Conscientious Objection and Cultural Memory: Retrospective Perspectives Among Britain's World War One Conscientious Objectors

by © Colin Forward

A Thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in History

Memorial University of Newfoundland

September 2024

St John's Newfoundland and Labrador

Abstract

Approximately 20,000 Britons registered as conscientious objectors during the First World War. While there has been significant analysis regarding both their actions and motivations, no previous study has comprehensively examined the testimony these men supplied to the historical archive in their later years, during the 1960s-1980s, which represented their unique cultural memory of the conflict. This thesis considers said testimony, alongside CO sources contemporary to the war as well as historical research on COs, with the aim of demonstrating that their experiences in the 1910s defined how these men thought about certain matters for the remainder of their lives. These matters include their sense of identity and unity, their politics and ideologies, their dynamics with other British citizens, their understanding of masculinity in the context of the war, and their opinion of the nature of war in the aftermath of both World Wars. The story encoded within these testimonies reinforce our recognition of the vital role these men played in the development of Britain's anti-war movement in the 20th century and provide a potential blueprint for future generations of war resisters who may find themselves needing to resist the order of their government to take up arms.

General Summary

Roughly 20,000 British men, known as "conscientious objectors," refused to fight in the First World War. Many years after the war, in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, these men spoke to museums and researchers about what that was like. Comparing their descriptions at that time against what they wrote during the war shows us that these men did not change very much in their opinions and beliefs as they grew older. Their stories show that by taking a stand against the First World War they made it easier for other British men to refuse to fight in later wars. It is important for their actions to be remembered because they can serve as an inspiration for others to stand up against wars in the future, and because understanding the mindset and approach of World War One conscientious objectors will help them be more effective when they take that stand.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Dr. Justin Fantauzzo, my supervisor, for his invaluable guidance. He has not only been an effective and encouraging mentor and a genuine wellspring of knowledge in the process of writing this thesis, but it was his initial encouragement that led me to pursue a Masters in History to begin with. Simply put, I could not have written this without him. Additional thanks are owed to the other members of the History faculty who taught me during my pursuit of this degree, as their influence and wisdom played no small part in developing my aptitude as a scholar.

I would also like to thank the School of Graduate Studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland for the Fellowship, and all additional funding, that allowed me to pursue this research.

The staff at the Library of the Society of Friends in London deserve thanks also, both for the assistance they rendered during my research process and for the genuine interest they displayed in my subject, which was highly appreciated and highly motivational.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my family for their whole-hearted support and patience with me throughout this long writing process. My father and sister deserve particular thanks for their countless voyages to retrieve me from the university library at all hours of the day and night. Finally, I would like to thank my fiancé, Emily, for her devoted assistance on my research trip to England. I would never have been able to gather all my research materials in time without her assistance in the archives, helping to photograph papers and transcribe oral interviews.

Table of Contents

Abstract ii

General Summary iii

Acknowledgements iv

Table of Contents v

An Introduction: The Meaning and Value of Cultural Memory 1

Chapter 1: The Development of Contemporary British Perspectives on World War One 7

Chapter 2: Three Branches of Historical Thinking on Conscientious Objectors 19

Chapter 3: Memory, Oral History, and a Discussion of Sources 31

Chapter 4: Absolutism, Alternativism, Christianity & Classifications: The Stability of CO Identity 39

Chapter 5: "Not A Nasty Lot At All:" CO Retrospectives on their Treatment by their Fellow Men During the War 58

Chapter 6: White Feathers and Black Sheep: COs, Gender Dynamics and Familial Alienation 76

Chapter 7: CO Experiences of and Perspectives on 1918-1945 90

Conclusions: CO Assessments of British Society Post-1945 & Beyond 109

Bibliography 119

An Introduction: The Meaning and Value of Cultural Memory

More than a century after the bloody conflict finally came to an abrupt halt on November 11th 1918, the First World War remains well-trodden ground for historians. Despite the undeniably massive scope of the conflict, and perhaps precisely because of it, one might be tempted to conclude that there are surely few, if any, novel lines of inquiry left for First World War historians to explore, especially those scholars primarily concerned with Great Britain. After all, over the course of many decades, countless valuable research projects have thoroughly considered nearly every aspect of the war within Britain, underpinned by a wide spectrum of methodological approaches and theoretical backgrounds. Volumes upon volumes have been carefully compiled covering topics such as the complex military logistics of waging war; the intense conflicts that raged at home within Britain's political sector; the bloody, muddy yet perplexingly mundane reality of life in the trenches; the colossal economic and technological impact of the great industrial systems of the nation, churning like never before; and the fashion in which the civilian population of Great Britain both physically experienced and psychologically conceptualized the Great War.

The legacy of the conflict is well-researched, albeit not as well-researched as the war itself. England's cultural memory of the war has been the subject of numerous studies, perhaps most famously Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*, published in 1975, which dictated the proverbial terms of engagement for academic study of this topic for many years. Thus, if the First World War was once a fertile plot of ground for historians to dig into, it may now appear to be as deeply mined as the pockmarked fields of Europe became under the relentless fire of artillery during the conflict itself. Nevertheless, there are still a few unexcavated

plots remaining for those scholars persistent enough to continue overturning the soil. One of these plots lies at the junction between two areas that have already been thoroughly uncovered. This is the overlap between the aforementioned study of Britain's cultural memory of the war and the study of Britain's First World War conscientious objectors, which is a topic that has benefitted from heightened academic interest over the past two decades. Yet, as I will demonstrate, while both of those subjects have received their fair share of attention from historians, their overlap – the cultural memory of Britain's WW1 conscientious objectors in the aftermath of the war – has not been so fortunate. Remedying this oversight is the primary objective of this dissertation.

Exploration of this topic requires, of course, a few preliminary definitions and points of clarification. Who exactly were Britain's conscientious objectors, and what exactly am I gesturing towards when I refer to their 'cultural memory'?

The answer to the former question is, on the surface, a simple matter of facts. In late 1915, the British government introduced the Derby Scheme, a program intended to encourage eligible British men to volunteer for military service by having them preemptively "attest" for service without officially being called up for immediate service, essentially promising the British government that they would answer the call to action whenever it eventually came. However, the Derby Scheme did not produce the results the British government had hoped for. According to historian Ilana R. Bet-El, although there were a little over 5 million men deemed eligible under the age guidelines, only about 722,000 men attested, were medically fit for service and were not employed in industries necessary for the war effort.[1] This number was, in the eyes of the British army, an insufficient quantity of manpower. Thus, in January 1916, with no prospect of victory in

[1] Ilana Bet-El, *Conscripts : Lost Legions of the Great War*, (Phoenix Mill, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1999), 11.

sight, the British government passed the Military Service Act. This was a piece of legislation that imposed mandatory military service on a significant portion of the male population of Great Britain, specifically all unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 41 aside from the medically unfit and members of a few protected professions. Another act, passed in May 1916, imposed conscription upon married men as well, and in 1918 the age limit was raised by another decade to 51.

There were several options that those who fell under the jurisdiction of the Military Service Act could resort to in a bid to potentially avoid spending their following years squatting in the mud-caked trenches of France or the blood-soaked sands of the Middle East with a rifle in hand. Those who were served call-up notices could appeal to the government, asking to be exempted from service for a number of reasons. As per the "Application As To Exemption" form they were required to fill out, they could argue, for instance, that "it is expedient in the national interests that the man should, instead of being employed in military service, be engaged in other work in which he is habitually employed" or "that serious financial hardship would ensue if the man were called up for Army services, owing to his exceptional financial or business obligations or domestic position."[2] Naturally, however, it is only those who applied for exemption "on the ground of a conscientious objection to the undertaking of combatant services" that have traditionally been viewed as conscientious objectors (hereinafter referred to as COs).[3] As per the most recent estimates, they numbered roughly 20,000 men, and can be further subdivided into two groups: a majority of "alternativists", who accepted non-combat roles in Britain's war effort,

---

[2] A number of these forms are kept at the British National Archives. See, for example, MH 47/8/1/57 at the aforementioned institution.

[3] While the acronym CO is typically associated with "commanding officer" when used in a military context, I have nevertheless opted to use it here to refer to "conscientious objector" as conscientious objectors themselves as well as British society as a whole used it to refer to conscientious objectors both during and after the war.

and a minority of approximately 1,500 "absolutists", who refused any and all work that contributed to the nation's military efforts.[4]

Given that this thesis is concerned with the "cultural memory" of these individuals, it is necessary to provide a clear definition of exactly what that term encompasses. Both "culture" and "memory" are rather broad and imprecise terms when employed in an academic context, and thus need to be refined into something more specific to be useful. Thankfully, an exact definition of cultural memory has been crafted by Jan Assmann, an influential Egyptologist and archaeologist who, alongside his spouse Aleida Assmann, played a significant part in early academic discourse on the idea of national memory, a closely related concept. Assmann defines cultural memory as "that body of reusable texts, images and rituals specific to each society in each epoch, whose 'cultivation' seems to stabilize and codify that society's self-image."[5] In other words, it is the collection of symbols that a given culture incorporates into their sense of collective identity, binding them together into a unified group. But while this definition may aptly capture the notion of cultural memory as an *object* (metaphysical though it may be), I am also interested in simultaneously treating cultural memory as a *process* – that is to say, not merely what cultural memory is composed of, but also how the process of composition is carried out.

To this end, I would like to briefly quote the historian Jay Winter, who penned the introduction of the 2013 edition of Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Here, Winter asserted that Fussell's contribution to the study of the First World War lay within "his insight into the way language frames memory, especially memories of war."[6] When I use the term "cultural

[4] Max Hodgson, "Pathologising 'Refusal': Prison, Health and Conscientious Objectors During the First World War, *Social History of Medicine: the Journal of the Society for the Social History of Medicine* 35 no. 3 (2022): pg. 973.
[5] Stefan Berger and Bill Niven, "Writing the history of national memory," in *Writing the History of Memory*, ed. Stefan Berger and Bill Niven, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 138.
[6] Jay Winter, introduction to *The Great War and Modern Memory* by Paul Fussell, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), x.

memory," this notion – memory as both interpreted through and shaped by the very language used to express it – is, in part, what I am signifying. Thus, my own usage of the term "cultural memory" is perhaps best understood as the shared understanding of past experiences that becomes embedded within a group through their continued engagement within a retrospective collective discourse.

This definition, admittedly, may seem to undermine the importance of the subject this text is concerned with. After all, all of the WW1 COs have already passed away. If "cultural memory" requires, as I have just argued, "continued engagement within a retrospective collective discourse," then the development of their cultural memory is a completed process and a finished product. What relevance could it possibly hold now, more than a century after the war ended? We know the facts surrounding the experiences of these individuals, so why does it matter what they thought about those experiences, now that they are dead and gone?

I argue that it is precisely because they no longer remain that now is the perfect time to consider their experiences and perspectives. While WW1 COs are no longer capable of engaging within a collective discourse, that does not mean that the record of this discourse has been properly compiled, as thoroughly as possible, and interpreted by historians. In fact, it might be argued that such a compilation only becomes truly possible when the conversation is "complete", as the final disappearance of a group from the ranks of the living means that their cultural memory has assumed, for better or worse, a final and unchanging shape.[7] And yet, while it cannot meaningfully grow, it can still degrade, if the sources that constitute its body are lost to the ravages of time. Thus, if historians wish to extract the maximum possible value from the

[7] There remains, of course, the possibility that primary sources generated by Britain's WW1 COs that have not yet been considered by historians may be uncovered by scholars pouring through the archives or found by the descendants of COs among family heirlooms. Indeed, a portion of materials relating to at least one CO, John Brocklesby, remain closed at the Library of the Society of Friends until 2028 as part of TEMP/MSS/412/2 due to their policies on unpublished manuscripts. However, it seems improbable that this, or any other materials not yet examined, will be substantial or novel enough to significantly change the overall shape of CO's cultural memory.

experiences and perspectives of Britain's WW1 COs, it is critical to study the subject now, without further delay, while we are fortunate enough to have a fairly substantial library of information created by these individuals as they sought an understanding of the significance of their own experiences. The task of organizing and contemplating these records will allow us to understand the world as they understood it and, in doing so, incorporate whatever wisdom they developed into our own approach to life.

And what precisely are the insights that might be gleaned from examining the experiences of Britain's WW1 COs? By examining sources created by this group near the end of their lives in the back half of the 20th century in conjunction with some sources contemporary to the war itself, this dissertation will argue that their testimony tells the story of a group of people who were single-minded and resilient. No matter what the rest of British society thought about the war, COs never questioned the legitimacy of their stand against it, and they lived with few regrets. Their reaction to the outbreak of the First World War foreshadowed the eventual attitude of senselessness that developed in British society, and they steadfastly refused to be complicit in the bloodshed that followed. Through this clarity of purpose, they were able to remain strong in the face of adversity and its aftermath, allowing them to play a small part in reshaping British society for the better by clearing a path for their successors in the British anti-war movement. Above all else, Britain's WW1 COs demonstrated to the world that a government cannot truly force its citizens to fight a war on its behalf without the consent of those citizens, and that a government that tries is bound to face passionate resistance from those that recognize the value of independent choice.

Chapter 1: The Development of Contemporary British Perspectives on World War One

In 2022, a third film adaptation was produced of Erich Maria Remarque's iconic anti-war novel *All Quiet on the Western Front*, following versions released in 1930 and 1979. Although the narrative follows a young fictional German soldier by the name of Paul, the story in its various incarnations has garnered considerable attention all over the world. As such, even though *All Quiet on the Western Front* focuses on the experiences of soldiers from a nation that was Britain's enemy at the time, the story has typically resonated deeply with Britons. As argued in one review of the film from centre-left news publication *The Guardian*, "for generations of British readers, the story [has] provided the symmetrical complement to similar agony behind the Allied lines, a book read in tandem with, say, Wilfred Owen's poetry."[8] An examination of various reviews for this adaptation suggests a particularly grim perception of the First World War predominates among the British populace, surpassing even the boundaries of political alignment. The socially liberal *Independent* asserts that "War is hell. We know that by now, certainly beyond any doubt,"[9] while the conservative *Telegraph* offers up a slightly broader "Violence may be hell."[10] A review from *The Observer,* a sister publication to the *Guardian*, portrays WW1 as "a war that was fought, in filth, vermin and desperation" wherein "lives [were] sacrificed on the whims of powerful, thick-skinned men,"[11] a slightly more acerbic statement than *The*

---

[8] Peter Bradshaw, "All Quiet on the Western Front review – anti-war nightmare of bloodshed and chaos," *Guardian,* October 12th 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/oct/12/all-quiet-on-the-western-front-review-anti-war-nightmare-of-bloodshed-and-chaos.

[9] William Stottor, "'All Quiet on the Western Front' is a Harrowing Depiction of War: Review," *Independent*, October 31st 2022, https://www.independent.co.uk/all-quiet-on-the-western-front-is-a-harrowing-depiction-of-war-review.

[10] Ed Power, "Netflix's German-language All Quiet on the Western Front is a haunting revelation," *Telegram*, January 19th, 2023, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/0/quiet-western-front-netflix-review-eerily-beautiful-new-take.

[11] Wendy Ide, "All Quiet on the Western Front review – extraordinarily potent German first world war drama, " October 15th 2022, *Guardian,*

Independent's reference to "the senseless loss of lives" during the war. Lurking within these remarks is a palpable attitude of sorrow and disgust, perhaps even genuine regret. If these reviews are representative of the general consensus held within British cultural memory, they indicate that Britons have undergone a process of disillusionment. They now primarily regard the war as a tragic period of carnage. To some members of this society, the conflict was not justified, an opinion acknowledged by former British Prime Minister David Cameron in 2014 during a ceremonial speech commemorating the centennial anniversary of the war. During his speech, the leader expressed concerns that "Too often it has been dismissed as a pointless war, fought by people who didn't know why they were fighting."[12]

There is a specific underlying assumption colouring this perspective that frequently goes unquestioned. Modern Britons, at least those with a casual grasp of history, seem to believe that the way they picture the First World War is a wholly accurate image, and that the way that they feel towards the event mirrors the sentiments of those who personally experienced the conflict. They cannot really be blamed for this, as there is an understandable logic to this attitude. The layperson in Great Britain thinks, after all, that they have been exposed to enough solid evidence to support this viewpoint. Consider, for example, *The Guardian*'s reference to the poetry of Wilfred Owen. Owen, who tragically lost his life in 1918 just days before the conflict ended, is one of the most well-known First World War poets in Great Britain. Here was a man whose experience of the war was profoundly visceral, whose experience of the conflict was so intimate that it led to his death. Surely, then, there can be no opinion on the war imbued with greater validity than his, and his picture of war calls to mind "Only the monstrous anger of the guns,

https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/oct/15/all-quiet-on-the-western-front-review-extraordinarily-potent-german-first-world-war-drama.

[12] "David Cameron makes moving speech as lights go out to mark WW1 centenary," *Standard,* August 4th 2014, https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/david-cameron-makes-moving-speech-as-lights-go-out-to-mark-ww1-centenary-9648074.html.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle" and "The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells."[13] This horrific stock image of war is not only the same image presented by *All Quiet on the Western Front*, but the same image presented by the vast majority of British First World War narratives over the last century. Unlike the layperson, however, historians recognize that this picture of war is a caricature. There is a kernel of truth to it, certainly, but it is distorted and overemphasizes not merely the ugliest features of the war, but specifically features which were largely confined to specific temporal and geographic boundaries – in particular, the area of the Ypres Salient in Belgium near the end of 1917.[14] A brief survey of works by historians that consider British memory of the First World War will illuminate how various forces in British society contributed to the development of this oversimplified portrayal of the First World War.

