

# IMAGES OF MANLINESS: THE PORTRAYAL OF SOLDIERS AND CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS IN THE GREAT WAR

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## ABSTRACT

This article analyses constructions of English manhood during the First World War. As such, it focuses upon cultural representations of masculinity rather than the lived experiences of particular men. Such portrayals can have great social power when they gain a widespread cultural currency – not least in the impact they can have upon the lives of individuals. The central purpose is to consider the depiction of the conscientious objector to military service. Once conscription was introduced, objectors became a legally recognized category of men and special statutory provision was made for those who were deemed to be 'genuine'. Despite the legitimacy that this might have granted, all objectors (whether recognized as genuine or not), along with those who defended their stance, came to be despised and rejected as deviant. Their story, as presented here, is a study of the construction and contestation of deviance (in terms of both gender and Englishness), yet in this version of the deviant the role of law is a relatively minor one.

## INTRODUCTION

**T**HIS ARTICLE presents a brief social history of deviance and dissent focusing upon cultural representations of masculinity during the Great War. It forms part of a wider and long-term study of conscientious objectors to military service (COs or conchies) in this conflict which I began as a legal project in 1989.<sup>1</sup> In the present text, while the social takes a prominent place, the legal takes a more minor one. Given the title of the journal in which these words appear, this apparent lack may appear odd to some. However, it is hoped that the text reinforces the benefits for sociological scholars of venturing far beyond the relative security of what is familiar. In

the present case, a social history perspective allows for a richer analysis of the role of law in constructing objectors. By shifting the focus from law and criminology it also provides a useful starting point for a study of deviance. In this respect, perhaps the approach has more in common with sociologies of deviance (e.g. Box 1971/1981; Cohen, 1972) than with more crime-centred scholarship. Beyond this, analysing the portrayal or, indeed, treatment of COs suggests that proponents of a functionalist critique of criminal law (see Lacey, 1988: ch. 5) might sensibly conclude that the legitimate boundaries of their enquiries may extend not merely into the realm of ostensibly civil dispute resolution, but also into the minutiae of social, cultural and economic interaction (see further Bibbings, 1995).

Gender is also a major concern of this article. Despite some continuing resistance from defenders of the canon of subject orthodoxy, the study of gender has successfully infiltrated, if not the mainstream, then the borderlands of a range of academic disciplines. This genre of scholarship can also bring new layers of analysis and reconceptions of established subjects as John Tosh (1994), in calling for historians to 'take masculinity seriously', argues. In the present article a gendered approach to deviance and its construction and contestation seeks to revisit the fertile terrain of the 1914–18 war and re-examine the way in which COs were depicted.

The field of historical studies scholarship on English men and the Great War has traditionally focused primarily upon men as political players or combatants with little regard to gender. Moreover, work on soldiers tended to concentrate upon volunteers and their experiences, hence largely obscuring the civilian and conscript man's stories (let alone women's stories). Yet, during the war the majority of men were not in the military (see for example, Tate, 1995: 5) and over half of the 5 million men enlisted in Britain during the war were compelled to do so (*Statistics of the Military Effort, 1922*: 364). In recent years, (gender) scholars have begun to address these gaps. For example, Ilana R. Bet-Al's (1991, 1998) work on the writings of conscripts has sought to open up an area of study and to shift our knowledge about the conflict. Similarly, Joanna Bourke's (1996) work has focused upon the impact of the Great War upon the male body and George Mosse (e.g. 1990) has explored masculinity, sexuality and war. Such work on war and men is of particular significance given its subversive potential to infiltrate the traditional heartland of historiography and demonstrate that gender is inherent in all aspects of social, political and cultural life (see Tosh, 1994: 179–80). This article, by examining wartime versions of maledom, seeks to further this project.

Moreover, although the conchies of this period have been studied before,<sup>2</sup> such work has not yet examined COs *as men*. This is perhaps a remarkable omission, given the wealth of material on the unmanliness of these men, the well-known fears about the male of the species in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the fact that war itself was then (and is still) largely (but by no means entirely) constructed as being about men. In addition, during these years of conflict, efforts to influence popular thinking about manhood

became more focused, more deliberate and, in some instances perhaps, more desperate. The analysis of such crisis management can provide insights into the portrayal of supposedly deviant men and women in other periods. It is also in such attempts to depict the despised and rejected that much can be discerned about the revered and accepted. Indeed, tensions or inconsistencies within (or resonances between) constructions of the deviant and the exemplary can reveal much about contemporary concerns.

Wartime is often characterized by crude dichotomies and stark reversals in attitudes, as the extremes of a national emergency tend to lead to rapid shifts in and the polarization of conceptions and attitudes. Unsurprisingly, then, the First World War brought with it reconstructions of manliness that drew upon preexisting clusters of ideas about men. The binary examined here was a pivotal one in this period: that of the military man versus the conscientious objector (CO) to military service. Depictions of the objector and the soldier are described, discussed and disrupted using some portrayals of these men in political, social, cultural and legal sources. While the central concern is therefore an examination of an intramasculine opposition, images of femininity are also recognized to be an important part of the currency in which the deployment of representations of masculinity trades. In the current context, for example, soldiers were often depicted as both the antithesis and the defenders of a largely defenceless female population, while COs tended to be portrayed as feminized men or even as 'unmen' (see below).

During the conflict, soldiering soon came to be represented as the only way to be truly male and this was reinforced by the recounting of tales of heroism, while stories of less noble acts were often suppressed. During voluntary recruitment men had to desire the rewards of soldiering; once military conscription was introduced, support for compulsion needed to be maintained. Thus, the way in which different men were portrayed and perceived was often viewed as crucial to the successful pursuit of the conflict and the preservation of national unity. In this context, the stakes were high. Indeed, the government even (covertly) approached well-known poets and novelists to write literary propaganda. Many of the artists working with the Secret War Propaganda Bureau sought not only to depict the war as just, necessary and glorious but also focused on presenting different 'types' of men, celebrating the exemplary while marginalizing or castigating the deviant (see Buitenhuis, 1987/1989; Roberts, 1996: 54–67).

In this context, the way in which COs were depicted became crucial to both pro-war propagandists and to objectors who sought to flood the country with their own propaganda. In part, the official view seemed to centre upon fears that, if objectors attracted widespread sympathy or support, the legitimacy of military compulsion and, indeed, of the war effort might have been undermined (for example, see Dicey, 1918). In contrast, for opponents of the war and/or compulsion there was often a desire not only to defend their stance and to persuade others of the rightness of their views but also to assert their identity as men. Thus, COs and their supporters became involved in what was, in part, a gendered propaganda war.

