

---

# Mary Roberts Rinehart and World War I: Constructing Narrative on the Front Lines in France and Belgium

Brianne Jaquette\*<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>College of the Bahamas – Bahamas

## Abstract

While war has long been written about by American women writers, their work on the topic of war has also long been disparaged. Even as recently as 2014, a piece in *The New Yorker* about the history of Americans writing about war mentions no women. In scholarly circles, this is starting to change; however, there is still much work to be accomplished by both discussing and uncovering women writers who have written about war. This paper is part of a larger project to reintroduce the war writing of Mary Roberts Rinehart, who was one of the first woman to visit the front in World War I. Rinehart was already a popular novelist when she convinced the editors at *The Saturday Evening Post* to send her to war before the Americans were involved in the conflict. As she crossed literal borders and traveled in France and Belgium, she also crossed figurative ones and was allowed unprecedented access to the troops on the front lines. This paper examines *The Saturday Evening Post* columns that she dispatched back to the U.S. and argues that instead of her gender being a limitation in the writing of her column-as her editor and her husband feared when she proposed her plans-, she leans into her position as a woman in places she does not "belong" to understand the perspective of those living in the liminal spaces of war zones and front lines. Rinehart assesses the lives of the soldiers and civilians she meets through this lens and uses her training as a writer to construct narratives about the individuals in the war that transcend national identity-she writes with as much feeling about German soldiers as French and Belgian ones-while still maintaining her focus on her goal of providing the American people the truth about, as she sees it, "conditions as they really are."

---

\*Speaker