As previously mentioned, the first notable entry into the compendium of academic works to analyze the way that British society came to remember the First World War is Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*. Fussell, a veteran of the Second World War who was admittedly a professor of literature rather than a historian, attempts to unpack and assess "the way the dynamics and iconography of the Great War have proved crucial political, rhetorical and artistic determinants on subsequent life."[15] His personal academic background explains why Fussell's analysis centered largely upon the prose of Britain's war poets, such as Owen and his compatriot, Siegfried Sassoon. Fussell argues that the high degree of public awareness of these works and their vivid portrayal of the war from the perspective of the soldier, viscerally engaged with the realities of battle and the trenches, allowed for "novelists and poets too young to have experienced it [the war] directly… [to] transform the war into a 'subject' and simplify its motifs

[13] Wilfred Owen, "Anthem for Doomed Youth" in *Poetry of the First World War: An Anthology*, ed. Tim Kendall, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 153.
[14] Daniel Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory*, (Hambledon and London: London and New York, 2005), 4.
[15] Winter, introduction to *Great War and Modern Memory,* xv.

into myths and figures expressive in the modern existential predicament."[16] This basic argument itself – the idea that cultural memory is preserved through a society's reinterpretation of the art generated concurrently with and as commentary on a given moment – both supports and is supported by the staying power of WW1 poetry. However, Fussell's analysis is too narrow to be taken without a grain of salt.[17] The words of a small quantity of artistically-inclined upper-class soldiers, even if widely circulated among their countrymen, cannot singlehandedly explain why Britons remain so fixated upon their morbid picture of the First World War, no matter how vivid and memorable their prose may be.

Taking up the torch from Fussell roughly twenty years later, two historians – Adrian Gregory and Jay Winter – began the search for other possible influences upon Britain's memory of the war. In 1994, Gregory published *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day 1919-1946*, a monograph which examined British memorialization of the conflict during the interwar period through the lens of ritualistic commemoration, rather than through the legacy of war-era literature. Gregory undertook this analysis with the explicit belief "that the memory of the war was not constant and that in fact it was being reshaped by political, diplomatic and economic events during the inter-war period, rather than shaping them."[18] If Fussell presented the cultural memory of the war as something expressed and contained within the medium of art, Gregory instead argues that the meaning of the war was a topic, and perhaps even a venue, for public debate, at least initially, and he used the discourse surrounding the cultural significance of Armistice Day in the 1920s and 1930s as proof of this fact. Ultimately, he finds that British memory "stressed civilian, particularly women's, sacrifice through bereavement. It aimed to

---

[16] Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory,* 1975. Reprint, (New York: Oxford University Press: 2013), 348.

[17] For a comprehensive review of Fussell's work and an overview of the academic discourse regarding this text, see Leonard V. Smith's article "Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory*: Twenty-Five Years Later, " in *History and Theory* 40, no. 2, (2001), 241-60.

[18] Adrian Gregory, *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919-1946*, (London: Bloomsbury, 1994), 9.

universalize the memory of the war… The ex-serviceman was marginalized in the process."[19] Thus, while Gregory demonstrates that the forging of a national cultural memory might be a collective process that unfolds in a variety of different social forums, his work also suggests that it is not a process that can support multiple divergent end results. The concept of a nation inherently collapses the identities of its constituent citizens into a single amalgamated unit. Consequently, the narratives that a nation strives to perpetuate in its cultural memory must similarly trend towards a simplified story with a single meaning.

Jay Winter's findings in his 1995 work, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History,* might be viewed as the natural extension of this viewpoint. Much as a national identity absorbs the identity of its citizens, nations themselves are unified under continental banners of identity. Winter found that the cultural memory of the war in Britain was not exceptional when compared to other nations, but was rather part of a pan-European paradigm. He argues that "the enduring appeal of many traditional motifs - defined as an eclectic set of classical, romantic or religious images and ideas - is directly related to the universality of bereavement in the Europe of the Great War and its aftermath."[20] There is undeniable merit to this idea, given that it provides a clear reason for the well-documented appeal of *All Quiet on the Western Front* to Britons. Simultaneously, however, Winter argues that the way Britons remembered the war could also be a highly personal matter. He stresses that beyond the aesthetic and political spheres of public performance, "there was another level on which they lived the 'meaning' of the war. That level was private, sometimes solitary, and frequently hidden from view."[21] Plainly put, the way that British citizens thought about the war while in groups differed

[19] Ibid., 161.
[20] J. M. Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European Cultural History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 5.
[21] Ibid., 224.

from the way they thought about it as individuals. In this sense, Winter might be understood as drawing a distinction between 'collective memory' and 'collective remembrance,' wherein the former refers to shared conceptions of an event and the latter to expressions of those conceptions within the public sphere.

While Fussell, Gregory and Winter have focused on understanding what influenced Britain's cultural memory of the war in terms of the war's symbolic meaning and in what ways that meaning has been publicly expressed, other scholars have sought to explore the matter of how British cultural memory of the war has changed over the years with regards to the physical and psychological realities of the conflict and attempted to identify the primary influences that drove those changes. For example, in 2005's *The Great War: Myth and Memory*, Daniel Todman endeavoured to explain the emergence of six popular narratives regarding the war that he deems to be "myths" that have entered Britain's cultural memory. Most of these myths can be found lurking within the words of the aforementioned reviews of *All Quiet on the Western Front*: the uniquely filthy physical conditions of the conflict; the manner in which death touched the lives of every British citizen; the incompetence of British leadership; the overall futility of the war; the unified perspective of war poets and the universal disillusionment of veterans. Todman makes explicit the connections he perceives between contemporary events within a society and changes in their collective memory. For example, in the text's fourth chapter, "Futility", he asserts that the notion that the war was an entirely pointless exercise in bloodshed emerged and re-emerged at several distinct occasions throughout the twentieth century, as British citizens became disillusioned with the seemingly endless string of international incidents and political tension

that characterised that century, such as the Second World War, the Cold War and Vietnam.[22] They could not help but allow these conflicts to influence their beliefs about the First World War.

Fussell's influence on this branch of scholarship is still apparent thirty years later within Todman's work. While Todman explicitly critiques the flaws he identifies in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, he also, like Fussell, finds that due to the influence of literature, Britons came to view the war as less of a series of concrete events and more as a mythologized assortment of symbols bearing philosophical significance. As he argues, it became the case that over the course of the century, for the most popular pieces of British media about the First World War, "a key element is not how accurately it depicts the war in historical terms, but rather how easily others can use it to bolster their own preconceptions." The actual details of what happened during the war lost relevance as British society instead came to focus on what they *believed* to have happened, and subsequently what ideas they could generate and support based on this interpretation of the conflict's significance to the national identity.

One particularly relevant "myth" in British cultural memory pertains to the public response to the war during the conflict. Broadly speaking, modern Anglophone society tends to "remember" the war as being a grim, bloody duty waged by the masses first out of enthusiasm, and then out of obligation, albeit with little active complaint in the latter stage. And yet, First World War historians have occupied themselves debating both the extent of and the reasons behind any militaristic enthusiasm demonstrated by British citizens. In terms of public support for the war, historian Catriona Pennell has argued that at the onset of the war in 1914, the support of the average Briton for the war was "very often carefully considered, well-informed, reasoned and only made once all other options were exhausted. By August 4 people supported the war, but

[22] Todman, *The Great War,* 136 & 142-143.

only because they felt it was the right thing to do in the circumstances."[23] But arriving at a decision does not necessarily indicate a smooth decision-making process. Pennell stresses that this support was accompanied by mixed emotions, at times contradictory, ranging from "anxiety, excitement, fear, enthusiasm, panic, uncertainty and criticism… Often they were felt at the same time, or at the very least, within hours, days, or weeks of each other."[24] British civilians may have largely supported the decision to go to war, but support and enthusiasm are not one and the same.

Regarding the reaction of those who enlisted immediately to serve in the war, historian David Silbey's *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm For War, 1914-1916*, published in 2005, argues that both social historians and military historians have been overly reductive on the matter of Britain's pre-conscription volunteer soldiers, asserting that by "treating the volunteers as a herd, historians have been able to apply a single motivation to them, often an emotional, even irrational one."[25] Rather than merely being motivated by sentimental patriotism, he instead posits that working-class Britons had a multitude of additional reasons to volunteer for armed service, including a desire to see the world, the opportunity of an escape from the monotony of their home and financial incentives. Still, while these motivations seem perfectly reasonable as the logic behind taking up any ordinary sort of job, our retrospective knowledge of the war's hefty death toll raises the question of whether exotic sights and a full wallet were worth gambling with one's life. As such, the way that Britain came to remember the war is characterized by a sense that the working-class soldiers who willingly went to war with such "petty" materialistic motivations were acting irrationally. As Silbey notes, over time we have

[23] Catriona Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.
[24] Ibid., 227.
[25] David Silbey, *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War, 1914-1916*, (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 2.

become prone to conclude that “some of the enlistees’ decisions look foolish” even though “this sort of retroactive evaluation slips worryingly into the ahistorical.”[26]

Silbey also makes an intriguing argument regarding the motivation behind the Military Service Act. He argues that one of the primary reasons that conscription was enacted in 1916 was because “the government and society believed that a pool of shirkers existed. They looked around for a solution. The simplest seemed compulsion.”[27] However, other scholars, such as Bet-El, have traditionally emphasized the need for industrial and military manpower coupled with low rates of volunteerism to explain Britain’s turn to conscription.[28] As such, the idea that conscription came about as a direct punishment for men who did not volunteer to serve, rather than simply being the result of a genuine need for soldiers, has not gained much traction among historians besides Silbey.

In fact, other scholars have taken the opposite route to Silbey and highlighted the presence of anti-war sentiment in Britain during the war. One such historian is Brock Millman, whose *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain* suggests that the intensity of efforts to resist the war while it was ongoing have been historically downplayed, partially due to “a selective memory and a bad conscience. Most of those personally engaged on the government side left little record of their activities against dissent.”[29] If Millman’s argument is to be believed, it suggests that one of the factors that resulted in the popular belief that Britain’s wartime population (with the exception of conscientious objectors and their allies) whole-heartedly accepted the necessity of the conflict was the absence, or arguably even the active suppression, of materials preserved that were capable of supporting alternative narratives. Consider, for

[26] Ibid., 127.
[27] Ibid., 32.
[28] Bet-El, *Conscripts*, 11-13.
[29] Brock Millman, *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*, (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 3.

example, Millman's conclusion that "Reaction, if not revolution, was always incipient during 1918, and may well have been months, if not weeks away, when the war ended – suddenly and unexpectedly – in November."[30] While historians can never really prove beyond a doubt what *could* have happened if things went differently – even if such exercises can occasionally produce compelling works of fiction – the possibility of a British anti-war revolution in 1918 would seem ludicrous to the modern British citizen, as a result of how British society has come to remember the war as a unifying mutual struggle.

Now that we have covered several of the narratives that have come to dominate British memory of the war, we must also consider how those narratives rose to this state of supremacy. As previously mentioned, Daniel Todman pointed towards the Cold War and other 20th-century international conflicts as a possible explanation for why Britons bought into the claims that retroactively classified the war as futile. Other historians have discussed literature and other forms of art as a medium for the movement of the war into the symbolic realm. This does not yet explain, however, exactly when British society came to a unified consensus on how the war was to be remembered, with little room for dissenting interpretations, although as mentioned Gregory and Winter offer arguments as to why this unification was more or less inevitable. Thankfully, shocking though it may be given the infrequent nature of general consensus among academics, this is a question that historians have found an answer to: stage musicals and comedy television.

In *Memory, Narrative and the Great War: Rifleman Patrick MacGill and the Construction of Wartime Experience*, historian David Taylor argues that Joan Littlewood's 1963 stage play "Oh, What a Lovely War!", its subsequent film adaptation, and the infamous 1989 British television show "Blackadder Goes Forth" were both responsible for transforming British

[30] Ibid., 304.

cultural memory of the war into its modern incarnation.[31] These two pieces of media both portrayed the war in a darkly comical fashion, envisioning the conflict as a senseless affair conducted in order to satisfy the whims of clueless, glory-hungry military leaders. The possible connection between these two notable British cultural touchstones has not gone unnoticed. Todman argues that "A clear line of descent can be drawn from the generals of *Oh! What a Lovely War* to those in *Blackadder Goes Forth*."[32] Simultaneously, however, they are both products of the unique socio-political landscape in which they were produced.

In *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History,* Brian Bond argues that "Oh! What a Lovely War!"'s cynical depiction appealed to British audiences in the 1960s due to a number of contemporary concerns festering within British society at the time, including "a pervasive fear of all-out nuclear war" as well as "the emergence of an independent youth culture" and a number of high-profile government scandals.[33] These issues primed British citizens to question any interpretational framework of the First World War that failed to wholly condemn the conflict as an utter farce, thereby bringing the overall attitude of Britons closer to the stance originally held by many COs during the war. And if *Oh! What a Lovely War* started a wave of British miscomprehension of WW1, *Blackadder Goes Forth* added fuel to the fire. It had such a prodigious impact upon British perception of the war throughout the 1990s that when faced with a documentary about Douglas Haig, the First World War general who served as the basis for *Blackadder'*s blundering caricatures of the British army's upper ranks, a number of critics used *Blackadder* as the yardstick with which to measure the documentary's accuracy.[34]

---

[31] David Taylor, *Memory, Narrative and The Great War: Rifleman Patrick MacGill and the Construction of Wartime Experience*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), 31.
[32] Todman, *Myth and Memory*, 116.
[33] Brian Bond, *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 51-52.
[34] Ibid., 79.

The widespread influence of these works on the British perspective of the war is probably also connected to advancements in the distribution systems of mass media during the 20th century, ensuring that these works reached a wider audience, as well as the comparatively lesser effort required on the layperson's part to watch a play or movie than to read a longer, more detailed account of the war. After all, Bond notes that *Oh! What a Lovely War*'s film adaptation resulted in "a sensation world-wide when first screened in 1969, and has been described as 'the perfect TV extravaganza', not least because of its all-star cast."[35] And while fellow historian Gary Sheffield may believe that the film adaptation is "inferior as art" to Littlewood's original play, Sheffield too agrees that the work "came to symbolise for many people the essential 'truth' about the First World War."[36] Sheffield also credits various television documentaries produced for British audiences on the subject of the First World War throughout the second half of the twentieth century, such as *The Great War* and *1914-1918*, as major factors in the public perception of the war.[37] Ultimately, then, it was commercial success in the era of television that solidified this particular version of the war with its immense cultural staying power.

[35] Ibid., 66.
[36] Gary Sheffield, *Forgotten Victory: The First World War: Myths and Realities*, (Sharpe Books, 2018), 38, Kindle.
[37] Ibid., 40-41.

Chapter 2: Three Branches of Historical Thinking on Conscientious Objectors

Even as Britain's retrospective lamentation of the war intensified, interest in the trials and tribulations of COs, the earliest vocal dissidents against the conflict, has remained a niche topic among average British citizens. Interest in their plight has grown considerably among historians, however. Up until the end of the Second World War, only a handful of academic works were composed on British COs, such as *Conscription and Conscience: A History 1916-1919*, written in 1922 by John W. Graham (a Quaker chaplain involved with the CO movement), or Robert Pollard's *Conscientious Objectors in Great Britain and its Dominions,* written in 1945. But the latter half of the 20th century saw an upswing in CO-centered research, which was probably a result of the same social factors that Bond used to explain *Oh! What a Lovely War*'s popularity operating alongside the rising popularity of social history as a subdiscipline. It may have also been a result of a realization that the population of surviving COs was beginning to thin out as the First World War drifted further into the past, hastening the need to research this community before the opportunity to collect more samples of first-hand testimony about their lives was entirely lost to historians.

Regardless of the motivation behind this interest, it has resulted in the development of three major identifiable (if occasionally overlapping) branches of historical scholarship written about Britain's WW1 COs. One of these branches has been primarily concerned with the relationship between COs and the rest of British civil society during the war. Another has narrowed its focus to the experiences of absolutist COs that were imprisoned as a result of their disobedience. The third branch, which emerged most recently, has analyzed the stories of COs in the specific context of their unique geographic and/or political communities.

One of the earliest examples of texts detailing the relationship between COs and British society is David Boulton's 1963 publication *Objection Overruled: Conscription and Conscience in the First World War*, a work that was described as recently as 2014 as "still the most comprehensive available on its subject."[38] Notably, as I will discuss in detail later in this text, Boulton's work was warmly received by the subjects of his study. This was followed in 1973 by Thomas C. Kennedy's article "Public Opinion and the Conscientious Objector, 1915-1919," which found that anti-CO sentiment continued to flourish even after the war, resulting in "long term economic deprivation. C. Os. that had been civil servants, for example, were temporarily barred from reappointment and absolutists were permanently excluded."[39] This treatment extended until at least the 1930s, per Kennedy's findings, although the comparatively benign treatment of COs in the Second World War led Kennedy to conclude that the British public had developed "a deeper public understanding and tolerance" towards conscientious objection by the outbreak of this second international conflict.

By the late 20th century, British COs earned high praise in at least some circles of British scholarship. In 1987, Caroline Moorehead, a British human rights journalist, biographer and historian, wrote *Troublesome People: Enemies of War: 1916-1986*, a monograph which covered the topic of 20th-century war resistance in a number of countries. Moorehead spoke to a number of pacifists in the process of drafting her work, and these personal encounters are likely what led her to assert on the first page that "There is a stubbornness, an obduracy, about pacifism that can be infuriating; it can also be heroic, admirable."[40] Her coverage of WW1 COs in particular reveals her personal admiration for their choices, which arguably verges on the point of

---

[38] Liz Willis, review of *Objection Overruled: Conscription and Conscience in the First World War,* by David Boulton, *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 30, no. 4 (2014): 309–12, https://www.jstor.org/stable/27017863.
[39] Thomas C. Kennedy, "Public Opinion and the Conscientious Objector, 1915-1919", Journal of British Studies 12, no. 2 (1973): 118, http://www.jstor.org/stable/175277.
[40] Caroline Moorehead, *Troublesome People: Enemies of War, 1916-1986*, (London: Hamilton, 1987), xiii.

hero-worship – while discussing one CO, Mark Hayler, Moorehead waxes poetically about the speech Hayler delivered during his military tribunal, asserting that "there is something very brave and dignified about his testimony" and claiming that she can practically hear him – "disheveled, dirty and hungry, an outcast" – orating within the military courtroom as she reads his speech decades later from records kept at the Imperial War Museum (IWM).[41] Her rhetoric, of course, may be embellished with these touches partly due to its status as popular history, but her admiration for COs is almost certainly genuine and the publication of this work demonstrates some degree of appetite for stories about pacifists among the history enthusiasts of the period.