SETTING THE SCENE: RECRUITMENT AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF  
MANHOOD

From the outbreak of war in August 1914 until early 1916 the sole method of recruitment in England was one of voluntarism (*Manual of Military Law*, 1914: ch. IX). Initially, those who signed up to serve were volunteers, and they signed up in huge numbers. Two and a half million men and boys enlisted in the first 16 months of the war (*General Annual Reports of the British Army*, 1921: 9). Most notably, working men came forward, despite some evidence of the unpopularity of the military as a career for the lower classes in the years prior to the Great War. Indeed, in 1898 H. O. Arnold-Foster (Secretary of State for War 1903–5) had stated that '[n]o tradition is more deeply rooted in the minds of the poorer classes . . . than that which represents enlistment as the last step in the downward career of a young man' (Arnold-Foster, 1898: 346). In contrast, the military had become a popular career for those who were, by their status, officer material (for example, see Reader, 1988: ch. 5). Yet, by the time war was declared, a significant reversal regarding the working classes' perception of soldiering seemed to have taken place. Patriotic propaganda played a role in creating and sustaining this shift by its harnessing of preexisting notions of manhood, although resistance to the military (and conscription) certainly continued (e.g. within the socialist and trade union movements; see Rae, 1970: 9–11; Thomis, 1959). Thus, W. J. Reader (1988) argues that the lure of heroic exploits and the quest for adventure, which were already planted in the minds of many males, were utilized in propaganda. Indeed, to some extent, ideas about what it was to be a man were manipulated in order to assist in a redefinition of manhood (for all classes of men) 'in terms of soldiering' (Tate, 1995: p. 5).<sup>3</sup> However, initially at least, such efforts only encouraged preexisting enthusiasm for the great adventure.

In August 1914 a tide of popular opinion supported the conflict and rallied against the evils of Prussianism. Accounts of the sense of expectation as people waited to see what would happen and of the wild celebrations on the streets which followed the declaration of war, confirm a sense not only of widespread pro-war feeling, but also of excitement. Thus, even in the days before war was declared accounts record a wave of 'mass hysteria'. On 3 August 1914 in London '[a] vast procession formed in the streets . . . everyone waving flags and singing patriotic songs' (Powell, IWM, 2–3.). On the next day '[a]ll of London was awaiting Germany's reply to our Ultimatum, the excitement was intense, and it was plain that a large Majority were in favour of war [sic]' and a 'seething mass' of men crowded round the Great Scotland Yard recruiting offices seeking to join up and join in (Williams, 1918: 6). War fever gripped the popular imagination as people prepared to enjoy the spectacle and the glory, while some young men and boys worried that if, as expected, it would all be over by Christmas, they would miss out on all the fun. On 9 August 1914 *The Times* included the following (to 21st-century eyes) extraordinary report:

At an inquest on the body of Arthur Sydney Evelyn Annesley, aged 49, formerly a captain in the Rifle Brigade, who committed suicide by flinging himself under a heavy van at Pimlico, the Coroner stated that worry caused by the feeling that he was *NOT* going to be accepted for service led him to take his life. (emphasis added)

In this context, the recruitment drives and the jingoistic elements in the press sought to 'call out the manhood' in all classes of men in order to sustain the flow of recruits for the military. The aim was to encourage more men and boys to view enlisting as not only their duty but also as desirable and as providing the means to *become* (heroic) men. Thus, in sources from recruitment posters to journalistic accounts of the fighting, soldiering was portrayed as the best, if not the only, thing for a man to do in the current crisis. Among other things, these materials drew upon the Victorian revival of the Arthurian tradition and its gentlemanly and therefore largely class-specific (Christian) cult of chivalry (see for example, Girouard, 1981: 219–30). Paul Fussell describes the romanticized language used to talk about the war as echoing such sources. In this context, 'high diction' and the language of knightly honour transformed the mundane and the gruesome into a euphemistic romance lexicon. Here a horse became a 'steed' or 'charger'; the enemy was 'the foe'; danger was 'peril'; to conquer was 'to vanquish'; to die was to 'perish'; and the blood of young men was, in the words of Rupert Brooke, 'the red/Sweet wine of youth' (Fussell, 1975/2000: 21–3).

The patriotic adventure stories of empire, which had enjoyed great popularity from the latter half of the 19th century, also played their role in the celebration and marketing of the soldier (see Reader, 1988). These tales already formed part of the myth of empire, 'the story England told itself as it went to sleep at night' (Green, 1980: 3). Consequently, such narratives, along with the popular 'true' accounts of imperial heroes, such as the inexpensive pamphlet *Lives and Adventures of Great Soldiers in the British Army* (1885) which reprinted press stories, were rich sources for advocates of both the war and recruitment to draw upon (see generally Dawson, 1994). The Great War was, thus, often described in recruitment materials as providing the opportunity to experience life as a storybook hero, or to become like the real-life imperial conquerors. In the most famous recruiting image, Kitchener, the hero of Sudan, was pictured calling men to join a great enterprise with him as their figurehead. At the same time, other posters and leaflets asked 'Are YOU In This?', promised honours and daredevil exploits, or warned that if men were slow to join in, they might miss this wonderful opportunity (war posters collection, IWM). Such glorious images of an aspirational, yet apparently easily attainable, English manhood (all a man had to do was wear a uniform) were fortified by the assumption that this would be a speedily and victoriously concluded war. Thus, in recruitment materials the sacrifice of service, if it was considered to be a sacrifice, would only be brief (enlisting did not mean choosing a career in the military), and the rewards great.

Yet, despite the statistical evidence that so many men were coming forward to serve and suffer, there was also a pervasive and growing perception,

fervently encouraged by pro-conscriptionists (see Hayes, 1949: 36–50; Rae, 1970: 6–8, 15), that many men were (inexplicably) shirking their responsibility, benefiting from their cowardice and prolonging the war. It was not long before young, able-bodied single men who failed to sport a uniform were challenged, harangued and castigated in the press and in streets, shops and sitting rooms around the country (for example, see Reader, 1988: ch. 6). There was a steadily growing pressure to make these men do their patriotic duty, to which the coalition government of late 1915 eventually yielded; or so it seemed. In fact, the policy shift probably had more to do with the need to manage manpower than it did with obtaining more men for the military as ‘The army had more men than it could equip, and voluntary recruitment would more than fill the gap, at any rate until the end of 1916’ (Taylor, 1975: 53; see also Lloyd George, 1933/1938: 426–7). In the popular press, however, conscription was portrayed as a means to compel shirkers ‘skrimshanking’ [sic] at home to do their duty and it seemed to attract widespread support precisely because of this perception (see for example, Lloyd George, 1933/1938: 427–8).

The Military Service Act, 1916 (MSA) introduced military compulsion for all (initially single) able-bodied men deemed to be fit and of military age.<sup>4</sup> Men to whom it was applicable were liable to serve in the military once they were called up. Prime Minister Asquith justified the measures stating that subjecting men to conscription simply ‘deemed in law . . . what every man recognised to be their duty as a matter of moral and national obligation in the time of greatest stress in all our history’ (5 HC 77, 5 January 1916, col. 961). In doing so he obscured the view long held by many that England’s military tradition was one of voluntarism as Englishmen would do their duty with pride without the need for compulsion.

