream women's fiction of the period.

With the massive departure of men to the Front, women suddenly found themselves not only anxious or in mourning for the men they loved, but also in possession of unexpected freedoms: new jobs, greater mobility, an unfamiliar degree of responsibility and agency. A hostile Press told stories of unfaithful wives, of callous, sensation-seeking military nurses, of frivolous women exploiting new freedoms as their men suffered and died. Women novelists, on the other hand, provided narratives that focused on female experience, acknowledging and endorsing the pleasurable sense of strength that comes from self-determination, but countering guilt and bad conscience through a range of narrative devices. The most conservative redeemed their guiltily emancipated heroines by having them repent their selfish freedoms and turn instead to self-abnegating devotion to the war wounded. The majority, though, made female empowerment respectable and compatible with patriotism, by constructing plots in which what Goldberg terms 'sheroes' contribute to the war-effort by daring action or by heroic self-sacrifice, or by having their heroines channel their (considerable) moral and emotional energy into motherhood and active public service. With few exceptions – notably those novels that make class an issue, as well as gender – female emancipation is rendered compatible with the most traditional view of gendered identity, and the uncomfortable sense that the war, while massacring their loved ones, might in some senses have benefited women is both acknowledged and skilfully neutralized. Goldberg demonstrates well how these novels might have been pleasurable and comforting to read, in and immediately after the war years.

The 'continuity' of the title turns out, then, to be a more powerful force than the 'change', and in a sense the story Goldberg uncovers is a depressing one. The post-war years would show that moderation and self-sacrifice to the national cause gained French women nothing: the backlash against the largely mythical 'New Woman' was as fierce as if she were real, and civil rights would be a long time coming. But the book rightly refuses to indulge in easy condemnation: the tension between, on the one hand, the potent ideology of feminine identity as nurturing and supportive and, on the other, the will to greater freedom and self-determination could not easily be overcome. These commercially successful novels

may not have been a radicalizing force, but they did provide a valuable arena in which women writers and readers could explore ways of negotiating contradictory desires, and enjoy their fictional resolution.

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En-Gendering India: Woman and Nation in Colonial and Postcolonial Narratives

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In *Engendering India*, Sangeeta Ray examines the multiple and shifting articulations of gender in British colonial, Indian national, and postcolonial discourses. Concentrating on the period between the 1857 Mutiny and the subcontinental partition in 1947, she traces the construction of the 'authentic woman' of India in four separate chapters through texts that she finds equally preoccupied with the production of a 'national space called 'India'.' Most of the writers she examines (Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Anita Desai and Bapsi Sidhwa) have already received much attention in critical analysis. Yet Ray's refreshing perspectives that analyze the nationalist and imperialist nexus of the domestic and the political in the works of these authors further reinforce their centrality to her own argument, which is that 'after 1857 the figure of the Hindu woman begins to function as a crucial semiotic site in and around which the discourses of imperialism, nationalism, and Indian postcolonialism, and feminism are complexly inscribed.' (p.8). She devotes the first chapter to Bankim Chandra's novels *Anandamath* (1882) and *Devi Chaudhurani* (1884) to illustrate the production of a Hindu identity that draws on a glorious (imagined) Hindu past in the initial moments of the empire's consolidation in India, and, in so doing, builds itself around a discourse that simultaneously celebrates and limits the power of women. Chapter 2 examines texts by non-Indian writers such as Harriet Martineau, Meadow Taylor and Flora Annie Steele to show how, in their fictions about the 1857 Mutiny, these writers recast India as Hindu and feminine and deploy this rhetoric to impose a false unity on an otherwise diverse nation. She devotes Chapters 3 and 4 to the partition of Bengal in 1905 and the 1947 subcontinental division to examine the interplay of women and nationalism in male discourse through Tagore's writings, and to render visible, through an analysis of Desai and Sidhwa's novels, female critiques of the rather problematic male nationalist agenda.

Since Ray's focus throughout the book is largely political, her historical grounding of the texts is very productive and enables her to avoid reading the literary texts in the void. She simultaneously places these texts within a sound theoretical