Moorehead's work also touches on the legacy of British pacifism. In *Troublesome People*'s last chapter, "Witness," Moorehead discusses several anti-war organizations and events of the 1980s. Among them is the story of a peace camp established by anti-nuclear arms activists on the site of an American Air Force base at Greenham Common in Berkshire, which began with a small caravan formed by "a group of Welsh women excited by reports they had heard of a gathering of women marching in the name of peace from Paris to the Scandinavian countries"[42] and ultimately led to "30,000 women decorating the fence with banners… a break in along six miles of fence; 'blockades' of the American vehicles; constant "forays" to liberate documents."[43] The prominent role played by women in this protest is not particularly surprising, given the energetic feminist movements of the 1970s and 1980s. That said, while this serves as proof that British anti-war movements were active beyond the First and Second World Wars, it also serves as a reminder that women are bound to play their own unique role in pacifist movements, just as British women during the First World War did. While they were not subject to conscription like their male relatives, friends and loved ones, their own sense of ethics and social connections led

[41] Ibid., 37.
[42] Ibid., 308-309.
[43] Ibid., 311.

to women playing key roles in the activities of pacifist organizations and the lives of many COs. Furthermore, their contributions were not confined to the temporal boundaries of the war itself. For instance, Clara Winsten, wife of WW1 CO Stephen Samuel Winsten, accompanied Samuel to his 1976 interview with the IWM. When prompted by the interviewer with the question, "Why didn't you think there was a war coming?", Winsten found himself unable to answer succinctly and relied upon his wife for an answer, asking her, "At what point, Clare, did you think there was a war coming?"[44]

On the subject of gender, in 2003, Lois Bibbings chose to examine the public perception of COs through a new lens in her article "Images of Manliness: The Portrayal of Soldiers and Conscientious Objectors in the Great War." Here, Bibbings takes on the vital task of dissecting the degree to which gendered expectations of behaviour influenced the relationship between COs and the rest of British society. She does this in an explicit attempt "to infiltrate the traditional heartland of historiography and demonstrate that gender is inherent in all aspects of social, political and cultural life."[45] In the course of this analysis, she finds that COs were painted as a "deviant group who represented an aberrant form of manhood" in comparison to Britain's "soldier men" who "were heralded for their heroic killings."[46] This was directly related to contemporary concerns, stemming from the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 to 1902, that "English manhood was degenerating."[47] There are, however, some curious omissions in Bibbing's examination of how British gender roles at the time impacted the fate of COs. For example, although Bibbings notes that some of the tribunal members in charge of overseeing conscientious

---

[44] Stephen Samuel Winsten, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, June 29th, 1976, recording, Imperial War Museums Sound Archive, Catalogue #784, REEL #7, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[45] Lois Bibbings, "Images of Manliness: The Portrayal of Soldiers and Conscientious Objectors in The Great War," *Social & Legal Studies* 12, no. 3 (2003): 336, https://doi.org/10.1177/09646639030123003.
[46] Ibid., 343.
[47] Ibid., 346.

objection "saw their role as a patriotic rather than a legal one,"[48] Bibbings does not explore what motivated the tribunal members to view their duty in these terms, and whether their determination to send COs to the front lines had any relationship with tribunal members' personal sense of masculinity. Furthermore, Bibbings does not address the iconic "white feather" phenomena, a trend in which young women accosted young, unenlisted men in the streets to present them with a white feather in order to shame them with their cowardice. Still, "Images of Manliness" is a thoughtful piece of scholarship which paints an accurately multifaceted picture of the complex and contradictory relationship between COs and British society. Bibbings points to several accounts from British military officials who expressed sympathy and respect for COs, as well as literary works that drew comparisons between COs and Jesus Christ himself and accounts from COs that considered themselves patriots despite the scorn subjected upon them by their countrymen.

Historical works focused on the unique experiences of imprisoned COs began to appear around the turn of the century. Victor Bailey's 1997 article, "English Prisons, Penal Culture and the Abatement of Imprisonment, 1895-1922", suggests that the brutal treatment of COs in prison during the war and their subsequent reporting of said treatment within the public sphere, was at least a partial factor behind the British prison reforms that began to materialize at the tail end of the titular period.[49] In 2004, testimonies from British WW1 objectors comprised the first six entries in Peter Brock's *These Strange Criminals: An Anthology of Prison Memoirs by Conscientious Objectors from the Great War to the Cold War*, wherein Brock, a dedicated historian of pacifism, showcases their stories while offering his own commentary. The result is something of a comparative study; by grounding British WW1 COs thusly, Brock establishes

[48] Ibid, 343.
[49] Victor Bailey, "English Prisons, Penal Culture and the Abatement of Imprisonment, 1895-1922," *The Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 3 (1997): 300, https://doi.org/10.1086/386138.

them as the benchmark against which other COs who were imprisoned might be measured. Intriguingly, Brock takes the uncommon stance that these pacifists "were not singled out for especially rough treatment; towards the end of the war the government even conceded them a few privileges not granted to common criminals."[50] Brock also discusses the prison experiences of British COs in his essay "Prison Samizdat of British Conscientious Objectors in Two World Wars." Here, he found that these 'samizdat', or dissident journalistic publications both written by and circulated among the imprisoned COs, provided valuable insights into the mindsets of their producers but also had an "elitist character" and were circulated only amongst "a small group with special concerns of its own."[51] They were not representative of all COs, and this is a rare reminder that even the minority of absolutist COs cannot be treated as a monolithic entity, despite being unified in their staunch rejection of the war.

The most recent example of historical scholarship centred on the prison experiences of COs is likely Max Hodgson's article "Pathologizing 'Refusal': Prison, Health and Conscientious Objectors during the First World War," published in 2022 in the *Social History of Medicine*. As a work synthesizing social history and medical history, Hodgson's text was written with the aim of fixing the issue that "over a century on from the conflict little is known about the ways in which the experiences of COs in prison affected their physical and mental well-being, or the extent to which the British wartime state engaged with objectors' health."[52] In the process, Hodgson addresses some of the same questions about gender anxiety as Bibbings. He argues that COs were subject to "articulation as 'physical… non-entities', 'effeminate, anaemic men'."[53] Indeed,

[50] Peter Brock, *These Strange Criminals: An Anthology of Prison Memoirs by Conscientious Objectors from the Great War to the Cold War*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 14.
[51] Peter Brock, "Prison Samizdat of British Conscientious Objectors in Two World Wars" in *Against the Draft: Essays on Conscientious Objection from the Radical Reformation to the Second World War*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 230, https://doi-org.qe2a-proxy.mun.ca/10.3138/9781442627215.
[52] Hodgson, "Pathologising Refusal," 975.
[53] Ibid., pg. 980.

by framing this emasculation as a form of "pathologizing" COs, Hodgson strengthens Bibbings' assertion that this perception of COs was connected to "anxieties about male degeneration" that had their roots in "various schools of eugenic thinking."[54]

The third branch of WW1 British CO historiography, that of pacifism within specific communities, has two main elements to consider. The first of these elements is the role of Quakers. Nearly all works discussing COs call attention to the fact that, in demographic terms, the majority of religious COs were either Quakers themselves or had strong social ties to members of this Christian denomination. For example, while detailing the experiences of CO Fred Murfin in her monograph *Conscientious Objectors of the First World War: A Determined Resistance,* Ann Kramer points out that immediately prior to his arrest for non-compliance, Murfin "said goodbye to his Quaker friends, who promised to support him."[55] In fact, Quakers had such a strong influence on the pacifist movement that, disregarding any casualties suffered by Quakers in the FAU, the war may have actually positively impacted their membership rates. Not all COs with ties to Quakerism necessarily began their wartime experiences with these connections; some developed their ties to the Religious Society of Friends during the conflict, such as absolutist George Frederick Dutch, who became a Quaker after the war "when his wartime experiences solidified his pacifism into a lifelong commitment to peace."[56]

Some historians have also highlighted the experiences of pacifist Quakers who were not COs by the strictest definition of the term. In "The Friends' Ambulance Unit in the First World War," Linda Palfreeman demonstrates that the titular organization was able to help some pacifist Quakers reconcile the fact that "they felt the urge to do their duty for their country but struggled

---

[54] Lois Bibbings, *Telling Tales about Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military Service during the First World War*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 112.
[55] Ann Kramer, *Conscientious Objectors of the First World War: A Determined Resistance*, (South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Social History, 2013), 77.
[56] Peace Pledge Union, "GEORGE FREDRICK DUTCH 1894 - 1976", The Men Who Said No: Conscientious Objectors 1916-1919, accessed April 12th, 2023, https://menwhosaidno.org/men/men_files/d/dutch_gf.html.

to reconcile this with their duty to God, to promote peace and to oppose war, seeking other means to settle disputes."[57] Members of this group occupy a unique position; as this organization was formed prior to conscription, it could be argued that its members, while pacifists, should not rightfully be classified as COs due to their contribution to Britain's success in the war taking place essentially on the front lines of battle. Still, it is reasonable to assume that in the absence of the Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU), many of them would have been forced to turn to conscientious objection lest they surrender their religious convictions by engaging in combat. As such, Quakers who joined the FAU have traditionally been treated as a group of quasi-alternativists by historians, and their accounts and artifacts have typically been collected and archived alongside materials from conventional alternativist COs with little distinction drawn.

The second element that warrants attention in the aforementioned third branch is the Anglocentric nature of most early works on British COs and anti-war sentiments. This is hardly uncommon for British WW1 history; historians have often openly admitted to focusing their attention on England and the English population at the expense of the Scots and the Welsh, although there are exceptions such as Adrian Gregory's *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War* which pay greater attention to regional differences within Great Britain. This applies even to case studies that deal with anti-war movements in small regions, such as Ken Weller's *'Don't be a soldier!' The Radical Anti-War Movement in North London 1914-1918*, written in 1985, wherein the author confesses that his work "necessarily bears the imprint of my own local chauvinism."[58] Of course, other historians have sought to legitimize these kinds of

[57] Linda Palfreeman, "The Friends' Ambulance Unit in the First World War." *Religions (Basel, Switzerland)* 9, no. 5 (2018): 168, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9050165.
[58] Ken Weller, *'Don't be a soldier!' The Radical Anti-War Movement in North London 1914-1918*, (London: Journeyman Press Limited, 1985), 7.

municipal or provincial case studies. One such case study is Cyril Pearce's *Comrades in Conscience: The Story of an English Community's Opposition to the Great War*, written in 2001 and focusing on the English town of Huddersfield. Pearce would shortly thereafter articulate a justification for projects which view COs through a regionalized lens, in his 2002 article "Rethinking the British Anti-War Movement 1914-1918: Notes from a Local Study." Therein Pearce critiques both wide-scale national studies, for being prone to "[diminishing] specific local anti-war opinion by incorporating it as part of a much grander narrative,"[59] as well as perspectives that "become pre-occupied with the COs individual heroism to the point where the struggle is only seen in those terms."[60] We might surmise that in Pearce's opinion, a middle-ground approach that places anti-war sentiment in a local or regional context more accurately captures the scope of social and cultural influences and pressures on pacifists. While it is difficult to say whether Pearce's approach is the 'optimal' approach, it has certainly generated new ways for historians to think about COs, potentially challenging conventional narratives. For example, Pearce's study of Huddersfield reveals that "local Quaker contributions to the ranks of the COs" were "very small", although he wisely cautions against drawing too many broad conclusions from his data in the absence of comparative studies.[61]

A number of projects in the last decade have drawn on Pearce's approach, while expanding the geographical focus to include Britain's other countries. This list includes *Objectors & Resisters: Opposition to Conscription and War in Scotland 1914-18*, published in 2015 by Duncan Robert, who credits Pearce with influencing "my research methods, findings and conclusions on numbers and classifications of conscientious objectors."[62] Robert

[59] Cyril Pearce, "Rethinking the British Anti-War Movement 1914-1918: Notes from a Local Study," *Quaker Studies* 7, no. 1 (2002): 34.
[60] Ibid., 35.
[61] Ibid., 51-52.
[62] Robert Duncan, *Objectors & Resisters: Opposition to Conscription and War in Scotland 1914-18*, (London: Common Print, 2015), 3.

unsurprisingly finds evidence of several different motivations for anti-war sentiment that existed among Scots. Foremost among these were the "fundamental pacifist position", opposed to war in any context, and the leftist "class war position", held by socialists who considered the conflict to be a product of capitalism.[63] Robert's coverage of Scottish COs is particularly insightful, as it demonstrates the nebulous nature of ideology and personal motivation; while quoting the observations of CO James Millar, Robert brings attention to the considerable success that imprisoned Scottish socialist COs had in converting other imprisoned COs to their political ideology.[64]

Aled Eirug produced a similar work in 2018, titled *The Opposition to the Great War in Wales, 1914-18*. Eirug credits Pearce, Duncan and Weller as influences, asserting that his own "study builds on this work to consider the extent to which opposition to the war was not only a matter of individual conscience, but also part of a broader social and political response within rooted communities."[65] Although Welsh COs comprised a very small body of 901 COs, representing only 0.7% of the total population of Welshmen eligible for conscription,[66] Eirug's work is nevertheless highly important; it calls attention to the multifaceted nature of CO identity and allegiance, which has been insufficiently considered by other historians. As Eirug observes, one objector "defined himself as an ILP-er [Independent Labour Party], a Socialist, Congregationalist and member of the NCF [No-Conscription Fellowship]."[67] An ardent belief in pacifism might stem from both a Christian perspective and a socialist one; indeed, these two paradigms could be interlinked, or from the same life experiences or social connections. Eirug also highlights the class solidarity of Welsh COs, asserting that "the occupational profile of this

[63] Ibid., 28.
[64] Ibid., 113.
[65] Aled Eirug, *The Opposition to the Great War in Wales, 1914-1918*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2018), 18-19.
[66] Ibid., 150.
[67] Ibid.

cohort of men tended to be that of the skilled working class or lower middle class,"[68] although oddly he does not provide any fleshed-out theories as to why this demographic had the strongest showing amongst Welsh COs.

Finally, the most recent work that follows in Pearce's footsteps is Angus Wallace's 2023 article "A Community of Consent: Conscientious Objectors on the North Yorkshire Moors and the North East Coast During the First World War." In this case study, which focuses on a mining community and studies a surprisingly large quantity of surviving documents from the local tribunals discovered in 2014, Wallace argues that many of the COs from the region were clearly willing to accept a certain degree of support for the war. Rather than characterizing these men as simply "anti-war," Wallace submits that historians should recognize the presence of opposition to "military service rather than over working in the national interest," and the fact that "conscription could be viewed as industrial as well as military."[69] In writing this article, Wallace has demonstrated the need for historians to broaden their understanding of the motivations behind conscientious objection. However, as the vast majority of sources identified and consulted in the writing of this dissertation reflect the opinions of COs with strong anti-war leanings and ties to pacifist movements and organization, it is those COs who are afforded primary consideration in my analysis.

Yet, despite growing interest from academics, there is still something missing from this compendium of scholarly works on COs, in addition to the omission indicated by Wallace. All of the works I have mentioned above have emphasized the experiences of COs during the war but none have given any amount of real consideration to the post-war lives or, even more

[68] Ibid., 153.

[69] Angus Wallace, "A Community of Consent: Conscientious Objectors on the North Yorkshire Moors and the North East Coast During the First World War," *Northern History* 61 (1): 94–113, 2023, doi:10.1080/0078172X.2023.2272833.

importantly, the post-war perspectives of COs. This, I argue, is the logical and vital extension of the work undertaken by scholars like Bibbings, Roberts and Eirug to emphasize the breadth of CO identity, for it addresses the question of identity-fluidity over time. Historian Michael Roper considers this question as it pertains to WW1 soldiers in his article "Re-remembering the Soldier Hero: the Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War," wherein he argues that, for a soldier retelling a story from the war multiple times throughout his life, "the emotional processes connected to the war experience and to present life-dilemmas coalesce in the narrative, revealing the psychic as well [as] the social structuring of memory."[70] The changes that arise in the repeated retelling of a war-time memory can thus be explained as a part of "actively managing painful experiences from the past."[71]

How do these conclusions apply to COs? In a literal sense, the COs who gave interviews and wrote letters in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s about their war-time experiences were the same individuals who personally underwent those experiences. Simultaneously, however, they had been altered on some psychological or spiritual level by the passage of time, like any other human being, and they were no longer quite the same person as they were in their youth. What facets of their younger selves' paradigms had they held onto, and what contradictions had arisen, perhaps unnoticed by their own eye? Subject to the fallibility of memory and at the mercy of the unrelenting march of time, what do the post-war testimonies of COs reveal about the human capacity, or lack thereof, to maintain a stable self in the face of past traumas? And ultimately, how did bearing witness to another world war, social and cultural revolution and the looming threat of nuclear annihilation contextualize their memories of the First World War and the decisions of their youth?

---

[70] Michael Roper, "Re-remembering the Soldier Hero: the Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War," *History Workshop* 2000 (50), 200-201, https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/2000.50.181
[71] Ibid., 184.