The MSA was a universalist measure which, nevertheless, allowed for some exceptions and exemptions. These were kept to a minimum as excluding too many men from its ambit might have appeared discriminatory and, consequently, might have increased resistance to the measure. Surprisingly, however, alongside exceptions for the ministers of religion, men who were medically unfit and some provision for workers in essential industries, the Act provided for the exemption of those who possessed a ‘genuine conscientious objection’ to ‘combatant service’, although ‘conscientious objection’ was not defined (MSA s.2(1)(d)). Thus, in theory at least, the Act allowed some of those hated men who had refused to enlist to continue in their avoidance of the military.

Those who wished to claim exemption on the basis of conscience had to argue their case in front of a tribunal system which considered *inter alia* all claims for exemption from call-up (MSA s.2(7), scheds 2, 3 and Military Service Regulations (Amendment) Orders SR&I 1916 No. 53). COs who were regarded as being genuine by the tribunal could be granted either absolute, partial or conditional exemption (MSA s.2(3)). Absolute exemption meant that the man concerned was completely absolved from the recruitment process. Partial exemption directed the individual to non-combatant duties

within the military, while exemption could also be granted on the condition that the applicant undertake or continue in a particular field of labour (often in essential industry or agriculture). A number of objectors did not go before a tribunal, were not recognized, or refused to comply with the tribunal decisions and went on to cause various degrees of difficulty for the pro-war establishment.

If a CO had no exemption or rejected the tribunal decision, he was deemed to have enlisted in the military. If he refused to report for duty he would be arrested, fined in the magistrates courts and handed over to the military (MSA, 1916, s.1(1)(b)). At this point an objector who refused to obey orders would become subject to the harshness of military rules, discipline and punishment that applied to all soldiers. Some court-martialled COs were subsequently imprisoned in military and later civilian prisons (Army Order X, AO 179, 1916) where they served out their sentences only to be returned to the military. If they continued to disobey, this process would be repeated. Later a number were transferred on to the army reserve and worked on specially created hard labour camps under the Home Office Scheme (see Rae, 1970: ch. 8)). Many instances of the injustices and ill treatment that COs suffered in society, in the tribunals, in the military, in prisons and on the Scheme were recorded during the war, although there are also some more positive stories (for example, see Rae, 1970: 108–10). Some were effectively tortured in the army and a few were shipped to France and sentenced to death for their disobedience, although their sentences were subsequently commuted. A number of men suffered physically and mentally as a consequence of their treatment and some died.

At the beginning of the war about 16,500 men had declared themselves to be conscientious objectors or 'conchies', as they came to be known. Once conscription was introduced, about 13,866 argued their claim for exemption in front of a tribunal (Rae, 1970: 130).<sup>5</sup> Some of these applicants were undoubtedly not genuine objectors, but 5944 of their number refused to accept the exemption granted to them under s.2(3) MSA or, possessing no certificate exemption, persistently resisted compulsion, and were consequently repeatedly court-martialled (Rae, 1970: 71). Thus, an initial point to note was that, despite the fact that a vast degree of time was spent considering them, in parliament, in the press and in the country, there were numerically very few objectors. During the war 4,970,902 men volunteered or were conscripted (Cmd. 1193, 1921, 9), the 16,500 conchies represented 0.33 percent of this figure. However, they also had male and female supporters who worked hard to publicize and promote their arguments and their manhood. Some of the latter were prominent people who managed to give COs a higher profile than was justified by their numbers and, thus, also (wittingly and unwittingly) encouraged the view that COs posed a greater threat to the war effort than was probably the case. In addition, the No Conscription Fellowship (NCF) vigorously campaigned against conscription and strove to publicize, principally through its weekly organ, *The Tribunal*, the injustices and suffering that some COs suffered during and after the war.

Objectors came from a range of social, economic and educational backgrounds and based their objection on varied grounds. For some their stance came from the tenets of their religion or their own religious beliefs. These included Quakers, Christadelphians, Plymouth Brethren, Jehovah's Witnesses, Methodists, Anglicans and Catholics as well as at least one Buddhist and members of small religious sects. Others based their beliefs on moral, political or humanitarian grounds (sometimes alongside religious beliefs). The nature of these men's objections varied greatly; some objected to war, some to this war, while a number refused to take part in any battle save the final conflict foretold in the Book of Revelation. The nature of the tasks that objectors were prepared to undertake in wartime also differed: there were the absolutists in prison who refused to accept the state's authority to direct them; there were those who were happy to serve in the Non-Combatant Corps (popularly known as the 'No Courage Corps'); and there were men who went to the front as part of the Friends Ambulance Unit but would not undertake the same work in the Medical Corps. Further, at the extremes the ranks of COs included anarchists and Bolsheviks, who sought to bring about chaos or revolution, together with devoutly religious, law-abiding men, who practised passive resistance and strove not to be too troublesome for the authorities. It becomes difficult to talk about objectors as a class of men without recognizing such differences. Nevertheless, it is possible to generalize and argue that these men were often despised and rejected as a group as they represented identities that sounded a discord with the dominant ideas of the period. However, just how loud this discord was sometimes depended upon the particular COs portrayed.

#### THE CONCHIE VERSUS THE SOLDIER

During this period 'conscientious objection' was, for the first time in a military context, a legal category. Indeed, far from being defined as a dissident identity, a *genuine* objector could legitimately avoid military service. Yet, in cultural terms such men were widely considered to be a deviant group who represented an aberrant form of manhood. If the volunteer was the most exemplary of men and the conscript was at least doing what he was told, the CO was publicly and shamelessly rejecting his very identity as an English man. Men, therefore, were represented as types: the despised category 'conchie' often conflated all the very different men into one hated common identity, although among these the religious and particularly the Quaker objectors were more likely to be viewed sympathetically (see for example, Rae, 1970: 72–3).

Moreover, the implication was sometimes not merely that they were not real men, or indeed that they were in some way feminized, but that they lacked basic human characteristics common to both genders: they were '*unmen*'.<sup>6</sup> Further, they came to be widely viewed as criminals who deserved punishment. Thus, the claim of conscience objection, whether successful or



not, became a very particular badge of both gender and patriotic deviance. Legal recognition, whether in rhetoric or in practice, made little difference as the men were, by their stance alone, outlaws and outcasts.

