



# COMPLEXITIES OF CARE

A DECOLONIAL INTERVENTION IN FIRST WORLD WAR MEDICAL CARE SCHOLARSHIP

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My doctoral thesis brings together the fields of social history, medical humanities, and literary studies to focus on narratives by nurses who cared for ‘foreign bodies’ during the First World War — particularly those who looked after Indian sepoys, French soldiers, African labourers, and German prisoners of war. Drawing on the work of Das, Maguire and Steinbach (2021), Tronto (1993), Held (2006), Carden-Coyne (2014), and Fell (2021), my study analyses diaries, memoirs, short stories, and oral interviews and examines how national and racial differences are discussed in the context of medical care.

The thesis explores various works produced throughout the twentieth century; it focuses on nurses who documented their experiences caring for foreign soldiers and soldiers of colour, their discomfort, curiosity, and cultural and political sensibilities. Examining both publicly available texts and archival materials\*, my work aims to be an original contribution to First World War scholarship and decolonial medical humanities.



\*The archival materials used in the thesis have been gathered from the Imperial War Museum (London), Somerville Archive (Oxford), Churchill Archive Centre (Cambridge), Essex Record Office (Chelmsford), and John Hopkins Chesney Archive (Baltimore).

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES



Explore how the presence of wounded foreign and non-white bodies shaped nurses’ subjectivity and responses.



Investigate how pain and the politics of painkilling drugs like morphine intersected with issues of gender, class, race, and colonialism (including the opium trade), to influence wartime care practices.



Examine how British VAD nurses used the discourse on hygiene—often situated at the intersections of medical and colonial frameworks—to carve out a place for themselves in the collective memory of the war.

Images sources:

My Brighton and Hove | A.M. Brown, The Red Cross Magazine | Granger Collection | Wellcome Collection | Alamy