Chapter 3: Memory, Oral History, and a Discussion of Sources

On March 14th, 1972, a CO by the name of Walter Manthorpe responded to a request in *The Friend,* a Quaker publication, by a young woman named Pauline Pollard. Pollard had noted that she was writing a history project about WW1 COs, and was looking for information about "what motivated COs to testify against war, why they chose the Friends Ambulance Unit, the Home Office Scheme, the non-combatant corp [*sic*], work of national importance, or absolutism; how they were treated by the tribunals and what reaction they experienced from the public and the military."[72] Manthorpe was willing to help Pollard, but first he asked her to provide him with a list of more specific questions for him to answer. This was because he wanted to know if she was more interested in the motivations behind conscientious objection, or the experiences COs underwent, as Manthorpe felt that "the first of these would not take much writing, but the latter could fill a book."[73] Manthorpe's statement here is something of an extreme understatement – not only have various scholars written anthologies about the experiences of COs, such as Bibbings' *Telling Tales About Men* or Brock's *These Strange Criminals*, but a number of COs composed thorough, albeit unpublished, manuscripts about their personal war-time experiences. For instance, John Brocklesby's memoir, *Escape from Paganism*, spends a number of chapters discussing his imprisonment during the war, and H. Blake's *Whose Image and Superscription* is a 500+ page memoir of his own time as a CO.[74] Thanks to archival materials such as these manuscripts, as well numerous oral interviews conducted with COs throughout the years by

[72] Pauline Pollard, "Conscientious Objection in the First World War," *The Friend*, February 4th, 1972.
[73] Walter Manthorpe to Pauline Pollard, March 14th, 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Correspondence between Pauline Pollard and former World War 1 Conscientious Objectors, Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London, England (hereafter cited as TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence).
[74] For *Escape From Paganism*, see TEMP MSS 412, John Brocklesby Papers, Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London, England (hereafter cited as TEMP MSS 454, John Brocklesby Papers). For *Whose Image and Superscription*, see LIDDLE/WW1/CO/08, Blake, H., Peter Liddle Collection (First World War), University of Leeds Special Collections, University of Leeds, Leeds, England (hereafter cited as Peter Liddle Collection).

institutions such the Imperial War Museum (IWM) in London, we are fortunate enough to have a fairly weighty record of CO experiences.

But materials of this ilk – by which I mean recollections of the war composed or delivered after it had ended – pose difficulties for some historians. Some scholars who have a particular affinity for notions of objectivity would probably argue that they are less authentic than accounts contemporaneous with the war, being sullied by hindsight and external narratives and blurred by the impermanence of memory. The impact of hindsight is certainly a valid concern. As Taylor rightly observes, "Memory is present (and present-problem) oriented even as it looks to the past."[75] Furthermore, Taylor suggests, the recollection of memory is heavily tied to the construction of autobiographical narratives, which are not only "ongoing and unfinished rather than final and authoritative" but also "a fictional construct, albeit concerned with reality and truth… shaped by its socio-cultural context and the dynamic between audience and writer."[76] Undoubtedly, then, the accounts provided by respondents to Pollard's request in *The Friend* or delivered in IWM interviews were influenced not only by the chronological gap between the events and the recollections, but also the perception COs had of both themselves and their audience as well as the general state of British society in the 1970s and 80s, which held, as previously discussed, a wildly different opinion on the First World War than when the COs took their stand against it in the 1910s.

The oral interviews, in particular, pose their own challenges when compared to the written retrospectives. As historian Lynn Abrams observes, there are additional layers to consider when working with oral histories, as "oral historians are not just interested in *what* is said but

---

[75] Taylor, *Memory, Narrative and The Great War*, 54.
[76] Ibid., 59.

also *how* and *why* it is said."[77] Obviously, these questions arise when any type of source, oral or otherwise, is under the scrutiny of a competent historian. But when it comes to oral history, these questions take on entirely new dimensions. Written sources usually originate from individuals who typically have the luxury of time when composing their accounts. They can spend that time choosing their words carefully, and they have the option to erase and/or rewrite their remarks during the initial process of composition if they decide they do not like what they have written. Consequently, there is purpose and intent, of some kind or another, behind every single word captured in a written document.

Oral histories, especially oral interviews, are an entirely different matter. True, under ideal and ethical circumstances the individual recounting their history during an oral interview should be able to comfortably ask for omissions and redactions from the record if they say something they wish they had withheld. And beyond that, interview transcripts will often make minor adjustments for the sake of clarity and comprehension, such as removing filler words and adjusting flawed grammar. But still, when the words *as they were spoken* (or very close to it) during an interview are kept accessible for later audiences, they demand a particularly thorough degree of attention from the historian. These scholars must be attentive to tone, volume, cadence, signs of hesitation or false-starts that suggest the interviewee, perhaps unconsciously, has disregarded their first impulse, reconsidered their initial response, and in an instant changed their mind about what to say next. And, if the historian happens to be the one conducting the interview or watching a video recording, rather than listening to a purely auditory recording or reading a transcript, they must also consider the physical responses of their subjects. Abrams raises the point that those with traumatic memories might display unease through "changes of voice and

[77] Lynn Abrams, "Memory as both source and subject of study: The transformations of oral history," in *Writing the History of Memory*, ed. Stefan Berger & Bill Niven, (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 90.

observable body language."[78] These are all elements inherent, by their very nature, to the medium of spoken word and direct interpersonal communication. They are elements that the written word, at best, can only faintly approximate.

The implications these facts hold for this project are considerable; as previously noted, all WW1 COs have passed away. Thus, all oral histories used to form the basis of my analysis in this thesis are archival materials rather than personally conducted interviews. On the one hand, those from the IWM were kept in an audio format. As such, they contain the aforementioned elements inherent to the medium which have undoubtedly colored my interpretation of the testimony within. To claim that I would be able to completely refrain from reading into the tone in which the interviewees spoke would be to credit myself with a degree of objectivity I frankly do not possess. Those originating from the Liddle Collection at the University of Leeds, on the other hand, were only available as written transcripts. And while those transcripts seem to have been written with the intention of capturing the words as close to verbatim as possible, they nevertheless do not capture the voices of those interviewed in quite the same fullness.

Further complicating the matter of oral history is the question of the audience. The intended audience of a written history or historical source are rarely present during the composition of that source. Consequently, there is a natural distance between the source and the audience. The intended audience may influence the way that the creator of the source tells their story, but not in a fashion that exerts complete control upon them. But oral histories, in contrast, are often composed before an audience and delivered by agents who recognize themselves as engaging in the human tradition of storytelling. At times the audience may even serve as an active participant in the composition of an oral history, asking questions and encouraging the storyteller to elaborate upon particular details that specifically catch their interest and thereby

[78] Ibid., 105.

reflect their priorities. Even if they remain passive and silent, the storyteller is bound to be influenced by their very presence. Thus, the audience to whom an oral history is delivered holds the potential to shape the telling of a memory almost as much as the person who is actively engaged in remembering it.

In the case of the interviews that form the evidentiary basis for this work, the influence of the interviewers on the content discussed by the COs is fairly substantial. One of the primary sets of interviews consulted were conducted by Dr. Peter Liddle from the University of Leeds. Rather than allowing his respondents to provide him with information as they saw fit, Dr. Liddle clearly had his own particular ideas regarding what information would be valuable to the historic record. Each of his interviews began with him asking the CO he was speaking to tell him when and where they were born, and he followed up on that question by asking about their education. While those are fairly natural starting points for a life story, one must wonder whether the COs would have chosen to start with those details if they had simply been invited to begin telling their story, rather than being prompted with a closed-ended question. Furthermore, Dr. Liddle interjected with questions frequently throughout the interviews, seeking clarification or expansion on remarks made by COs and thereby directing the course of the interview.

The other primary set of interviews cited throughout this work were conducted by the Imperial War Museum (IWM), by employees named Margaret A. Brooks and Lyn E. Smith. While Brooks and Smith typically also began their interviews by asking the COs to discuss their early years, they interjected much less frequently than Dr. Liddle did, often allowing the COs to simply speak without interruption for four or five minutes at a time. As such, it might be argued that the interviews produced by the IWM more accurately reflect the ways in which the COs thought about their experiences independently, while Dr. Liddle's interviews invited them to

consider aspects of their experiences which may not have naturally occurred to them as meriting discussion and exploration.

In addition to these interviews, some of the most significant primary sources consulted in this research project were delivered by surviving male COs who were writing to a female high school student, Pauline Pollard. And while there is no way of determining exactly how their perception of Pollard impacted the way that COs chose to tell their stories, there are a few possibilities worth considering. In one of his letters to Pauline Pollard, CO Harold Bing, uncertain whether he was accurately quoting something verbatim, parenthetically remarked that "if you are, as I suspect, a Quaker yourself you can easily check."[79] We can safely assume that Bing was not alone among his peers in assuming that because Pollard searched for COs via a letter in a Quaker publication, she was probably herself a Quaker. COs who wrote to her presumably then tailored their stories under the assumption that they knew their audiences' religious beliefs, even if they had no personal relationship with Pollard. This could have manifested in any number of ways, ranging from unstated assumptions regarding their shared knowledge base to the generation of a sense of rapport between storyteller and audience which fostered honest testimony.

Furthermore, research into the social dynamics of oral interviews suggests that gender dynamics may have impacted CO testimonials. Most pertinently, it has been argued that while male "interviewees tended to avoid discussing emotion, the women interviewers found it much easier to introduce the topic and to encourage the men to open up."[80] We might conclude, then, that these men probably displayed a degree of emotional vulnerability and honesty about their

[79] Harold Bing to Pauline Pollard, February 19th, 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.
[80] Lenore Manderson, Elizabeth Bennett and Sari Andajani-Sutjahjo, "The Social Dynamics of the Interview: Age, Class and Gender," *Qualitative Health Research* vol. 16 no. 10, December 2006, 1329. While this article was primarily focused on oral interviews in the field of medical research, the observations it makes regarding gender dynamics in oral interviews are equally applicable in the context of oral interviews of any nature.

feelings in the course of these interviews that may not have been granted to a male interviewer. The notion that male interviewees may open up in greater detail to female interviewers is further supported, as pertains to this dissertation, by the interviews given by CO Phillip Radley to Dr. Peter Liddle (male) and Margaret A. Brooks (female). When discussing his father with Dr. Liddle, Radley only opted to remark that his father "used to write on pacifist matters if you can put it that way to the paper… he himself lost his job because he refused to do war work and that was a tremendous encouragement and stimulant to me."[81] In his interview with Brooks, however, Radley included additional details about the event, specifying his father's age at the time, and the fact that this event coincided with Radley's stay in prison. Radley then used this story to transition into telling an anecdote about a letter he received from his missionary uncle.[82]

Above all else, though, oral history struggles with a bad reputation. People believe, from their own first-hand experience, that the human memory is a fickle and imperfect thing. Accordingly, we feel comfortable assuming that oral histories are bound to be distorted by accidental untruths born from failing memories, and that those distortions must surely be exacerbated by old age and the passage of time. Historians, who are not typically well-versed in the intricacies of neuroscience, are split on the matter of whether or not this is a genuine truth. David Taylor, for instance, notes that "each remembrance of an event is new and distinct from earlier remembrances, let alone from the event itself."[83] But Abrams decisively claims "There is no evidence to demonstrate either that people tell deliberate untruths in oral history interviews or that memory is especially liable to distortion."[84] Any attempt to determine which of these

---

[81] Phillip Radley, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, June, 1979, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/076, "Radley, Phillip," Tape #556 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[82] Phillip Radley, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, May 25th, 1974, recording, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #642, REEL #1, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[83] Taylor, "Memory, Narrative and The Great War," 49.
[84] Abrams, "Memory as both source and subject," 92.

historians is correct on the matter would almost certainly require a lengthy divergence into the realm of complex sciences that is beyond the scope of the author's expertise.

Thankfully, however, answering that methodological question is beyond the scope of this project. After all, this analysis is only tangentially concerned with the veracity of CO testimony – that is to say, CO accounts are equally valuable whether they match the historical record or not, so long as they are not wholesale fabrications without any discernible relationship to the truth. The specific details of their experiences are of far less importance than the question of how they came to view their experiences and when, how and why they came to those viewpoints; the factual accuracy of their perceptions only matters in that context. Indeed, the discovery of factually inaccurate statements within CO testimony would be highly beneficial, as it would clearly demonstrate the necessity of thoroughly interrogating CO testimony in order to determine what factors account for such inaccuracies.

Thus, for a project such as this, far from being inferior sources, oral histories are ideal due to their highly personal nature. And while written sources like autobiographies, memoirs or annotated diaries are also highly personal, the written word, as previously discussed, suffers from a degree of separation from the intended audience. Oral histories are typically composed on the spot, in a direct interaction with an audience who serves as a manifestation of the here-and-now. Because of this, no other type of source is quite so capable of demonstrating the ways that people make sense of their past while navigating their present as an oral history.

Chapter 4: Absolutism, Alternativism, Christianity & Classifications: The Stability of CO Identity

The retrospective accounts provided by COs long after the war facilitate investigation into numerous powerful questions. Two of these questions, regarding the subject of identity, seem particularly worthy of consideration. First, if autobiographical narratives are, as Taylor argues, "a search for personal identity"[85] then what aspects of their experiences provided the fundamental building blocks for CO's sense of self that would last the remainder of their lives? What made them feel kinship with their fellow objectors, and what parts of their experience did they feel was uniquely theirs? And, on a related note, is there a discernible gap between the way that COs viewed themselves during the relative peace of their later years versus the turbulent period of their youth?

I believe that the first step to answering these questions is to consider what is arguably the most discussed and certainly the most binary aspect of CO identity: the significance of the "absolutist" and "alternativist" labels. As with any pair of binary terms used in the construction of human identity, there are a number of important variables at play which must be considered when determining both its value and its shortcomings. Who constructed this binary and why? Is membership in either category assigned externally, or determined by the active choice of those contained within it? To what degree is membership in these categories fixed or fluid? How clear are the delineations between one label or the other? Who subverts it, and how does this subversion manifest?

Although identifying the precise origin of the "absolutist" and "alternativist" label is likely a near impossible task, there lies little difficulty in the task of comprehending the meaning of these terms. "Absolutists" were those who insisted that the provision of the 1916 Military

[85] Taylor, *Memory, Narrative and The Great War,* 56.

Service Act stating that "Any certificate of exemption may be absolute, conditional or temporary" meant that absolute exemption should be available to them. "Alternativists" were those who accepted the alternative of exemption "conditional on the applicant being engaged in some work… of national importance."[86] There is no firm evidence which might be used to identify the entity or entities responsible for codifying these labels in the public vocabulary. Nor is it entirely clear exactly when these labels came into widespread use, although evidence suggests they were coined relatively soon after the war broke out. The earliest usage of either term identified during the research process for this dissertation is located in the war-time diaries of Sybil White, the wife of a CO, who mentioned having a "good deal of conversation regarding the Alternativists" in a diary entry dated November 20th, 1916.[87] White's usage of the term suggests that COs probably did not view being classified as absolutists or alternativists as an inherently oppressive, derogatory or reductive label, given that a CO's spouse would have been unlikely to opt-in to a categorization system with negative connotations for her husband. Thus "Absolutist" and "Alternativist" were, to COs and those in their immediate circles, terms devoid of judgement.

Still, from the moment that conscription was enacted, COs were clearly and openly aware of the degrees of variation in their collective resistance against the war effort. A document circulated by the Fellowship of Reconciliation in September 1916, meant to inform their members on the subject of "alternative service", loosely organized COs into the categories of "Ready to Accept," "Willing but Prevented," and "The Man Who Cannot Accept."[88] But even though the sense of division among COs may have been apparent to both themselves and their

---

[86] Parliament of Great Britain, "Military Service Act, 1916," Chapter 104, 2.3, adopted January 27th, 1916. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1916/104/pdfs/ukpga_19160104_en.pdf

[87] Sybil White, unpublished diary, November 20th, 1916, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/099, White, Andrew E. Clarke, Peter Liddle Collection.

[88] Memo, TEMP MSS 62, "Cornelius Barritt Papers", Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London, England (hereafter cited as TEMP MSS 62, Cornelius Barritt Papers.)

peers, that did not stop COs from attempting, at times, to downplay the significance of the gap between alternativists and absolutists. This may have been done merely to present a united front to their detractors and thereby avoid potentially undermining their cause, but it also might have simply resulted from a worldview that the differences between absolutists and alternativists were less notable than their commonalities. The latter option was the belief of absolutist E. Williamson Mason, who observed in 1918 that staunch absolutists like himself theoretically "have perhaps the questionable right to call the alternativists traitors, but they do not, for they alone know through sympathy and experience what their brethren suffered."[89] Notable absolutist CO Archibald Fenner Brockway held a similar viewpoint. Brockway, one of the founders of the No-Conscription Fellowship, stated in a 1917 letter to the Central Tribunal that he thought "the C.O's who have accepted Alternative Service feel that protest [against the war] as sincerely as those who have declined it" even as he explained to the Central Tribunal that he personally believed accepting alternative service was the wrong choice.[90]

After the war, presenting a united front of COs was no longer a necessary tactic in an ongoing struggle against their detractors. As such, in later years, some COs came to display a blunt acknowledgment of the severity of the ideological disagreement between alternativists and absolutists. In 1974, absolutist Phillip Radley admitted to feeling that alternativists who had accepted the Home Office Scheme were "giving the show away," although he sheepishly agreed with an observation from his interviewer, Margaret A. Brooks, that absolutists like himself were, in a sense, "self-righteous."[91] Five years later in 1979, when asked by Dr. Peter Liddle how he had felt about the alternativists, Radley provided a similar response, stating that "we [absolutists]

---

[89] Brock, *These Stranger Criminals*, 32.

[90] Archibald Fenner Brockway to the Central Tribunal, January 17th, 1917, TEMP MSS 977, Arnold S. Rowntree Papers, Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London, England (hereafter cited as TEMP MSS 977, Arnold S. Rowntree Papers.)

[91] Phillip Radley, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #642, REEL #7.

felt that they hadn't really understood the principle that we felt we were right in opposing and that if we had all accepted the Home Office Scheme the principle would have gone."[92] Furthermore, unlike Radley, some absolutist COs expressed a sense of moral virtue over alternativists much earlier than the 1970s. Another absolutist, H. Blake, bragged in his 1937 unpublished memoir, with an evident sense of pride and superiority, that he suspected he was "the very first one to make the refusal to sign the Home Office agreement."[93] The self-satisfied nature of these words suggests that Blake felt a sense of superiority and greater ethical character when he compared himself against the compromising alternativists.