The Great War was a carnival of war, a ritual of reversal, where the normal perceptions of existence shifted dramatically. Killing, which was normally forbidden and unlawful, became compulsory, while refusing to kill was suddenly the most reprehensible stance for a man to hold. In addition, it was a position that many, including some tribunal members, found impossible to comprehend and therefore acknowledge. Thus, many undoubtedly genuine objectors failed to gain satisfactory, or indeed any, recognition from these bodies. Indeed, the unfairness of some tribunals was to be fictionalized in J. A. Cronin's novel *The Stars Look Down* (1935: 357). During the war, examples of injustice and incomprehension on the part of tribunal members were widely reported; however, the examples cited in this article are drawn from secondary reports as the majority of tribunal records were destroyed in 1921.<sup>7</sup> Thus, one tribunal member asked a CO applicant '[d]o you really mean to say you wouldn't kill anybody?' When the applicant agreed that this was the case the response was '[w]hat an awful state of mind to be in!' (quoted in Graham, 1922: 89). As a result, during the war many COs were held in the same prisons that housed 'ordinary' murderers, while soldier men were heralded for their heroic killings.

Thus, despite the conscience clause, the CO could be held in jail and categorized as a civilian or military criminal if he refused to comply with the authorities. Beyond this, the CO was widely considered to be the most heinous cultural criminal. In this respect, his criminality lay not so much in his legal status but rather because of his stance. Regardless of his exemption status, his disobedience was committed against the interlinked laws of duty, patriotism and manliness and his crime was the refusal to join in. Ironically, as George Bernard Shaw noted: 'the law to exempt him has resulted in his being punished more severely than other criminals' (Shaw, 1944/1945: 305). Thus conscientious objection, which parliament had not formally designated as criminal, nevertheless was most often assumed to be (see Lacey, 1995: 14) and COs' portrayal and treatment in society, in the tribunals and in the military frequently reflected this. For example one contemporary account observed that '[n]early all [tribunals] agreed in regarding conscience as an unpatriotic offence which must be visited by penalties' (Nevinson, 1916: 690). To some of the members of these judicial bodies conchies were 'blackguards' (Snowden, 1916: 12). Thus, a military representative opposing a claim for exemption at the Sheffield tribunal informed the applicant that there was only one way to get absolute exemption from his tribunal and that was death (Graham, 1922: 72). As a result of such attitudes, some COs who were undoubtedly genuine were refused exemption or granted a level of exemption that a tribunal was aware they would reject. It seems that some tribunal members saw their role as a patriotic rather than a legal one; their comments and decisions reflected the popular view, while their priority was to provide as many men as possible for the military.

To some, COs' criminality was more specific: they were not merely hindering the war effort but were guilty of treason. The *Daily Express* described objectors as traitors who were helping to stab the army in the back, they were 'either crazy or agents of the enemy' and the NCF was financed with German money (10 April 1916); in short, they were 'fighting for Germany' (11 September 1914). The *Globe* saw the NCF as an 'essentially treasonable' organization (30 March 1916), and the *Sunday Herald*, while noting that COs were 'not worth the powder and shot', felt that in the current crisis 'perhaps a few rounds might be spared' (9 April 1916). The popular press and *The Tribunal* reported similar castigation of treacherous objectors in some tribunals (e.g. 8 March 1916). Such a perception, if encouraged, could only increase the hatred that was directed towards such men and discourage others from joining them. But one category of CO came to be feared more than others. The disruptive tendencies of a minority of such men led some to predict the danger of a Bolshevik revolution in England. The militant objectors, who were housed in Dartmouth Gaol following its 'deprisonization' and renaming as the Princetown Work Centre under the Home Office Scheme, were frequently portrayed in the press as posing a particular threat to the nation. For example, one visitor to the Centre reported that 'sacks of letters come and go, no doubt carrying instructions for those plans of bloodshed which may at some future time, according to our view, bring ruin on England' (*The Times*, 8 October 1917). At various points during the war inflammatory stories about Princetown in the local and national press (for example, see *Daily Mail*, 23, 24, 27, 30 April 1917) incited increased public hostility (and violence) against (some or all) objectors. Indeed, the press and the pro-war establishment delighted in reporting examples of COs' misdeeds as such stories not only made good headlines but also reaffirmed anti-CO feeling (see Rae, 1970: 109).

This notion of the objector as an outlaw is the starting point for an analysis of his portrayal (and, to some extent, his treatment). Many other threads reinforced the rejection of conscientious objection as an unforgivable transgression. Some of the most common themes in these depictions are explored below.

In failing to join up and join in, COs who refused to be implicated in the war effort were perceived as wilfully excluding themselves from a great celebratory endeavour or a national sporting event. Indeed, the image of the war as an international contest was a popular one which drew upon the recent promotion of healthy exercise for boys (Fussell, 1975/2000: 25–8; Leed, 1979: 40–2; Reader, 1998: 162–6). Because conchies would not 'play the game' they were likely to be, at the very least, misunderstood, misinterpreted and maligned. Thus, their refusals seemed often to be taken as evidence of evil motives or laziness, rather than of deeply held conviction. In addition, jingoism, which at its worst operates as '[a] coarse patriotism fed by the wildest rumours and the most violent appeals to hate and the animal lust of blood' (Hobson, 1901: 8–9), played a role here. In the Great War this blood-lust was directed towards the 'Hun' and, to a lesser extent, the anti-war

movement and the conchie. Thus, the newspapers often encouraged readers to disrupt anti-war or CO meetings and sometimes even sought to incite the public to attack objectors. For example, the second NCF National Convention in April 1916 provided an opportunity for the press not only to heap scorn on objectors but also to call upon right-minded citizens to give the men a suitable reception (see for example, *Daily Express*, 7 April 1916; *Daily Sketch*, 24 March 1916; *Evening Standard*, 23 March 1916). Literary texts also attacked the objector as Harold Begbie's poem 'A Christian To A Quaker' illustrates. Each stanza castigates Quakers ('your cocoa nibs') and suggests that such Friends deserve to be ill treated and imprisoned or worse: 'So in you go (and may you die)/To two years hard' (n.d. – cited by Roberts, 1996: 199–200). Whether such words had an effect or not, objectors were often shunned and hounded:

In general society you could scarcely mention their existence, much less claim acquaintance with an individual C.O.s, so great was the disgust and abhorrence called forth . . . some families expelled the conscientious objector members from their midst, so keenly did they feel the disgrace of the connection. (Playne, 1933: 303)<sup>8</sup>

Concerned citizens also sometimes physically attacked them. For example, in May 1918 local youths attacked COs at Knutsford Home Office Camp (Brace Committee, 1919: 7).

Religion often figured in the contrasting depictions of the soldier and the CO. Thus, Christianity was utilized in order to help justify both the iconic image of the former and the persecution of the latter. The soldier was frequently portrayed as a shining Christian knight, or as 'a type of crucified Christ' (Fussell, 1975/2000: 119, 117–20). Establishment Anglican (pro-war) notions of Christianity propounded the idea of fighting as a noble, just and necessary act. War was justified by the teachings of Christ and 'we' were fighting for 'Him' (see Article XXVII, *Church of England Articles of Faith*). This was 'primarily a holy war' which all God-fearing men should support (Robert Bridges, *The Times*, 1 September 1914). Further, there was a feeling that, as God was on 'our' side, 'He' would protect 'us'. Moreover, Christ was after all British; as one tribunal chairman noted when a CO applicant began to explain the meaning of a New Testament passage in the Greek: 'Greek, you don't mean to tell me that Jesus Christ spoke Greek. He was British to the backbone' (the chairman of 'a tribunal near London', Graham, 1922: 71; R.L. Outhwaite M.P., 5 HCD 80, col. 2435–2437, 16 March 1916). Thus, the Christian conchie was often portrayed as a heretic who failed to see, or wilfully ignored, the true teachings of the Bible. His refusal to fight was to 'turn Christianity upside down'<sup>9</sup> as 'the very essence of Christianity is to fight' (a tribunal member at Worcester, quoted by Graham, 1922: 89). One member of a Lancashire tribunal told an applicant: 'I think you are exploiting God to save your own skin. It is nothing but deliberate and rank blasphemy' (Graham, 1922: 71).

The construction of the CO also drew upon and became linked with fears

that English manhood was degenerating. This idea, influenced by evolutionist and eugenicist theories, reached its peak during the Boer War when many recruits failed their medical examinations. Such concerns about physical fitness even led to the setting up of an Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Deterioration in 1904 (Cd. 2175. See Greenslade, 1994: 43). Additionally, 'muscular Christianity' and organizations such as the Boys Brigade and the recently formed Scouting movement were, in part, a reaction to the perceived physical and moral degeneration (and decadence) of the race (see for example, Bourke, 1996, 13; Reader, 1988: 21–4, 77–8). They sought to reassert and reproduce true manliness through the provision of physical training and (to some extent) moral education for boys. Here healthy activity was generally prioritized over the unhealthy potential of introspection and self-absorption (see for example, Greenslade, 1994: 42, 218) and war was often conceived of as part of the divine process of evolution; as a means of regeneration (Wyatt, 1911).

Portrayals of COs as pathetic physical and/or moral specimens often resonated with these concerns. One CO was described at his tribunal hearing as 'a shivering mass of unwholesome fat' (R.L. Outhwaite 5 HC 80, col. 2435, 16 March 1916); and an applicant at Holborn Tribunal seemed to have been refused exemption because of his failure to take healthy exercise and his supposedly unwashed appearance (Snowden, 1916: 10). Another tribunal member told an objector that 'Yours is a case of an unhealthy mind in an unwholesome body' (1916: 10). An applicant's presumed moral degeneracy and cowardice or laziness were also often stated in the tribunals and the country (see for example, C. H. Norman in Brockway, 1919: 25). In contrast, the image of the soldier was one of physical prowess and stoicism; in the recruitment posters of the day the military man was always the finest of physical specimens and was unquestionably morally upstanding merely because he wore a uniform. He, in contrast to the CO, was a man of action.

English manhood was perceived to be in decline or in crisis in a number of respects in the late 19th century. There were, for example, the challenges posed by the independent 'New Woman', the female suffrage movement and the Suffragettes. Also, the 'naughty nineties', with its notion of the 'New Hedonism', intensified concerns about upper class decadence (on decadence, see for example, Jackson, 1913/1988: ch. III). In particular, the newly categorized sexual invert was beginning to be associated with the effeminacy and aestheticism of the dandy, which Oscar Wilde had come to epitomize (Greenslade, 1994: 21; Sinfield, 1994).<sup>10</sup>

Representations of the CO utilized these fears and related concerns about the parasite (see for example, Greenslade, 1994: 18–19) In one telling cartoon from *John Bull* (May 1918) he was depicted as a dandified figure, bearing a passing resemblance both to Wilde and to L. Raven Hill's sketch entitled 'A Voluptuary' (published in *Pick-me-up*, the popular 1890s' journal of literature and art, reproduced in Jackson, 1913/1988, illustration 338). While the CO slouches lazily in an armchair, hands in pockets and smoking, in the background 'Happy Families' playing cards show his father, brother and

uncle in the army, a cousin in the navy, his mother as a nurse and a sister in uniform. The caption reads 'This little piggie stayed at home'. All the other members of his family, even the women, are doing their bit, while he lazes smugly, presumably protected by the 'shirkers charter', and suffers no discomfort from the war. Consequently, he is an unnatural man, a pointless man, an aberration who is not only unmanly and possibly an invert, but is also less than a woman. Further, conchies, in standing by and letting others fight for them, were parasites; a subhuman breed. Scavenging at the margins of society, such men were perceived as 'the most awful pack that ever walked the earth' (Snowden, 1916: 8).

As a stark contrast to images representing the CO as a threat, an infection, a blasphemer or an aberration, there was also a tendency to belittle objectors through ridicule. The *Daily Sketch*, for example, followed the progress of 'Percy' the CO in the military, portraying him as a nonsensical figure, grinning maniacally, while sporting an army blanket. He is implicitly emasculated by his refusal to wear a uniform (15 April 1916). Publicly portraying the conchie as the feminized fool was, perhaps, sometimes safer than taking him too seriously. In addition, it would have been hard in the case of some devoutly religious objectors to conceive of them as threatening. These men may have seemed heretics from the standpoint of establishment pro-war Anglicanism, but they were also often the most law-abiding and inoffensive of men.

#### THE UNMANLY SOLDIER AND THE HEROIC OBJECTOR

Having sketched a picture in which the military man and the CO *un*man represent separate and oppositional forms of manhood (or of manliness and unmanliness), I now want to suggest ways in which this extreme polarization can be and was disrupted. Thus, some alternative constructions of these versions of manhood are discussed below. All of them were circulating during the First World War but were officially repressed and censored whenever possible. Such silencings represented attempts to control public perceptions of manliness and of certain categories of men.

The concept of the idealized manliness of the military man was itself full of paradoxes as soldiering was increasingly portrayed as a natural and ordinary as well as an aspirational and exemplary form of manhood. Also, this discourse of quintessential Englishness, honour and adventure excluded many men besides the CO: 'civilian men found themselves in an odd negated space in relation to masculinity' (Tate, 1995: 5). Thus, the older and unfit were outside the image of this ideal manhood; they were a redundant male population, although at least those who were fathers and brothers could indirectly lay claim to some of the glory if their sons or siblings volunteered. Yet at least the older or unfit men had accepted excuses for their lack of a military uniform and were consequently unlikely to be persecuted. This image of redundancy is reflected in some of the patriotic and propaganda

fiction of the time. In J. M. Barrie's sketch, 'The New Word', a despondent yet proud father tells his son who is leaving for the military: 'I'm a decent fellow but I don't really count any more' (1918, reproduced in Tate, 1995: 225–40). Significantly, the Propaganda Bureau had recruited Barrie at the start of the war (Roberts, 1996: 54).