Still, Radley and Blake did not speak for all their absolutist peers when they made those remarks. Other COs maintained the same stance of solidarity among absolutists and alternativists that they had presented during their wartime struggle no matter how much time had passed. In his 1974 interview, Hoare specifies that there was "extraordinarily close comradeship, really. I had [it] all the way through, between objectors, all kinds."[94] That same year another absolutist, Frank Merrick, similarly stressed the point that "I don't think it bothered us. We were so united in the main stand that I don't think we minded very much when the other chap had rather different reasons for his stand, we were so thankful that he took his stand."[95] This relationship went both ways, as it was not merely absolutist COs who acknowledged the validity of alternativists' stances. Alternativists also took the time to emphasize their respect for the absolutist stance, as shown by alternativist Harold Wrigley's observations in 1972 when he claimed that absolutists have had all the glamour "and deserve it," although he also admits to

---

[92] Radley, interview by Liddle, June, 1979, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/076, Peter Liddle Collection.
[93] H. Blake, *Whose Image and Superscription?,* unpublished manuscript, 1937, 67, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/008, "Blake, H," Peter Liddle Collection.
[94] Joseph Edward Hoare, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, July 29th, 1974, recording, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #556, REEL #5, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[95] Frank Merrick, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, March 15th, 1974, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #381, REEL #2, Imperial War Museum, London, England.

having felt that alternativists like himself had the right to feel that they "did their bit."[96] Bernard G. Lawson, a pacifist who became a member of the Friends' Ambulance Unit, similarly asserted to Pollard that he:

> "had every respect (and still have) for the 'absolutionist' or those who were prepared to take work under the Home Office Scheme, and very nearly became subject to imprisonment myself. I always felt that, given an acceptable alternative without breaking my principles, I would be more satisfied taking up some form of work or service which aimed at lessening suffering and benefiting humanity, in some form which did not result in actively furthering war aims and which might perhaps give one the opportunity of sharing in some way the risks and hardships of the soldier - and answering the public mis-conception that that cowardice lay at the bottom of the pacifist stand.[97]

In the course of explaining his motivations, Lawson unwittingly touches upon the often unacknowledged ambiguity, and arguable insufficiency, of the absolutist/alternativist dichotomy. It is clear from his own words that Lawson, despite being a pacifist who saw fit to respond to Pauline Pollard's request for information from/about COs, does not consider himself to be either an absolutist or a conventional alternativist. He specifically opted to call attention to the difference between himself and those who accepted the Home Office Scheme, after all. Lawson's identity therefore exists in a nebulous state of flux, as a CO who does not place himself among the traditional groupings of absolutist CO or alternativist CO.

Similarly, Howard Cruttenden Marten, who persisted in his refusal to work for the military even as he was sent to France and sentenced to death alongside other COs (before his sentence was later commuted to 10 years penal servitude), would eventually state that he "wouldn't say I was what we called a complete absolutist, a 'do-nothing.' I wasn't prepared to do anything under military direction or to be exempted in a very restrictive way, but I was prepared

[96] Harold Wrigley to Pauline Pollard, March 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.
[97] Bernard G. Lawson to Pauline Pollard, February 28th, 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.

to do certain work, as I did finally after it was all over".[98] If a man so dedicated to resisting the war that he was nearly executed for his disobedience ultimately categorized himself as less than a "complete" absolutist, then it is difficult indeed to fathom who *would* have qualified as a "complete" absolutist. Admittedly, Marten did eventually accept the Home Office Scheme, but it should be noted that he was initially offered non-combatant service, which he felt amounted to "direct participation in war"[99] – presumably, Marten felt that the work he completed under the Home Office Scheme did not meaningfully contribute to the British war effort. He noted in a letter included in his unpublished memoir and written as a critique of the Home Office Scheme, that "Much of the work done by the C.O's is similar to that imposed by our penal code,"[100] suggesting that he felt he would have been doing the same work whether he was imprisoned or in a Work Centre under the Scheme. This line of thinking is likely what caused Marten to later describe himself as not a "complete absolutist" rather than simply labeling himself as an "alternativist." Thus, while Lawson exists outside the binary of absolutist and alternativist and falls into neither category, Marten blurs the border between the two conventional types of CO by somehow falling under the purview of both labels.

And there are still more COs that defied strict categorization as absolutists or alternativists as a result of the inherently inconsistent, fluctuating nature of human identity. They could view themselves as absolutists at one point in time and alternativists at another. For example, George Gillet, who eventually joined the FAU as part of the conditional exemption he was granted by his local tribunal, recalled later in life that he "found it very difficult to decide whether to become an Absolutist, like a number of my friends were, or to accept alternative

[98] Howard Cruttenden Marten, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, August 5th, 1974, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #383, REEL #1, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[99] Howard Cruttenden Marten, "White Feather (The Experience of a Pacifist in France and Elsewhere)" unpublished manuscript, 1918, revised 1936, 138, TEMP MSS 67, Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London, England (hereafter cited as TEMP MSS 67, Howard Cruttenden Marten Papers.)
[100] Ibid., 155.

service… I compromised feeling rather cowardly because of it."[101] Furthermore, despite the fact that he accepted the alternativist position, he also refers to the "many of us who felt the call to adopt the absolutist position."[102] Gillet, then, serves as an example of an ostensible alternativist who nevertheless sought to associate himself with the absolutist position when remembering the war years later. There is a subtle sense of regret lurking in his words, as though he felt that by choosing to accept alternative work he had made the "wrong" choice, that he should have instead stood resolute as an absolutist. Joseph Hoare was in a somewhat similar position, but unlike Gillet, Hoare acted upon his uncertainty during the war rather than leaving his future self with regrets. Hoare was initially imprisoned in Wormwood Scrubs Prison for three weeks before accepting work with the Home Office Scheme. But, as Peter Brock observed in *These Strange Criminals,* Hoare became "increasingly uneasy and with a growing feeling that his place was back in prison" which led to him abandoning his work centre and returning to prison after being re-arrested.[103] Thus, Hoare spent time as an alternativist before transitioning to an absolutist stance as his feelings on the matter changed in response to new developments.

Despite the fundamental issues with using narrowly-defined terms to describe something as multifarious as the human condition, the convention of defining COs as "absolutists" or "alternativists" is not a pointless practice. It still serves as a useful starting point for a historian considering the experiences of both individual COs and the demographic as a whole, especially since COs themselves had internalized this classification system. However, given the ambiguity introduced by COs like Marten, Gillett and Hoare, it is best that "absolutist" and "alternativist" be treated by historians as merely the two extremes of a sliding scale whereupon COs can be placed and shifted along as necessary, rather than serving as mutually exclusive labels.

---

[101] George Gillet to Pauline Pollard, 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.
[102] Ibid.
[103] Brock, *These Strange Criminals*, 50-51.

Just as "absolutist" and "alternativist" need to be considered in more complex terms than a simple binary, so too do some of the other ways in which COs have been classified or divided into subcategories. Historians have always been aware that COs were diverse in the nature of their personal objections to the conflict and the spiritual and political communities that they came from. As Lois Bibbings has noted, the religious backgrounds of COs "included Quakers, Christedelphians, Plymouth Brethren, Jehovah's Witnesses, Methodists, Anglicans and Catholics as well as a few men of the Jewish faith, some spiritualists, at least one Buddhist and members of various small non-conformist groups."[104] These categories, just like the categories of "absolutist" and "alternativist," are not as clear-cut as they might appear to be. This is not merely to say that they might overlap, although they could and often did. It is also to say that even determining whether any given singular label accurately captures the full depth of a CO's identity can be a challenging task.

As an example, let us consider the question of "Which COs were Quakers?" On the surface, this is a straightforward question, and in the case of many COs it remains straightforward. One could not deny that Wilfred Ernest Littleboy, who, in his own words, was raised "in a very small country town, where there was very few members of the Society of Friends except our own family, from grandparents to grandchildren, but I went to a Quaker boarding school,"[105] was a Quaker. On the opposite side of things, Walter Griffin, who attended a Methodist school but stated that "there was nothing at all religious in my upbringing" and who eventually, at the outset of the war, found himself practicing a fundamentalist strain of Pentecostalism due to the influence of an evangelist preacher,"[106] was in no way, shape or form a

---

[104] Bibbings, *Telling Tales About Men*, 37.
[105] Wilfred Ernest Littleboy, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, June 25th, 1974, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #485, REEL #1, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[106] Walter Griffin, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, June 25th, 1987, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #9790, REEL #1, Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Quaker. Consequently, considering Littleboy in the context of his Quakerhood or Griffin in the absence of the same would be a reasonable and potentially useful undertaking for a historian thinking about COs.

But there are also COs with complex religious identities, like Lloyd Howard Fox, a man for whom the question of Quakerhood is a hard one to answer. When asked in 1988 if he was from a Quaker family, he responded by saying "Yes, Quaker and Plymouth Brethren. My father actually was what I always called a 'Pillar of the Church.' He was a church warden and read the lessons for about forty years."[107] This remark implies that Fox probably spent his younger years attending his father's church, and thereby suggesting that his Plymouth Brethren upbringing shaped his religious beliefs. But Fox also goes out of his way to notify his interviewer that his first cousin is Rachel Cadbury, a member of a prominent Quaker family, and Fox spent the war volunteering with the Quaker-run Friends Ambulance Unit (FAU) as a driver.[108] Should a hypothetical historian considering the religious backgrounds of COs include Fox among the list of Plymouth Brethren COs or among the list of Quaker COs? It seems evident that treating Fox as one-or-the-other would be overly reductive. Instead, it is more useful for scholars to treat the religious beliefs of COs as belonging to categories that might overlap like those on a Venn diagram.

Despite the messiness involved in sorting COs by religious affiliation, there remains a good reason why historians have traditionally embraced this method of categorisation; COs themselves have typically elected to sort themselves into categories based upon this part of their identity. They engaged in this process of self-identification not only through their words but also through their actions, both at the time of the war and in the following decades. For example, in

---

[107] Lloyd Howard Fox,, interview by Lyn E. Smith, March 25th, 1988, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #10173, REEL #1, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[108] Ibid, REEL #1 & #2.

his memoir "White Feather", originally completed just after the war in 1918 and subject only to minor revisions in 1936, Howard Cruttenden Marten immediately follows a list of his fellow COs with the remark that "Among our number were Friends (Quakers), members of the Church of England, Free Churchmen, a Roman Catholic… others who adopted the less orthodox but equally sincere faith of Socialism."[109] This is evidence that Marten felt that the religious affiliations of his companions were among their most important descriptors. This is hardly surprising, given the broad importance of one's religion to one's overall identity and its role in determining social circles throughout European history. Religious ties remained relevant during CO's time in prison. According to Marten, while imprisoned, Quaker COs like Howard Cruttenden Marten took opportunities to engage in their traditional method of worship by holding Friends' Meetings in their dormitories.[110] Participating in mutual worship would have helped forge an even stronger sense of unity and companionship among Quaker COs, reinforcing the psychological connections between their religion and their CO status.

For many COs, the mental associations between their religion and their past as a CO was a lifelong connection. As they reached the age where it seemed prudent to begin considering what would happen to their property once they were deceased, a number of Quaker COs chose to associate their conscientious objection with their religious practice by leaving their memoirs and mementos in the care of the Library of the Society of Friends, entrusting that their legacy would be in good hands under the protection of their religious community. In the letter that he wrote to the archivist of the aforementioned institution at the time that he donated a collection of letters written to him by other Quaker COs, Marten remarked that he felt the letters "reflect a wonderful spirit of fellowship" offered to him by his peers. He made a further point of acknowledging his

[109] Howard Cruttenden Marten, "White Feather", 30, TEMP MSS 67, Howard Cruttenden Marten Papers.
[110] Howard Cruttenden Marten, "White Feather", 21, TEMP MSS 67, Howard Cruttenden Marten Papers.

awareness of the fact that by presenting these objects to the library, he was granting the institution "full power of disposal or retention, as they may see fit."[111] In doing so, Marten surrendered his legacy as a CO to the custody of the Quakers on an institutional level, demonstrating his trust that his fellow Quakers understood the importance of archiving his experiences for future generations. Marten's life as a CO would be forever linked to his life as a Quaker.

Furthermore, the way that COs described their experiences, both in contemporary and in retrospective accounts of the war, indicated that during the war itself they developed paradigms for interpreting their experiences that focused on religion as a means of not only classification, but of hierarchy. On occasion, some men made negative value assessments towards other individuals of differing beliefs. Eric Southall, for example, began one letter he wrote to his mother while imprisoned with the comment that "We have a jew here, fairly strict and very orthodox. After conversing with him I have an irresistible impression that I have been transported many centuries into the past."[112] Donald Grant, when describing the character of the COs that joined him on the Home Office Scheme at Dartmoor prison, spoke of men who had:

> Every kind of basic reason for being there. Anarchists, Quakers, individual objectors with one's own reasons, like myself. Members of the International Bible Students Association, IBSA, I know the letters of it very well, for I knew that all of them seemed very extreme, heaven and hell, evangelistic, crude theologically, strong in belief, in texts. "Thou shall not kill," that's enough. An immense variety.[113]

Marten's memoir, Southall's letter and Grant's vivid, if ambiguously critical, description of the IBSA clearly suggest that associating other COs with their religion is not an anachronistic

---

[111] Howard Cruttenden Marten to John L. Nicalls, July 27th, 1956, TEMP MSS 67, Howard Cruttenden Marten Papers.
[112] Eric Pritchard Southall to his mother, February 27th, 1919, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/090, "Southall, Eric Pritchard," Peter Liddle Collection.
[113] Donald Grant, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, November 4th, 1975, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #711, REEL #8, Imperial War Museum, London, England.

application of thought-patterns developed after the war, but instead an accurate representation of the way COs mentally classified themselves and others at the time of the conflict.

To a certain extent, then, it seems like a safe practice for historians to think about COs in terms of their religious beliefs. Even if one dismissed the opinion of COs themselves on the matter, it could probably be taken for granted that the perspectives of non-Christian COs, whether atheist, agnostic, or members of an entirely different religion, differed meaningfully in some capacity from the perspectives of Christian COs, given the degree to which religious upbringing tends to shape one's worldview. And when it comes to Christian COs, it is tempting to assume that the variations in doctrine among the different Christian denominations might be significant factors in shaping the unique perspectives they held.

There is evidence to suggest that it certainly shaped their experiences, since Quakers are well-documented as having provided significantly more material and emotional support to COs than most other Christian denominations. While Quakers stood against the war, the majority of Christian denominations did no such thing, a fact that did not escape the notice of COs among their congregations. CO Harold Wrigley felt it was important to mention that "the CoE (Church of England) as usual accepted the war as a just war, as did the other denominations."[114] Wrigley's anecdotal testimony here is well-supported by the work of historians, some of whom take his arguments even further. Albert Marrin noted that the Church of England was the church with connections to the "dominant classes in [British] society" and, consequently, held the most sway in British society in terms of religious organizations.[115] Marrin actually argued that, for members of the Church of England, "the just war… broke down under the pressure of modern machine warfare, being replaced by the crusade, an older, more dangerous, but emotionally more

[114] Harold Wrigley to Pauline Pollard, March 1st 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence..
[115] Albert Marrin, *The Last Crusade: The Church of England in the First World War*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1974), viii.

satisfying concept."[116] There were, of course, some dissenting opinions within the institution, but they were uncommon. Another historian, Edward Madigan, concluded that the handful of anti-war CoE ministers he could identify from this period were "exceptional, however, and Church support for the war remained both public and virtually unanimous."[117]

And yet, this lack of support from mainstream church authorities failed to deter Christian COs of any denomination. Indeed, if the words of COs themselves are taken into consideration, it seems that although the unique aspects of individual Christian denominations may have shaped some aspects of their life as a CO, it rarely played a decisive role in guiding the initial decision of Christian COs to object to the war.

Instead of taking their moral and political marching orders from organized religion, it was their own individual interpretation of Christianity, that led Christian COs to object. For instance, CO Alfred Evan Williams recalled in his IWM interview that early in life he had been a choirboy for the Church of England, before his father had his family converted to Catholicism. His description of his religious beliefs during the war, however, was that he had "a belief in Christianity, if you like. Christianity, modified by the light of personal thinking and experience."[118] His opinion of organized religion was quite dire; when his interviewer commented that it was common for Church of England clergymen to speak in favour of the war, Evans remarked that "you can always count on clergymen to do that."[119] Another Christian CO, Dr. William Cormack, was raised in a Baptist family that left the church after the war began because "they were so shaken by the attitude that all the churches took up to war that they left

---

[116] Ibid., 252.
[117] Edward Madigan, *Faith Under Fire: Anglican Army Chaplains and the Great War*, (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011), 37.
[118] Alfred William Evans, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, May 15th, 1974, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #489, REEL #4., Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[119] Ibid.

the church."[120] This led to Cormack following in their footsteps; he abandoned organized religion entirely, stating in 1972 that he had "never been ever since that a member of any organised religious body or church."[121] This does not mean that Cormack abandoned Christianity. His personal relationship with Christianity still helped shape his choices; when Dr. Peter Liddle asked during an interview with Cormack if his objections had been both religious and political in nature, Cormack replied in the affirmative.[122]

It should be stressed that the peculiarities of their religious convictions did not escape the notice of COs. One CO, Harold Bing, cut right to the heart of the matter when he observed in 1972 that "Those who became COs generally did so as a result of their own individual reading of the New Testament."[123] Looking closely at his phrasing, one might be tempted to wonder if perhaps Bing ever had the opportunity to read the manuscript of fellow objector H. Blake's memoirs; in this document, Blake provides a verbatim copy of his response to the standard questions asked of COs in their exemption applications, where he specifically says that he has "an objection to war, participation in which I believe to be wrong & unchristian according as I interpret the teachings of Christ as contained in the New Testament."[124] In any case, these descriptions are very much in line with the fact that, generally speaking, COs tended to proudly describe themselves as a rebellious and non-conformist demographic. Although he did not personally view himself as a member of this subgroup of COs, Howard Cruttenden Marten seems to have had nothing but praise for:

> a very curious group of what I used to call the 'artistically-minded CO.' There were a lot of men who were not in any way organized or attached, but I should call them the

[120] Dr. William Cormack, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, August, 1972, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/022, "William Cormack," Tape #53 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[121] Ibid.
[122] Ibid., Tape #60 (transcript.)
[123] Harold Bing to Pauline Pollard, February 19th, 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.
[124] Blake, *Whose Image and Superscription?,* 1937, 28. LIDDLE/WW1/CO/008, "Blake, H.," Peter Liddle Collection.