Concerns about the unmanliness of Englishmen did not merely relate to COs. The numbers of men rejected on medical grounds heightened concerns about physical degeneration previously highlighted in the Boer War (Bourke, 1996: 171–2; Winter, 1980). Thus, in 1919 the Ministry of National Service reported that 'War is a stern taskmaster . . . It has compelled us to take stock of the health and physique of our manhood; this stock-taking has brought us face to face with ugly facts' (Cmd. 504, 1919, 6). Indeed, contrary to evolutionist/Darwinist ideas about war as a project of remasculinization (see for example, Greenslade, 1994: 213), it soon became evident that, although some men were 'improved' by war (see Bourke, 1996: 174–5), it was often the fittest of the race who were going to war and dying or returning physically and psychologically wounded. Thus, as Sandra M. Gilbert notes, 'Paradoxically, . . . the war to which so many men had gone in hope of becoming heroes ended up emasculating them'; they had become '*unmen*' (1983: 447–8, 423). In addition, objectors were not the only men to resist the military. For example, there were those within the trade union movement who fought against compulsion fearing, in part, that industrial conscription would follow and that workers would lose their hard-won rights (see for example, Rae, 1970: 9–12). Indeed, strikes were not uncommon during the war (see for example, Rothstein, 1980: 7–10). Thus, there were other groups of men who resisted the war effort.

Further evidence that Englishmen were not as inherently altruistic and brave as the mythology of military manhood tried to suggest is not hard to find. The notion that many men were failing to do their duty was widely circulating in 1915. Thus, despite the large numbers of men who enlisted, poster campaigns, the press, propaganda stories and the recruitment drives attempted to encourage, cajole, embarrass, threaten or even bribe men into enlisting. Patriotic citizens challenged and women handed out white feathers of cowardice to men who lacked a uniform. The National Register of August 1915 was to reinforce the perception that a vast number of men were failing to do the manly thing (National Registration Act, 1915). This was a form of workers' census which was exploited and manipulated by the pro-compulsion lobby. In this context, it seemed to prove that degeneracy and dishonour were lurking at the heart of English manhood. As a result of these concerns, a new recruitment strategy known as the Derby Scheme was introduced in the autumn of 1915 (see *Report on Recruiting*, 1916, Cd. 8149; Lord Derby, 1916). The Scheme effectively bribed men to 'attest' rather than to enlist. To attest meant merely to profess a willingness to join up at some future date if required to do so. Moreover, publicity for the Scheme not only mentioned the financial remuneration provided but also suggested that attesting represented a means to avoid the dishonour of being a conscript if

and when conscription was introduced (war posters collection and recruiting materials, IWM).

More significantly, the introduction of compulsion in itself contradicted the notion of an inherently patriotic and self-sacrificing English manhood which propaganda, the recruitment drives and the pro-war press were simultaneously propounding. Thus, it seems that defending one's country was an innate part of heroic English manliness and a duty. Yet, it was also something that some Englishmen sought to avoid unless compelled; these men, it seemed, were quite resistant to their supposedly natural instincts. Indeed, it appears to have been well known that many men sought or managed to avoid conscription or at least the front lines by means other than claiming to be COs. Some COs and other men apparently feigned illness or disability, used influence to secure protected employment, or even went into hiding or fled the country for Ireland where there was no conscription (see for example, Harvey, 1917: vii; Langdon-Davies, 1935: 189). Meanwhile, those reluctant soldiers who failed to resist compulsion were, to some extent, to be heralded (at home at least) as heroes, along with other military men. Wearing a uniform, however one acquired it, seemed to amount to an automatic badge of courage.

But merely wearing a uniform was not enough to ensure that men in the military would live up to the cultural image of the soldier; degeneracy, dishonour and cowardice lurked beneath many a khaki coat. Men at the front, far from enjoying the adventure that they had been promised, sometimes damaged their bodies in order to escape the intolerable conditions. Joanne Bourke discusses the many ways of malingering including self-injury, deliberate infection or feigned illnesses (1996: 81–6). Soldiers also shirked their duties in other ways: committing offences against military law (see for example, Scott Druckers, 1917: 81–2, 93–4); disobeying orders; going on strike; or deserting (see for example, Bourke, 1996: 78–81). Although only around 300 men were shot following court martial, this represented 11 percent of the death sentences passed and many more men faced charges that potentially carried a capital sentence. Capital punishment was seen as providing a deterrent to other military men but its widespread use was discouraged; its use for all capital offences would have implied that many Englishmen at the front were not heroes (see Bourke, 1996: 94–100; Babington, 1983; *Statistics*, 1922). Indeed, there was also official evidence of the inversion with which COs were sometimes associated. Samuel Hynes cites army statistics which record that, between 1914 and 1919, 22 officers and 270 other ranks were court-martialled for gross indecency (1992: 225).

Thus, some warrior men, for a whole variety of reasons and in a number of different ways, patently failed to conform to the image constructed for them on the home front. In short, they were also *unmen*. But, of course, while men in the military were likely to be all too aware of these realities, they were, as far as possible, hidden from the English public. Such censorship was never going to be entirely successful. However, stories of *unmen* in the military tended not to gain widespread publicity during the war, given

the tight control over the press, publishers and printers. Nevertheless, many military men had a very different image of their manly existence and this came to be represented in some of their accounts of the war. Siegfried Sassoon's poem, 'The Hero' provides just one such example (n.d., cited by Fussell, 1975/2000: 7). Its three verses describe a 'Brother officer giving white-haired mother fictitious account of her cold-footed son's death at the front' (Sassoon, cited by Fussell, 1975/2000: 7). Similarly, Rose Macaulay's novel *Non-Combatants and Others* (1916/1986) reveals that those on the home front were not unaware of the unmanhood of some soldiers. The book describes the less than noble army record and death of the heroine's brother who 'went all to bits and lost his pluck', tried to get himself injured then, having failed, fatally shot himself (1916/1986: 99).

The existence of so-called 'shell-shock' provides another disruption of the dominant images of the supposedly glorious military man; according to official figures at least 200,000 men were affected (see Stone, 1985: 249). The condition, once it was identified, was initially suppressed by the authorities in the interests of preserving discipline at the front, preventing false claims and hiding the psychological harms of war (Leed, 1979: 166; Showalter, 1987: 170). Subsequently, it became politically expedient to accept the reality that shell-shock was an illness rather than a sign of war resistance, moral degeneracy or cowardice (Leeds, 1979: 168). However, the existence of this neurosis could be said to suggest the mental fragility of manhood. Indeed, it has been conceived of as one of the feminizing effects of war, as a form of resistance to the war and as a male protest against dominant notions of manliness (see Showalter, 1987: ch. 7). Thus, war, the 'most masculine of enterprises', represented the 'apocalypse of masculinism', feminizing soldiers through both their loss of autonomy under the military and the experience of shell-shock (1987: 173). Men, it seemed, rather than thriving on warfare, had actually caught the female malady, hysteria, in the trenches. Their reason and manliness were softened rather than proved and toughened by fighting. Yet, in society the image of the *un*man was popularly associated with the civilian and CO man rather than the soldier.