> aesthetic groups – artists, musicians, all that. And there were quite a considerable number of them… They had a terrific repugnance at war which could only express itself individually. You see, artists and musicians and people of that caliber are very personally-minded. They're not group-minded. They're individualists at the core. So naturally they would almost invariably take a very personal attitude to that sort of thing.[125]

Although he made those remarks in the 1970s, Marten's eagerness to highlight the rebelliousness of his fellow COs was not the product of any change in mentality over the decades. In his *White Feather*, Marten boasts of:

> thousands of men determined to withstand the pressure that was thus brought to bear in order to compel them to accept military service against their most cherished convictions. Men of various schools of thought and religious belief were represented, but all met on common ground in their refusal to surrender their conscience to the keeping of the military authorities.[126]

All in all, then, the manner in which COs thought about themselves in terms of personality and beliefs is exactly what one would expect from a group of persecuted men fighting against the expectations and judgements of their countrymen. Although somewhat paradoxical, they focused on the ways in which they differed from one another, thereby both allowing them to foster a sense of unity by calling attention to the breadth and diversity of their movement, and also bolstering their sense of personal conviction by reassuring themselves that, if it came down to it, they could stand on their own against the rest of British society for reasons that were uniquely theirs.

Still, as much as COs may have wanted to develop a sense of personal strength nourished by their own convictions, many COs found that, among their peers, there were particular characters that served as strong influences upon their morale. Among the 16 men who were sent to France alongside Howard Marten, Jack Foister remembered Adam Priestly as "the most

---

[125] Marten, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #383, REEL #2.
[126] Marten, *White Feather,* 6, TEMP MSS 67, Howard Cruttenden Marten Papers.

sensible," Harry Stanton as "the bravest of the group," and Marten himself as sincere albeit somehow uniquely vulnerable.[127] Frank Shackelton, in his autobiography, recounted a moment when one of their group, whom he refers to as "S," quoted Tennyson's poem "Crossing the Bar" with such poignant timing as to generate "such an effect" upon him that no other rendition of the same poem was ever able to compare.[128] Presuming that Shackelton used the actual initials of his companions when anonymizing their identities, "S" refers to either Stanton or a man named Harry Scullard. If the former, this perhaps explains why Foister found Stanton to be the most courageous among their companions, as Shackleton's memoir described several occasions wherein "S" displayed a stalwartly cheerful attitude towards their situation. This phenomenon of latching on to fellow COs for inspiration was not exclusive to the COs in the most dire circumstances (that is, those sent to France and nearly executed.) H. Blake described one of his companions, a man with the surname Runham-Brown, as

> the possessor of one of the most beautiful characters which it has been my good fortune to encounter, & had I no other gains to record in this narrative I should still regard the privations & sufferings through which I passed as worth while. His tranquility of mind & calm serenity under all provocations, & his tolerance of all opposing opinion, are truly wonderful, & a delight & inspiration to behold, for one of such a fiery disposition as myself.[129]

It is, of course, worth observing that even as he sung Runham-Brown's praises, Blake stressed the severe gap in their dispositions. But equally important is the fact that COs, like any other group of individuals thrown together by a mere similarity of circumstances, did not always manage to treat their differences as a good thing. Blake similarly stressed the individuality of

[127] Jack Foister, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, July, 1976, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/032, "Foister, Jack" Tape #388 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[128] Frank Shackleton, "All my Tomorrows," unpublished manuscript, 109, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/084, "Shackleton, Frank.," Peter Liddle Collection.
[129] Blake, *Whose Image and Superscription?*, unpublished manuscript, 59, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/008, "Blake, H.," Peter Liddle Collection.

another of their comrades, a man named Simons, although in Simon's case Blake admits that he found the differences between them to be both a blessing and a curse.[130]

In any case, exposure to a diverse and opinionated set of individuals with which they shared a critical point of commonality of belief certainly had an impact on the many COs who found themselves finding new perspectives and values to assimilate into their worldview. For many Christian COs, this led to a newfound appreciation for leftist politics and/or a religious conversion to a more non-conformist branch of Christianity (typically Quakerism). Blake experienced this, albeit to a relatively minor extent; he admits to having misinterpreted socialism because he had previously only been exposed to information sources that had an anti-socialist bias. To his surprise, however, he found that socialism "appears to me to be almost the ethics of Christianity without the Christ," although the intensity of his religious fervor convinced him that this omission meant socialism was an ideology that was inevitably bound to fail in the absence of his saviour.[131]

Christian-socialist COs were not a particularly prominent or popular group; as fellow CO Frank Goodcliffe later observed in a letter to Pauline Pollard, there was but a very small number of Christian-socialist COs, and the other Socialist COs tended to regard this fusion of beliefs as an odd combination and an inherent contradiction.[132]

The inconsistencies between socialism and many forms of organized Christianity did not stop Joseph Hoare, who wryly observed in 1974 that he "came out of prison a red-hot socialist and joined the ILP and so forth."[133] Furthermore, there were a number of WW1 pacifists who clearly ended up holding leftist political tendencies even if they, like Blake, did not view

[130] Ibid., 60.
[131] Ibid., 64.
[132] Franke Goodcliffe to Pauline Pollard, 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.
[133] Hoare, interview with Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #556, REEL #5.

themselves as politically active. One particularly entertaining example is Rachel Cadbury, who worked with the Friends War Victims Relief Committee (FWVRC) during the war. In 1987, during an interview with Lyn E. Smith of the IWM, she responded to an invitation for her thoughts on the suffragette movement by hurriedly clarifying that she "was never interested in politics. Never been and never have been – no, not deeply interested."[134] Disregarding entirely the fact that many might argue that her actions themselves inherently constituted political action, this produces an almost endearing lack of self-awareness on Cadbury's part when she later observes in that very same interview that she feels "fury that people are so greedy. Not the people, sorry. Companies are so greedy. They all want something they think somebody else has got and they want,"[135] a remark so inundated with the underpinnings of anti-capitalist thought that it could be quoted in an introductory-level political science textbook. (And if one did not know any better, they might suspect Cadbury was engaging in self-parody when she goes on to say, vis-a-vis the nuclear disarmament movement of the 1980s, that she does "admire people who work for it, if they do it for non-political motives. I'm sorry if it gets mixed up with politics – does it? I'm not interested in politics, no. Well, you can't be interested in everything, can you?")[136]

Taking into consideration the topics discussed above – the alternativist/absolutist classification system, the particulars of religious beliefs among COs, and the political underpinnings of various COs – there are a number of conclusions to be drawn regarding the construction of CO identity. Firstly, there are a number of insufficiencies and unclear boundaries within each of these classification systems, such as those COs who cannot be firmly delineated

---

[134] Rachel Eveline Cadbury, interview with Lyn E. Smith, recording, October 28, 1987, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #10038, REEL #5, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[135] Ibid., REEL #6.
[136] Ibid.

as an absolutist or an alternativist, or the fact that COs who objected to the war based on their interpretation of Christian doctrine were united across denominational boundaries, even as members of their own congregations insisted that the war did not defy Christ's teachings. But secondly, and more importantly, we can conclude that the sense of identity held by COs tended to be shockingly stable. The way they thought about themselves tended to be formed during the war as a result of their pre-war upbringings, and it rarely changed significantly during the post-war years. At times they appreciated the diverse perspectives of their peers, and at times they found the differences between them to be a source of frustration. But above all else, whether absolutist or alternativist, Quaker or Roman Catholic or Church of England, Socialist radical or otherwise, COs consistently presented their role as conscientious objectors as the most important element of their identity and as the fabric that bound them together as a community of like-minded yet fiercely independent individuals. Indeed, the simple fact that these men chose to engage with the projects and studies conducted by researchers hoping to document their stories decades later shows that their shared tribulations imbued these men with a sense of fellowship that could not be forgotten. No matter what set them apart from one another, and no matter how much time had passed after their stand against the First World War, Britain's WW1 COs remained proudly united by their moral rebellion.

Chapter 5: "Not A Nasty Lot At All:" CO Retrospectives on their Treatment by their Fellow Men During the War

If the relationship that COs had with each other seems paradoxical because their differences served dual purposes as both a foundation for unity and a reminder to rely upon the individual strength of their convictions, the relationship they had with the rest of British society seems paradoxical for an entirely different reason. COs, in the years after the war, were presented by historians (and, to an extent, by themselves) as having been a near-universally despised and persecuted group of outcasts, shunned by their peers for being cowardly "shirkers" content to allow other men to die in their place. And while it is certainly true that much of British society treated them this way, especially the conservative media and members of government, much of the available evidence produced by COs suggests that it was quite ordinary for them to be treated with much more consideration than the conventional narrative purports. Many CO accounts call attention to numerous instances of positive treatment and support offered to them by members of British society, although some groups are mentioned more frequently than others. Although tales of physical abuse and belittlement predominate, many COs still shared stories about finding allies in the unlikeliest of places. A friendly face or an encouraging word could often be found even among the ranks of those men who were responsible for their predicament. Who were these surprising supporters, and how did Britain's WW1 COs make sense of the occasional support offered to them by men who held social, legal and political power over them?

A few – albeit a scant few – of those allies came from the Christian church. As previously discussed, the majority of Christian COs found that it was only their own personal interpretation of the teachings of Christ that went against the war while church leaders seemed to be all for it, even though waging war at all seemed to be a great sin in the context of the pacifistic reading of

the Bible popular among Christian COs. This trend of pro-war sentiment among Christian authorities is perhaps best exemplified by the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, Randall Davidson. Serving as the Archbishop of Canterbury since 1903, Davidson had been the highest authority of the Church of England for nearly the entire first quarter of the 20th century. Those COs who foresaw the coming war might have expected Davidson to be a potential ally in their stand, as Davidson was preaching against the oncoming war just days before it broke out. But by Christmas 1914 he had changed his tune, and his stance was that only an unworthy household, disloyal to Great Britain, kept their men safe at home rather than fighting at the front.[137]

Leaders of smaller, local churches usually followed in Davidson's example, and their militant stance made an impression upon COs such as Percy Leonard. Decades later in a 1976 interview, Leonard, describing the minister of his pre-war congregation, ruefully remarked that once the war began, "his favourite phrase was 'our cruel and malicious foes.' I can remember that like it was yesterday."[138] To Leonard, this apparent reversal of values was forever baffling and something of a personal betrayal. When asked by his interviewer how the minister justified his stance in the context of Christian teachings, Leonard could only say "I just don't know. I just don't know, because… No, prior to the war, I was behind him all the way. Now, I just don't understand it at all."[139] James Ronald Long, a fellow CO who was part of the Methodist church, felt similarly. A strong believer in the missionary tradition of spreading Christianity to others, Long described the sentiments being shared at his church at the time as "something I couldn't understand… I couldn't see that I could make a man Christian by killing him."[140]

---

[137] Will Ellsworth-Jones, *We Will Not Fight: The Untold Story of the First World War's Conscientious Objectors* (London: Aurum Press Limited, 2008), 41-42.
[138] Percy Albert Leonard, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, July 19th, 1976, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #382, REEL #1, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[139] Ibid.
[140] James Ronald Long, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, 1973, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/058, "Long, James Ronald," Tape #27 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.

Other COs, however, were able to come to terms with the change in policy and eventually developed their own explanations regarding this dramatic shift in church policy. While Leonard and Long were never able to wrap their heads around the logic of their former spiritual leaders, Harold Bing had developed his own opinion on the matter by the time he wrote to Pauline Pollard in 1972. Bing concluded that while Christian COs sought to follow in the example they believed Christ had set, church authorities turned to the teachings of other prominent figures in Christian doctrine besides Christ in order to justify the war that the British government demanded. In Bing's correspondence with Pollard, he speculated that the Roman Catholic church, for example, was able to justify the war in accordance with the doctrine of "Just War" promoted by St. Thomas Aquinas.[141]

The ardently pro-war manner in which most church authorities presented the war to their congregations naturally extended to their interactions with the COs among their audiences. Many COs remembered being actively discouraged by their leaders. Roland Reigne, for instance, recalled not only being pressured to enlist by a minister who he knew, but also being ardently taunted for his conscientious objection by a coworker who was "very pious and Superintendent of a Sunday School."[142] At his church in the small parish of Kings Walden in Hertfordshire, Bertram Leonard Somner was apparently subjected to "terrible recruiting sermons, preached at me, who was the only eligible person in the congregation!"[143]

Still, a lucky handful of other COs found that their views were shared by their congregational leaders. Bernard G. Lawson recounted that when faced with the decision to object or enlist, "I was very much helped by the Minister of the Church, Rev. Nicholas Richards,

---

[141] Harold F. Bing to Pauline Pollard, February 19th 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.
[142] Roland J. Reigne, "Recollections of Roland J Reigne," 5, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/078, "Reigne, Roland J.," (manuscript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[143] Bertram Leonard Somner, "A Conscientious Objector's Memories of WW1," 2, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/088, "Somner, Bertram Leonard," (manuscript), Peter Liddle Collection.

himself a keen pacifist."[144] William Marwick, though he was taken aback by the "jingoism" of many members of the clergy, still found that his pacifism was encouraged by two influential clergymen, one of whom led a working-class congregation in Glasgow.[145] Charles F. Dingle, in his letters to Pauline Pollard, credited his Baptist minister, a man named Rev. John Morris, with influencing him to become a CO.[146]

Finally, as to be expected in any situation where ideologies clash, there were at least a few members of the clergy who attempted to strike a balance between supporting and condemning COs. One newspaper clipping of an unfortunately unclear origin, kept in a scrapbook originally compiled by the father of FAU member Harold Gundry Clark, quotes a statement apparently given by the Bishop of Birmingham, Henry Wakefield, on the subject of COs. Wakefield was "persuaded that as a general rule conscientious objectors are, most of them, conscientious" but nevertheless felt "that they have mis-read the character of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the need for sternness in the healing of the world's diseases. I think they are absolutely wrong in refusing to do war service of a healing kind, though I understand their argument."[147] Wakefield's presentation of COs as well-meaning yet wayward souls who were making the wrong decision based upon a genuine misunderstanding of religious doctrine seems to have been the middle ground between the stance of clergymen like Davidson and clergymen like Richards.

While it was rare for church officials to actively support COs, when this support did manifest it typically appeared in an obvious fashion by church leaders who spoke their mind

---

[144] Bernard G. Lawson, "Memories of a Quaker International Worker," 3, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/054, "Lawson, Bernard G.," (manuscript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[145] William Hutton Marwick, untitled unpublished memoir, 3, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/063, "Marwick, William Hutton," Peter Liddle Collection.
[146] Charles F. Dingle to Pauline Pollard, March 3rd, 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.
[147] Newspaper clipping titled "Not Cowards" in a scrapbook made by the father of Harold Gundry Clark, Liddle/WW1/019, "Clark, Harold Gundry," Peter Liddle Collection.

openly. Less obvious was the subtle leniency granted by the police officers that were responsible for arresting COs who refused to report when conscripted. Although these individuals were the first point of contact for the British state's attempt to exert authority over COs who rejected the decision of the Tribunals, CO accounts frequently tell stories of police officers who treated their arrestees with an unexpectedly casual attitude. Frank Shackleton claimed that the police sergeant who arrested him freely obliged his request that he and the sergeant walk on opposite sides of the road so that factory workers would not see Shackleton in handcuffs.[148] George Frederick Dutch recounted coming home to find out that the local police had opted to leave a message with his family, asking him to report to them the next day.[149] One might suppose that they trusted that a man who was willing to stand up for his beliefs would be honorable enough to turn himself in rather than attempting to flee. Perhaps the most astonishing account among them all is that of Walter Griffin, who was the recipient of a rather unusual birthday/Christmas gift courtesy of his local police. When the detectives came to Griffin on December 23rd, his birthday, they had apparently "decided, between themselves, that if I promised that I would not leave the place where I was, which was the home of a Pentecostal person, as long as I could be there when they wanted me, which would be in two days or three days time, they would come back for me, if I promised to do that."[150]

Why did these officers of the law act in such a lax regard towards men who were, in the opinion of the national government, criminals, even traitors? COs themselves have offered some degree of speculation on the matter, attributing the mercy offered to them to motivations both altruistic and pragmatic. Shackleton's interpretation falls into the former category; he merely

[148] Shackleton, "All my Tomorrows," 93, LIDDLE/WW1/084, "Shackleton, Frank," Peter Liddle Collection.
[149] George Frederick Dutch, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, April 25th, 1976, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #356, REEL #1, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[150] Walter Griffin, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive,Catalogue #9790, REEL #2.

characterized his arresting officer as “a very humane man” with “no desire to inflict upon me any greater indignity than the situation demanded.”[151] While this may seem to be a very charitable interpretation for a man in his situation to hold, it does make sense that Shackelton saw it that way. Since many COs held pacifist positions in correlation with a belief in the innate value of human life, it seems natural that they would be predisposed towards the opinion that their peers were innately good-natured. This sort of stance seems to be implied by Shackleton’s usage of the term “humane,” after all. Naturally, there were other COs who had a less idealistic take on the matter, believing this attitude to be a simple matter of pragmatism on the part of the police officers. Griffin posited that one possible reason that his local police gave him an extra Christmas as a free man was simply because it would be too complicated, from a logistical standpoint, to hold him in detention over the Christmas holiday.[152] Finally, there was also the simple fact that, in many small English towns, there was a very real possibility that COs would be on good terms with local police officers due to their interpersonal history. This was the case for CO Eric Dott, who found that his arresting officer “was very shy about it all because we all knew each other well and he said he was very sorry but he had come to arrest me[.]”[153] Given the simplicity of this answer, it would be unsurprising if the presence of a pre-existing relationship between police officials and COs was likely the root cause behind the majority of these kinds of interactions.

Still, not every CO thought as kindly about the men who arrested them as Shackleton and Dott did. This was not without reason, as some COs reported having more hostile interactions with their arresting officer. CO H. Blake described how the constable who arrested him made a brief attempt to convert Blake to the constable’s pro-war perspective. Blake’s response to the

---

[151] Shackleton, “All my Tomorrows,” 93, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/084, “Shackleton, Frank,” Peter Liddle Collection.
[152] Walter Griffin, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #9790, REEL #2.
[153] Felicity Goodall, *A Question of Conscience* (United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1997), 11.

officer's argument was a remark that he scathingly characterized as "an assertion the implications of which seemed to be too stupendous for the limits of his imagination to encompass."[154]

Under the circumstances, it was perfectly warranted that COs held these kinds of negative opinions about the police, and even Blake's outright hostility is unsurprising. After all, on top of any mistreatment or derision present in their personal interactions with COs, police played no small part in the harassment of, and attempts to discredit, anti-conscription associations such as the No-Conscription Fellowship.[155] Police officers were also the agents deployed by the state to track down and arrest those who were actively avoiding conscription by, for example, fleeing to Ireland.[156] The relative kindness of a few local officers as they were shepherding COs into the hands of the military could hardly be measured as equal compensation for their participation in this sinister government campaign.

And yet, any negative remarks COs had to say about police officers were still typically far less bitter than their commentary about tribunal officials. While the antagonism between COs and tribunal administrators is a subject that other scholars have exhaustively documented, it is still perhaps best to quote the remarks of a few individuals to demonstrate the depth of this hostility. In what reads as an understatement born from a desire to be polite, Howard Cruttenden Marten observed that his "local tribunal was pretty hostile. They were… May I say I was not met with a great depth of vision or understanding."[157] This common attitude among tribunal members was openly recognized during the war. Writing in 1916, Henry W. Nevinson, an English war correspondent and founding member of the FAU, rather plainly admitted the fact that "Nearly all

---

[154] Blake, *Whose Image and Superscription?*, unpublished manuscript, 54, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/008, "Blake, H.," Peter Liddle Collection.
[155] Bibbings, *Telling Tales About Men*, 148-150.
[156] Ibid., 181-182.
[157] Marten, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #383, REEL #1.

[tribunals] agreed in regarding conscience as an unpatriotic offense which must be visited by penalties."[158] But the overall attitude towards COs by the tribunals was not necessarily the result of pro-war passion held by the entire membership of the tribunal. Instead, this hostility towards COs was often driven by a small subset of tribunal members with strong opinions. In his memoir, Marten suggests that most members of his local tribunal conducted themselves only as passive participants in the affair, and that the chairman of the tribunal was the singular individual among them who actually engaged with Marten.[159] Joseph Hoare likewise reported that there was at least one member of his local tribunal wholly disengaged with the bureaucratic process, a man "who throughout the procedures sat with his head buried in his hands, didn't say a word."[160]

Unfortunately, this apathetic air of passivity and disinterest was typically the best reception that COs could hope for. Local tribunals, which were only intended to determine the sincerity of a CO's beliefs rather than challenge or assess the core validity of those beliefs, were nevertheless spearheaded by pro-war individuals who sought to actively dismantle the arguments that COs made against the war in a display of moral superiority. Military representatives, in particular, tended to take the task upon themselves to force COs into an ethical debate. According to an account published in the July 28th, 1916 edition of *The Friend*, the following exchange occurred during the tribunal of a man named John Sturges Stephen:

> J.S.S [John Sturges Stephen]: Has not a man a right to hold his views from a profound religious conviction?
> M.R [Military Representative]: No! No man has a right to hold such views when he is living under the protection of the army and navy and the shelter of the Government which does not share the same belief. Why don't you go to another island?[161]

---

[158] Henry W. Nevinson, 'The conscientious objector', *Atlantic Monthly*, 103:695 (November 1916), 690, https://cdn.theatlantic.com/media/archives/1916/11/118-5/132300274.pdf.
[159] Marten, *White Feather*, 9, TEMP MSS 67, Howard Marten Cruttenden Papers.
[160] Hoare, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #556, REEL #2.
[161] *The Friend*, July 28th, 1916, 584, TEMP MSS 62, Cornelius Barritt Papers.

That same issue of *The Friend* also recounted the story of another CO, who was told by the retired clergyman serving on his tribunal as the military representative that "The animal will protect its young and it has that power given to it by its Creator. Ought we not to do the same?"[162]

Of course, as a Quaker publication, *The Friend* would perhaps have been biased towards reporting instances of verbal abuse of COs during tribunals. There is a possibility this does not constitute a genuinely representative sample of tribunal stories, and there is certainly some evidence that local tribunals could occasionally be accommodating towards COs. Angus Wallace argues that the North Riding Appeal Tribunal, for example, allowed "a high number of exemptions from combat duty and temporary exemptions" that suggested "understanding and acceptance of the COs arguments."[163] On a directly interpersonal level, it should be noted that military representatives did not always pounce upon the opportunity to belittle and bicker with COs; Jack Foister reported that at his tribunal, the military representative "did not in any way abuse his position. He was quite fair."[164] Even David Blelloch, who said that he couldn't fathom any member of the tribunal at Oxford having sympathetic sentiments towards COs, couldn't recall having his moral reasoning attacked. He described the military representative, one Captain Baldry, as a "perfectly nice man" who "naturally did his duty."[165] Furthermore not all tribunals universally refused COs the exemption that they were asking for. Although many local tribunals insisted they did not have the authority to grant absolute exemption, other tribunals recognized that they indeed had that right, and acted upon it.

---

162 Ibid., 583.
163 Wallace, "A Community of Consent," 111.
164 Jack Foister, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, July 1976, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/031, "Foister, Jack," Tape #377, (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
165 David H. Blelloch, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, December 1978, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/009, "Blelloch, David Habersham Hamilton," Tape #581, (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.

While one might expect that rank-and-file soldiers would have had the strongest motivation to resent COs, given the fact that the duty that these ‘conchies’ were ‘shirking’ was the one that soldiers had accepted despite the great personal risk, CO accounts suggest that this was rarely the case. British soldiers seem to have formed a mutually respectful relationship with COs much of the time. Many COs remembered receiving encouragement and support from soldiers, and the memories of these moments of validation lingered with them for decades. Alfred Evans, for example, recounted with clear appreciation three distinct instances wherein soldiers went out of their way to offer him material support in the form of sustenance during his brief stay at Cinder City Camp, Le Havre. He mentions one incident when a Scottish soldier told him “I don’t agree with you, laddie, but I admire your pluck” and offered him some tea. Another time an anonymous soldier “sent up his dinner to me with his compliments. I was completely taken aback, but being a prisoner, could only send him my thanks and appreciation by one of the guard. I never saw him, or even found out who he was. I only hope he fared well and survived the war.”[166]

Finally, there is one soldier who made quite an impression upon Evans, on the night before he and the other COs with him departed the camp. In an interview with Peter Liddle, Evans describes an Irish guardsman who assisted the prisoners in throwing themselves a small party in the guardroom, going so far as to collect their money in order to go out and buy them “cakes and fruit and chocolate.”[167] (On another occasion, Evans also observed that their money alone would not have been sufficient payment for what the soldier brought back for them, suggesting that he contributed a sum from his own pocket in order to finance the festivities.)[168]

---

[166] Evans, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #489, REEL #5.
[167] Alfred William Evans, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, May, 1973, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/030, “Evans, Alfred William,” Tape #27 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[168] Evans, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #489, REEL #5.

Other COs also claimed to have received gifts from soldiers. Roland J. Reigne, in his recollection of late December 1916, which he and his brother Sidney spent at Horsfield Barracks, explained:

> For the next seven or eight days we were confined to this barrack room, with these men who had seen some of the suffering and misery of actual war. Yet they were most kind to us, insisting on sharing some part of their Christmas presents with us. At times we sat around the fire, discussing all manner of subjects, including war and peace, and our particular position, in a most friendly way.[169]

In addition to acts of encouragement and material support from low-ranking soldiers, many COs also spoke of soldiers further up the chain of command who treated them well despite the circumstances. Ronald Long spoke of a commanding officer who was a "perfect gentleman" at Tunstall Camp, who may have been the same (Colonel or Major) Wise that brothers Roland and Len Payne described as "very kind and very very persuasive. He was more difficult to oppose than the bullies."[170] The ability of this man to make the Payne brothers waver (however slightly) in their convictions suggests he made quite an impression on them, which was probably no easy feat given the resolute, headstrong nature found within most COs. And even COs who could not be swayed whatsoever had positive memories of some army officers. Alfred Evans told the story of a captain in Boulogne who went so far as to salute him when Evans insisted that he was prepared to die doing what he thought was right.[171]

While this was a demonstration of respect, other officers apparently displayed signs of sincere emotional distress born of empathy for the situation COs found themselves in. Fred Murfin's memoir, *Prisoners for Peace*, described how the officer escorting a group of COs on a train ride repeatedly asked the group to allow him to remove their handcuffs, repeatedly

---

[169] Roland J. Reigne, "Recollections of Roland J. Reigne," 20, Peter Liddle Collection.
[170] James Ronald Long, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, Tape #27 (transcript) Peter Liddle Collection; Len and Roland Payne, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, February 1973, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/070, "Payne, Leonard Joseph," Tape #70 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection. Long identifies the man as possibly being a "Colonel" Wise, while the Payne brothers refer to a "Major" Wise.
[171] Evans, statement from "When the Saints Go Marching In," 1966, 6, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/030, "Evans, Alfred William" (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.

badgering them until they relented. Murfin concluded that the officer must have felt uncomfortable about the situation.[172] In a 1974 account of his experiences, George F Dutch described an early encounter with an old sergeant by the name of Wood, who attempted to convince Dutch and his fellow COs to change their minds, and who Dutch believed "was genuinely grieved that he could not move us."[173] Howard Marten told a similar tale, down to the specific usage of the term "genuinely";

> There was a little Scottish man there, a regimental sergeant major, and he had tears in his eyes, almost. He said "You don't know what you're up against." He said "You'll have an awful time." Well, I said "I can't help that, that's not my affair." And he really was genuinely concerned that the trouble that we were going to meet – and we were forever being threatened with the death sentence, over and over again.[174]

And yet, although there were plenty of soldiers that showed them friendly, even compassionate treatment, COs did not necessarily feel that their position was well understood by these individuals. Despite his encounter with the tearful Scottish sergeant major, Howard Marten came to believe that the support that COs received from soldiers often stemmed from the soldiers' own resentment of the military. Furthermore, he felt that the soldiers failed to grasp the sincere convictions of COs, and "couldn't get away from their minds that you were out to save your skin and not for principle. And when they found it was merely you were fighting a principle, they couldn't understand it. It was outside their ken."[175] Marten's observation on this matter seems to be well-founded, as there were soldiers who readily acknowledged the reality of a psychological gap between the two groups. For example, in an article titled "The Soldier and the C.O.," published as part of the No-Conscription Fellowship's 1920 post-war souvenir pamphlet, Captain E. McGill freely confessed that "it is possible to recognise the nobility of the

---

[172] Fred Murfin, *Prisoners for Peace*, unpublished manuscript, 1965, 55, TEMP MSS 722, Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London, England (hereafter cited as TEMP MSS 722, *Prisoners for Peace*.)
[173] Untitled account by George F Dutch, March 1974, 6, Imperial War Museum Private Papers, Document Item #7651, "Private Papers of G F Dutch," Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[174] Marten, interview with Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #383, REEL #3.
[175] Ibid.

sacrifice made by a conscientious objector for his cause, without being able to identify oneself with him in an absolute sense."[176]

While Marten may have felt that way when looking back on his experiences, there is also evidence that at least some percentage of soldiers actually went above and beyond what anyone would reasonably expect of them in order to support COs. Captain McGill's contribution to the NCF's pamphlet, published just a year after the war, represents one such instance. But other soldiers chose to defend COs in a highly public way even during the early days of conscription, by writing letters to newspapers professing their sympathy. One such letter appeared in the May 4th, 1916 edition of the liberal newspaper, *The Nation*. Written by a soldier named W. E. Armstrong, who requested that his letter be published in order to help combat "the widespread belief that those fighting have no respect for the Conscientious Objector."[177] Armstrong went so far as to jab at the biased nature of the tribunals, pointing out that these councils, composed of men too old to be conscripted themselves, had largely assumed that COs were insincere in their beliefs as a general rule rather than giving them the benefit of the doubt. Another man by the name of Miles Malleson, writing to *The Daily News* that same year, claimed to have been a soldier who was wounded, released from armed service, and then became a CO (presumably in an ideological sense rather than a technical one, since he had already been let go from the army.)[178] While the legitimacy of these letters is now impossible to verify, the fact that both men willingly supplied their names supports the notion that they were penned by genuine soldiers. Of course, there are also examples of letters published in newspapers that were reported to be from

---

[176] Captain E. McGill, "The Soldier and the CO," *The No Conscription Fellowship: A Souvenir of its work during the years 1914-1919*, (The Fellowship, 1920), 32, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/038, "Gaudie, Norman.," Peter Liddle Collection.
[177] W. E. Armstrong, letter to the editor, *Nation*, May 4th, 1916, TEMP MSS 62, Cornelius Barritt Papers.
[178] Miles Malleson, letter to the editor, *Daily News*, 1916, TEMP MSS 62, Cornelius Barritt Papers.

soldiers holding an anti-CO stance,[179] and there is insufficient data available to calculate which strain of commentary was more commonly found in soldiers' letters to the British press.

There are also some accounts from COs that do not colour soldiers in such a uniformly positive light. There were unsurprisingly interactions of a mixed nature, where soldiers came into conflict with one another due to holding opposing opinions on the COs' situation. One of Pollard's respondents, Richard West, recalled a time when he was staying in the same room as a group of soldiers while in military custody. One night, one of the soldiers attempted to encourage the others to "do him in," but another soldier came to West's defence and sat at his bedside for the entire night.[180] At other times, soldiers displayed no such sympathy, instead delivering to COs the sort of rough treatment one would have expected they would demonstrate towards the "shirkers." H Blake described an encounter with several soldiers who were attempting to coerce him into wearing an army uniform:

> they knew – as also I knew, – that such refusal would ensure to me a considerable amount of rough usage, & it was a striking demonstration of the brutality of the common soldier's mind that they received my answer with marked evidence of pleasurable anticipation in the infliction of suffering upon a fellow human being. With a great outburst of laughter, they told me I was 'in for a rough ride,'[181]

Of course, his reference to the "brutality of the common soldier's mind" seems to indicate that Blake had low expectations of the rank-and-file soldier's emotional intelligence. While perhaps this could be dismissed as a manifestation of the (arguably warranted) 'holier-than-thou' attitude that tints a fair number of Blake's recollections, even COs who generally seemed to like most of the soldiers they met still provided accounts of soldiers exhibiting crude behavior towards them. Alfred Evans, who, as a reminder, provided several tales of positive treatment at Cinder City Camp, also remembered being heckled by several passing soldiers after his

---

[179] For example, "An Officer on Opinion in the Trenches," *Liverpool Echo,* April 22nd, 1916.
[180] Richard West to Pauline Pollard, 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.
[181] Blake, *Whose Image and Superscription?*, 70, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/008, "Blake, H.," Peter Liddle Collection.

commuted death sentence was passed. He remarked in 1966 that "they called out 'Serves you right! You should have been obedient to those in authority over you.' St. Paul, of course! He had the merits of a soldier and more of his limitations."[182] This comparison to St. Paul is particularly scathing coming from Evans, who made his severe distaste for the biblical figure crystal clear in his interview with the IWM eight years later when he took the opportunity to deliver a lengthy rant about the saint:

> Work out your own salvation. St Paul is a fool, he made more trouble ever owed for Christianity than anyone [else] ever associated with it. I have a book at home with 16 quotations from Jesus and 16 from St. Paul and they sit side by side and *St. Paul denies Jesus in every one not merely in words but in sense*... rubbish. Work out your own salvation! I'm sorry, lady, I'm addressing you as a public meeting.[183]

(The words in italics were spoken by Evans over what sounds to have been the noise of him slamming his fist(s) against a tabletop, presumably with the aim of emphasizing his disrespect for St. Paul.)