Perhaps what is most significant to note about the portrayal of soldiers and soldiering during the Great War is what was hidden about the war. The reluctance to recognize or name shell-shock, the censorship of defeat, of disaffection and of soldiers writing home, along with the hushing up of concerns about 'sodomy' in the army, marked attempts to silence certain narratives of the conflict and images of the soldier.

Beyond this, a very different image of the objector can be constructed from that presented in the early part of this article. Some COs were seen and portrayed by themselves and their sympathizers as the most honourable and courageous of men who were willing to suffer unknown tortures for their beliefs and possibly even make the ultimate sacrifice in front of a firing squad. In these depictions we see the efforts of dissenters from orthodoxy to defend and propound their stance, often by consciously producing their own propaganda, and the attempts of men to proclaim and/or reclaim their sense of



manliness both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others. Further, they also illustrate the way in which marginal and deviant groups can appropriate and attempt to subvert contemporary notions of exemplary manliness.

The NCF had decided at its first National Convention in November 1915 to produce its own propaganda (*Agenda*, 1915: 6). Thus, *The Tribunal* and the various NCF pamphlets not only sought to provide support, assistance and information to COs but also to reach out and influence popular opinion. Despite prosecutions, imprisonment (e.g. under the Defence of the Realm Consolidation Act 1914 and Defence of the Realm (Amendment) Act 1915), close monitoring by the secret state (see PRO, KV1), police seizure of copy, the destruction of printing presses and threats to publishers (see PRO, HO 45/10801/307402; Mitchel, 1966: 331–46), the Literature Department of the NCF continued these efforts throughout the war. In short, the organization maintained ‘a breathtakingly efficient conspiracy against the organised might of the state’ (Marwick, 1964: 23).

Other sources also sought to reconfigure the objector. *The Men Who Dared: The Story of an Adventure*, by Stanley B. James (1917), represents one such version of the CO story. In this text these men’s sacrifices and experiences are celebrated in an often dramatic, breathless style. Indeed, the book’s very title challenges the dominant conceptions of the CO in its representation of these men as swashbuckling heroes who undertook daredevil deeds:

... Brute Force became the Dictator of Europe. Militarism with its hectoring tyranny, its destructive mania, its disregard for individual liberty and life ... violated the world-consciousness. The very pulpits rang with appeals to arm and kill. ... But the powers of spiritual and moral resistance that are latent in mankind found at last expression. With desperate courage, a handful of men and women stood out against the Thing that was destroying the nations. ... These men are quite conscious of the desperate nature of the struggle in which they are engaged, but they are none the less certain that there can be but one result. ... (James, 1917: 6–7)

In this book COs were out to save the world. Their story is, thus, a heroic adventure narrative, albeit one involving exploits of a character very different from that of the soldier or spy.

Support for objectors and recognition of their courage sometimes came from unlikely sources. Max Plowman, an officer who resigned his commission when he developed anti-war sentiments, felt for objectors and maintained that ‘[t]he soldier in the trenches understands the position of the CO in prison’ (Plowman, 1944: 104). Other accounts of soldiers’ respect for and sympathy with objectors exist alongside the hatred and ill feeling that were more often reported. Indeed, even prominent military men sometimes recognized the courage of these men:

I think I am prouder of my country than I was before, because it has produced people who have sufficient conscientious scruples to enable them to face a long term of imprisonment rather than upset their consciences. It is something to be proud of even to produce martyrs of this sort as well as martyrs on the battle field. (Commander Wedgwood M.P., 5 HC 95, col. 338, 26 June 1917)

While such recognition did not necessarily entail approval of conscientious objection, or of all types of CO, it does reveal the existence of a very different perception of these men from that which was popularly encouraged. Such sympathetic portrayals of (some) COs are finely scattered through many unlikely publications of the period. Perhaps what is most surprising is that they were published at all, given the state and self-censorship that was exercised during the war (see further below).

Some of the fiction of the war years also portrayed COs in a more positive light. Such writings posed a particularly sharp contrast to those authors, like Barrie, who produced literature as propaganda, sometimes at the state's bidding. *Despised and Rejected*, written by Rose Allatini under the pseudonym A. T. Fitzroy, was published in May 1918 by CW Daniel (Fitzroy, 1918/1988), who had previously been prosecuted for producing a pacifist pamphlet (see Cutbill, 1988: 4). The text's two main characters, a gay CO and a lesbian, become part of a pacifist subculture revolving around a London café. The work provides a powerful account of objectors' early wartime experiences, with characters dissecting the stance of COs and conchies describing their self-exposure to 'ridicule and vilification' (Fitzroy, 1918/1988: 342). Thus, Antoinette, in arguing with those who would castigate objectors, maintains that '[you] can't call a man who's ready to go to prison for his convictions a weakling or a coward' (1918/1988: 301). The work was prosecuted as being 'likely to prejudice the recruiting of persons to serve in His Majesty's Forces, and their training and discipline' and it was banned under the Defence of the Realm provisions (see Cutbill, 1988: 1, 4–5, 11; Tylee, 1990: 121.).

John Buchan's *Mr Standfast*, published in 1919, was another example of fiction that went against the flood of jingoistic hatred of objectors in its sympathetic portrayal of Lancelot Wake, a (gay) CO, who dies heroically at the Front as a non-combatant (Buchan, 1919/1994). However, for a number of reasons this work was not prosecuted and was popular among soldiers. What distinguished this from Allatini's work was not only its date of publication but also the identity of its author and the nature of the objector character. Buchan was an established author of patriotic adventure stories, a defender of responsible imperialism, and a member of the establishment. In 1917 he headed the new Department of Information which had taken over the work of the War Propaganda Bureau (Roberts, 1996: 59; Smith, 1965: 200, ch. 8). Moreover, in *Mr Standfast* the main objector character is distinct from other fictionalized conchies of the period. Wake epitomizes the 'good' CO. The character is intensely patriotic and courageous. He is prepared to serve his country even to the death; he was the type of objector that the popular press and the establishment was least unhappy to recognize (for example, see Asquith's portrayal of the CO in his speech introducing the Military Service Bill's conscience clause – 5 HC 77, col. 957–8, 5 January 1916).

At the beginning of this article the image of the Christian soldier was described as one that had a particular currency. Christian pacifists also used such images to describe the CO. They were self-sacrificing Christian soldiers who would not fight – at least in the conventional sense of violence and

warfare. For example, a short story written by Eva Gore-Booth reaffirms the idea of objectors as Christ-like. The story catalogues the injustices of the tribunal system by depicting one such body at work. It ends with a clergyman member questioning an applicant on conscience grounds who is, just like those who have gone before him, refused exemption. But in the visionary ending to the story the identity of this applicant is revealed: 'it is Someone I have been hoping all my life to meet – people said He would come again, but, indeed, I never thought to find Him here' (published in Graham, 1922: 102–9).

Patriotism was also sometimes associated with COs as well as military men. Although many COs rejected the very notion of loyalty to a country, some representations of the objector proclaimed him as a true patriot. For example, George Baker's autobiographical account describes his experiences as a socialist CO: 'this is a story of a man who, then not much more than a boy, during the Great War did his bit for England'. Before prison, he 'wore the white feather; in prison, the broad arrow, and after prison (according to some) . . . the mark of Cain' (Baker, 1930: ix). He continues: 'I . . . am a pacifist . . . a patriot. I love my country, and its heroic poor who are the salt of its English earth' (1930: x). So here we have the supposedly unpatriotic CO celebrating his allegiance to his country. Similarly, Clifford Allen, a Chairman of the NCF, reflected upon his wartime experiences as a CO while released from prison on health grounds in January 1918:

I am glad – unashamedly glad that this sea-girth is my native country . . . I want my country to be the greatest amongst the nations of the world – great by virtue of its loyalty to freedom and tolerance . . . We C.O.s must somehow make it clear to our fellow countrymen that it was our very love of country that made us choose prison rather than see her sported and bound by conscription. (quoted in Gilbert, 1965: 105)

Further, as the NCF sought to highlight, examining the issue of motivation could further disrupt the supposedly oppositional forms of manhood represented by the soldier and the objector. The brave CO, like the exemplary volunteer, was acting upon his conscience and doing his duty in following his beliefs, and consequently he willingly suffered harsh treatment or even torture. The NCF often promoted the similarities between the soldier and the volunteer, although, while it was recognized that both suffered, the greater hardship and dangers faced by the former were generally (carefully) acknowledged. For example, in April 1916 Clifford Allen, Chairman of the NCF, acknowledged the common suffering and sacrifice of the soldier and the CO (Graham, 1922: 189).

Moreover, just like the fallen soldier, a few conchies came to be seen and portrayed as martyrs by their supporters. The first CO to die was Walter Roberts at a Home Office Scheme hard labour camp in Dyce in September 1916. Although he apparently died of natural causes, his life ended in harsh conditions. *The Tribunal* published a valediction celebrating his struggle: '[a]nd now the struggle of this brave bearer of the banner of Peace is over.

His body rests beside those of many noble men at Haerden . . . To all his life and death must be an inspiration . . .' (14 September 1916). The text uses the 'high' diction that Fussell has described (1975/2000: 21–3). Here, and in texts like the aforementioned *The Men Who Dared*, those who fought for the CO were seeking to create heroes and martyrs and, in order to do so, utilized the language used to celebrate the warrior. Given the desire to celebrate a CO life, the use of dominant forms to praise the dead was unsurprising; they were what was available. In addition, this approach was strategically important as it might have suggested an air of legitimacy to both the CO cause and CO manhood.

### CONCLUSION

By facing popular contempt and ridicule, ill-treatment in the barracks, long imprisonment, and in thirty-six cases the shock of the death sentences, these men have proved their convictions genuine. They have shown themselves possessed of a moral courage at least equal to the common soldier's, and far greater than most of us educated people could show. (Nevinson, 1916: 693)

How do we assay the toughness needed to resist the norm of toughness . . . ? (Connell, 1995: 70)

This has been a brief sketch of the ways in which the portrayal of two 'categories' of men were constructed and (to some extent) manipulated during the First World War. Law plays a part in these representations but its role is neither straightforward nor is it one that occupies centre stage. Indeed, in order to analyse the depiction of deviance here it becomes important to see the legal as but a small part of the wider sociocultural and political context.

In the analysis I have also sought to suggest that alternative depictions of the CO embodied many of the characteristics and sought to occupy territories that were supposedly the preserve of the iconic military man. Thus, despite the pro-war establishment's attempts to prevent such incursions, celebratory and sympathetic depictions of the objector echoed some of the qualities epitomized by the soldier ideal; in the case of both COs and soldiers, self-sacrifice, honour, belief, duty and heroism were valorized. Indeed, the CO, like the soldier, by going forth into the unknown, was portrayed as journeying courageously into his own no-man's land. In contrast, the soldier in the trenches or on home service, and particularly the conscript, could be viewed as having little choice but to adopt an almost feminine passivity, as he awaited orders and then (sometimes) followed them. Moreover, some of these warrior men were arguably *unmanned* by war.

Beyond this, COs and their supporters' depictions of objectors as heroic, honourable and true formed part of their strategies of resistance and challenge. Here a group that was perceived of as deviant and marginal appropriated facets of a dominant ideology within their arguments and propaganda. The potential usefulness of such tactics has been noted elsewhere. For example, R.

W. Connell (via Wendy Chapkis' work on female beauty) suggests the subversive possibilities offered by 'playing with the elements of gender' by unpacking gendered concepts. By way of example he suggests that, given heroism is a core concept of hegemonic masculinity, representing gay men as heroic could form part of a project of social justice (1995: 234).

However, this is a strategy with inherent limitations. Thus, COs, in seeking to inhabit the land of heroes, might have encouraged some sympathy for their plight and for their stance but in so doing they were also reinforcing the notion of heroism as a vital component of true manliness. Thus, by drawing upon existing narratives of manhood, objectors and their supporters were merely seeking to challenge the kinds of behaviour that were perceived of as being courageous, rather than the qualities associated with manhood (or, indeed, those associated with womanhood). Nevertheless, attempting to shift or confuse the meaning of key ideas about gender is a worthy project.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

IWM = Imperial War Museum  
PRO = Public Records Office

#### NOTES

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1. See further (forthcoming, 2004) *Dishonourable English Men: Conscientious Objection to Conscription During the Great War*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
2. Studies include Graham (1922), Rae (1970) and Hayes (1949).
3. The degree to which Victorian versions of manliness were elite cultural forms has been the subject of some discussion. However, there is some evidence that such images did filter through to the working classes (see for example, Tosh, 1994: 181–2). In addition, the wartime portrayal of heroic manliness certainly addressed a mass audience.
4. Subsequent measures extended the scope of conscription. See Bibbings (1995).
5. Some were not prepared to do this as it meant accepting the state's authority or avoided compulsion by other means. See Rae (1970: 65, 130).
6. The term is taken from Gilbert (1983: 423).
7. See PRO MH 47/3.
8. On public hostility to objectors and pacifists (see for example, Kennedy, 1973).
9. Sir George Adam Smith, at his Inaugural Address as Moderator at the United Free Church Assembly for 1916, cited in Graham (1922: 43).

10. On decadency and homosexuality, see for example, Showalter (1992: ch. 9). Greenslade describes decadence as a mutation of degeneration theory (1994: 31).

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