With Evans' passionate testimony taken into consideration, we can conclude that even if soldiers displayed sympathetic and empathetic behaviors towards COs with a frequency that has thus far been under acknowledged by historians, the conventional narrative of widespread mistreatment still holds some merit. Furthermore, while the aforementioned examples of abuse directed towards COs by soldiers was verbal abuse, it should be acknowledged that physical mistreatment, sometimes even outright violence, was not uncommon either. This frequently came in the form of the formal infliction of corporal punishment on disobedient "soldiers" by their so-called superior officers. For instance, although he was lucky enough not to face the barbaric ordeal personally, Bert Brocklesby was well aware of what is arguably the most notorious of these punishments, "field-punishment number one which consists in tying a man with arms

---

[182] Evans, transcript of statement from "When the Saints Go Marching In," 1966, 7, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/030, "Evans, Alfred William," Peter Liddle Collection.
[183] Evans, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #489, REEL #8.

extended to a barbed wire fence for at least an hour at a time."[184] But mundane physical abuse outside the auspices of mandated corporal punishment was also commonplace; soldiers often became physically aggressive with the COs under their supervision, even when the COs were being reasonably obedient. Most COs eventually came to view this aggression as stemming not from genuine malice on the part of ordinary soldiers, but rather a result of their predictable tendency towards compliance with those higher up the chain of command. Howard Marten, for instance, had this to say on the matter:

> When we were leaving the Mill Hill Barracks, we were rough-handled [by soldiers], having our heels kicked and pushed around, and going down from the barracks to the railway station, and it was obviously laid-on at the instructions of the authorities. And it soon stopped. I found that over and over again, it was a certain exhibitionism of rough-play which was not-so-much genuine as put-on for the benefit of the authorities.[185]

Marten was not the only CO to suggest that the severity of their manhandling corresponded to the attitude of the commanding officers in charge of their handlers. Fred Murfin, in his memoir, remarked that the presence of a good-natured officer typically resulted in kinder behaviour from the soldiers under his supervision. In his words, "We found, as a rule, that if the officer was decent, the men were."[186]

Why is it that COs were so keen to provide explanations for the cruelty of soldiers, and so eager to highlight the deeds and words of soldiers who showed them some slight kindness? One must naturally question whether the relatively soft-hearted sentiment displayed by some COs towards the soldiers who were complicit in their torment is anachronistic and out-of-alignment with their actual feelings at the time of the war. Perhaps the passage of time dulled feelings of resentment, or maybe a desire to put the past behind them as they grew older caused COs to

---

[184] John Hubert Brocklesby, *Escape from Paganism*, unpublished manuscript, 21, TEMP MSS 412, John Brocklesby Papers.
[185] Marten, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #383, REEL #3.
[186] Fred Murfin, *Prisoners for Peace*, unpublished manuscript, 3, TEMP MSS 722, Prisoners for Peace.

selectively curate their stories in later accounts, choosing their words with the aim of avoiding the revival of old social tensions. After all, many of the above-quoted interviews were undertaken in the latter half of the 20th century, when many were hoping that the world could put the horrors of the First and Second World Wars behind them. Dutch, Evans and Marten conducted their interviews with the IWM in the mid-1970s, not long after Littlewood's "Oh! What a Lovely War" was performed on stage and in the midst of Cold-War era political unrest. It may be that COs testifying at this uneasy time felt the need to humanize participants in the First World War, perhaps imagining that as the heroic holdouts who stood against that terrible world-shaking conflict, COs had an obligation to provide hope and reassure others that people were fundamentally good and war was not inevitable. It would not be unusual for interviewees to try to deliver the narrative they believe to be anticipated by their audiences; as noted by Lynn Abrams "Discomposure arises when we are unable to align personal memories with publicly acceptable versions of the past. We all seek to achieve composure."[187]

Alternatively, perhaps instances of kindness from soldiers stood out more in their memories simply *because* they were a novelty, while the various abuses COs were subjected to blurred together as an unpleasant, hazy mass of experiences.[188] And certainly, there can be no doubt that the specific prompts COs were given by their audience while delivering their accounts impacted what they chose to talk about; Marten's story about the 'exhibitionism of rough play' by soldiers at Mill Hill was in direct response to Margaret A. Brooks, his interviewer, asking the question "did you find that when men were hostile it was in public in front of a group?"[189] Did this phrasing perhaps trigger some sense of masculine solidarity for Marten, nudging him

[187] Abrams, "Memory as both source and subject," *Writing the History of Memory*, 99.
[188] There is also the possibility that either the archival institutions who kept these primary sources, or the author of this thesis, is responsible for any bias towards these narratives for similar reasons.
[189] Marten, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #383, REEL #3.

towards taking a sort of excusatory, “boys-will-be-boys” attitude on the situation, explaining his description of the situation as a form of rough-*play*?

As shown in the testimonies compiled in this chapter, COs had a complex relationship with the various authority figures with which the war brought them into contact. Clergymen, police officers, politicians, tribunal members and soldiers were often cruel and judgemental towards the “conchies,” but there were also many displays of kindness towards COs carried out by members of those same groups. COs were consequently forced to try and make sense of this contradiction in whatever ways they could. Sometimes this led COs to conclude that their opponents on the other side of the great struggle against war were acting thoughtlessly. At other times they concluded that the rest of Britain’s men were simply doing what they thought was their duty, just the same as the COs themselves. Crucial to each of these interactions, however, is the fact that the participants, including both the COs and the other side, were almost exclusively men. As such, hanging like a shadow over all of these interactions is the spectre of early-20th century masculinity and the notion that a man is obligated to follow whatever authority he views as supreme, whether that be the British government, Christian doctrine, or one’s own moral compass.

Chapter 6: White Feathers and Black Sheep: COs, Gender Dynamics and Familial Alienation

The question of gender dynamics is essential to understanding the lives and legacies of COs. The relationship COs had with their fellow men and their sense of masculinity is undeniably relevant to their experiences in the 1910s, after all, as the patriarchal social structure and gender norms at play in Great Britain at the time meant that both COs and those whom they engaged in their power struggle against – namely, the military and civil authorities – were exclusively male. Considerable efforts have already been undertaken by historians to unpack this complex subject. As previously discussed, Lois Bibbings has done excellent work analyzing the ways in which the masculinity of COs came under attack during the war at the hands of British society. Drawing upon the portrayal of COs in political cartoons and tribunal transcripts, Bibbings established that "the unconscientious conscientious objector came to represent not only an unpopular identity but also an extremely unmanly one."[190] How exactly did this come to pass? How did COs reckon with this emasculation, and how did it influence their relationship with those in their domestic sphere?

Political pundits and tribunal members were not necessarily the only culprits behind the theft of CO masculinity. Even their female associates in the anti-war movement posed a potential threat towards the claim COs held on masculinity. Following in Bibbing's footsteps, Kabi Hartman's "Male Pacifists in British Women's World War I Novels: Toward an 'Enlightened Civilisation'" has demonstrated that the female allies of COs, in their own unique way, were also prone to stripping male COs of any claim to traditional masculinity, unintentional though this may have been. As Hartman argues, women writing about COs during the war, like Theodora Wilson Wilson or Eva Gore-Booth, often created protagonists that fit the following mold:

[190] Bibbings, *Telling Tales About Men*, 103.

"Self-sacrificing and spiritually enlightened, these male pacifists are not only Christlike, but are also often represented as asexual or homosexual—types of the 'intermediate' or 'third sex.'"[191] In the heteronormative landscape of early 20th-century England, this kind of characterization would have been in direct conflict with traditional notions and expressions of masculinity. (Of course, it is also important to note that men also occasionally wrote characters who followed this template. Bibbings has pointed out at least one male author, the Scottish novelist & politician John Buchan, who also created a heroic but queer-coded CO, the character of Lancelot Wake, in his 1919 novel *Mr Standfast*.)[192]

But while Hartman uses these works primarily as a means to explore the mindset of the women writing these texts, we should also ask how the men whose struggle was used as the vehicle for the woman's voice would have felt about these portrayals. Though undoubtedly well-intentioned and sympathetic to their plight, these stories in some regards played into the belief that COs were "an aberration who was not only unmanly and possibly an invert, but was also less than a woman; a subhuman breed."[193] Simultaneously, there are elements within this character archetype which are unlikely to have been objectionable from the perspective of the typical CO. For example, there is little reason to believe that Christian COs would have any objections to the character archetypes' association with Christ, especially given the emphasis that many of them placed upon their decision to follow their personal interpretation of his teachings above all else. Christ-like saintliness was only one small part of this character archetype. Faced with "pacifist women writers' portrayals of conscientious objector characters as asexual, homosexual, or woman-identified,"[194] how might COs have felt about their literary counterparts?

---

[191] Kabi Hartman, "Male Pacifists in British Women's World War I Novels: Toward an 'Enlightened Civilisation'," *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, 58, no. 4. (2015): 536.
[192] Bibbings, *Images of Manliness,* 352.
[193] Bibbings, *Telling Tales About Men*, 116.
[194] Hartman, "Male Pacifists," 519.

Unfortunately, this hypothetical is one I cannot conclusively answer. Among the materials collated during the research process for this thesis, there is no evidence that COs were particularly aware of how they were being portrayed in women's fiction during the war. The COs who were imprisoned, as Harold Bing recounted in one interview, had their access to literature restricted by the prison system. While they were eventually allowed to receive books sent to them by friends on the outside for 'study' purposes, his testimony seems to suggest that this was limited to academic texts.[195] Bing, Wilfred Littleboy and Phillip Radley all mentioned that they read a fair number of books about history, although Radley also professed that he indulged in poetry.[196] Eric Southall's correspondence with his mother from during the war, which exhaustively chronicles his reading habits, suggests he consumed a similar library of content.[197] The record suggests, then, that imprisoned COs consumed little-to-no fiction during their stay in jail. Even if these COs somehow had the opportunity to read the stories that women were writing about them, it is rather doubtful that they, in the midst of their struggle, took the time to jot down their thoughts on the matter. Of course, COs who were not imprisoned due to being granted exemption, whether absolute or conditional, did not suffer from these same access restrictions in regards to their reading material.

However, there is reason to believe that a number of COs would have eventually become aware of these depictions after the war, even if they had not encountered them during the war itself. As previously mentioned, one of the earliest academic works written about CO's was John Graham's *Conscience and Conscription: A History, 1916-1919*, published shortly after the war in 1921. Graham's book included as an addendum, in full, Gore-Booth's short story "The Tribunal,"

---

[195] Harold Frederick Bing, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, May 6th, 1974, Imperial War Museums Sound Archive, Catalogue #358, REEL #5 & #6, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[196] Ibid., REEL #6; Littleboy, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #485 REEL #3; Phillip Radley, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #642, REEL #5.
[197] Eric Pritchard Southall to his mother, August 1916-March 1919, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/090, "Southall, Eric Pritchard," Peter Liddle Collection.

a story that depicts the tribunal of a figure heavily implied to be Christ himself.[198] As Graham specifies in his author's note, several COs including Fenner Brockway, Hubert Peet and Howard Cruttenden Marten read all or part of this book during the writing process.[199] Furthermore, the text had a lasting popularity with COs. Harold Bing was also familiar with Graham's text, and recommended it to Pauline Pollard fifty years later in 1972, as did fellow CO Bernard G. Lawson, who described it as an "excellent and reliable history of the C.O. movement."[200] Unfortunately, while this suggests that these COs eventually encountered Gore-Booth's depiction of their peers, the author could find no direct commentary from any of them regarding their opinion about this depiction.[201]

Still, these depictions serve to highlight the larger-scale assault on CO masculinity within society as a whole during this time, an assault that COs were starkly aware of. After all, not only were COs frequently mocked, belittled and questioned during their tribunals, but the exchanges from these meetings were often printed in newspapers for the public to read. This practice was little more than a thinly-veiled form of public shaming – consider, for example, an extract from the March 10th, 1916 issue of *The Observer*, which was titled "NO MATTER IF THE GERMANS COME." This extract discusses the tribunal of Harold Pearce, and includes remarks from a tribunal member named Mr. Strickland who badgers Pearce with questions such as "You don't care what happens as long as you do nothing?" and "You prefer other people to do the job for you rather than do it yourself?"[202] The very next segment from that same issue reports that the

---

[198] John Graham, *Conscience and Conscription: A History, 1916-1919*, (England: G. Allen & Unwin LTD., 1922) 102-109.
[199] Ibid., 11.
[200] Harold F. Bing to Pauline Pollard, February 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence; Bernard G. Lawson to Pauline Pollard, February 28th, 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.
[201] While one may question the value of raising a question I cannot answer with the evidence I have at hand within this thesis, I felt it warranted inclusion in the hopes that another scholar may be able to conduct a deeper, more conclusive investigation into the matter of WW1 COs and their depiction in women's literature at a later date.
[202] "NO MATTER IF THE GERMANS COME," *Observer,* March 10th, 1916, TEMP MSS 62, Cornelius Barritt Papers.

chairman of the tribunal for W. E. Parsons told him “I see. You don’t mind being conquered. You are prepared to stand by and look on and you think all will be well if all do the same.”[203]

How did these allegations of unmasculine cowardice impact COs? It is possible to outline the general shape of an answer to this question by comparing the portrayal of the male CO in women’s literature and newspapers to the construction of masculinity embedded within the sources produced by the men themselves. And while these may not be representative of the attitude that every man had towards the question of masculinity, they certainly indicate that a significant number of COs placed high value on the sense of traditional masculinity as it had been conceived of in English society since the Victorian era – a quasi-chivalric masculinity which placed emphasis on “loyalty, courtesy, bravery and self-sacrifice.”[204] We can see the desire among COs to claim these qualities in the lines of prose left by one CO to another. One entry in an autograph book presented to J. Nicholl Carter by those imprisoned alongside him at Kimmel Park Camp read:

> Dare to be right! O, dare to be true!
> Other men’s failures can never save you;
> Stand by your conscience, your honour, your faith,
> Stand like a hero and battle til death.[205]

Although the words are used here by a CO, one can readily imagine such dramatic lines, asserting heroic daring and a willingness to be martyred for a cause, being invoked by a soldier facing mortal peril in the trenches – which is precisely the type of man who, in the eyes of British society during the war, had met the criteria necessary to achieve the status of ideal

---

[203] “CONSCRIPTION AND BEASTS OF PREY,” *Observer*, March 10th, 1916, TEMP MSS 62, Cornelius Barritt Papers.
[204] Anthony Fletcher, “Patriotism, the Great War, and the decline of Victorian Manliness,” *History (London)* 99, no. 334 (2014): 45. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-229X.12044.
[205] Entry in the autograph book of J. Nicholl Carter, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/015, “Carter, J. Nicholl,” Peter Liddle Collection. This quotation originates from the hymnal “Dare to do right, dare to be true” by George Lansing Taylor, 1864.

masculinity. As scholar Anthony Fletcher has discussed, this was an intentional stride towards idealised masculinity on the part of soldiers, embodied by men like 17-year-old Charles Carrington, who experienced a "craving to demonstrate his manliness" when the war broke out.[206] Carrington's arguably naive desire to perform an idealized masculinity is unsurprising, given his youth. After all, as Ilana Bet-El observes, the children's adventure stories that would have been popular during his prepubescent years were informed by chivalric, knightly notions of masculinity, and "the large audience of boys who read them were constantly made aware of [the protagonist's] manliness, and urged to emulate it."[207]

COs were raised in the same society as these soldiers and subjected to the same gendered expectations, which undoubtedly helped shape their decisions. Frederick Gillman, a member of the FAU, claimed in an interview in 1977 that his decision to join the organisation stemmed from a sense that "like all young men or most young men in those days you wanted to be doing something active."[208] Perhaps Gillman's desire to lead an "active" life stemmed from exposure to the popular *Scouting for Boys*, published in 1908 by Lord Baden-Powell, another text that Bet-El argues primed the young men of Britain to strive towards masculine ideals drawn from chivalric aspirations.[209] Another FAU member, Alistair MacDonald, admitted that joining the group instead of going through tribunals was a compromise of his principles, but also claimed that "It was a rather natural procedure. I was a young man. I was anxious to do something."[210] The invocation of their manhood to explain their actions shows that, in spite of their willingness to

[206] Fletcher, "the Decline of Victorian Manliness," 42.
[207] Bet-El, *Conscripts*, 186.
[208] Frederick Charles Gillman, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, October 1977, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/039, "Gillman, Charles Frederick," Tape #488 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[209] Bet-El, *Conscripts*, 186-87.
[210] Alistair MacDonald, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, September 1977, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/062, "MacDonald, Alistair," Tape #486 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.

set themselves apart by maintaining their pacifistic principles, these men felt compelled to uphold their masculinity.

Thus, while one might be tempted dismiss the words in Nicholl's autograph book as simply an attempt by a CO to reaffirm his dedication to the anti-war cause by scrawling down some bold words rather than being an effort to reclaim a stolen sense of masculinity, there is no reason to believe that these two acts would have been mutually exclusive. As Bibbings argues, when COs chose to represent themselves as men who were willing to die for their beliefs, those representations are in fact "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."[211] In this way, the COs that chose to frame themselves as heroic stalwarts were arguably entering into a contest with soldiers over the claim to Victorian masculinity by refusing to follow "other man's failures" and compromise their moral virtue. If nothing else, they were at least staking their right to an equal share of masculinity as the soldiers on the front lines. Still, perhaps it was a sense of masculine solidarity rather than competition that drove CO Alfred Evans to tell an army captain that "men are dying in agony in the trenches for what they believe in. I wouldn't be less than that."[212]

Briefly, we should acknowledge the likelihood that there was some unknowable percentage of COs who fell outside the normative models of gender identity and expression contemporary to Great Britain in the 1910s. While the application of contemporary terminology used in the discussion of gender and sexuality is a hotly debated practice among historians due to

---

[211] Bibbings, *Images of Manliness*, 350-351.
[212] Alfred William Evans, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, May, 1973, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/030, "Evans, Alfred William," Tape #27 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.

the inherent anachronism embedded in such a practice, to imagine that the ~20,000 British COs from the First World War would all be, in present-day terminology, cisgender, heterosexual males would require rejecting statistical probability. Direct evidence of sexual or gender non-conformity among COs that does not require reading into text may be scarce, but an absence of evidence does not in and of itself imply absence. There are a number of reasons that would explain why such materials are seemingly non-existent. This includes the highly personal nature of such matters, which decreases the willingness of individuals to commit them to record, even in modern society. The enforced isolation and high level of observation that most COs were subjected to throughout the war would have further disincentivized the expression of non-conforming gender and sexuality performance. Finally, it should be recognized that the archive here is bound to be biased towards traditional COs whose post-war lives mapped onto the 'traditional' family structure, given the role that both Christian religious institutions (such as the Library of the Society of Friends) and the families of COs played in safeguarding the archival materials generated by COs. A man cannot pass down old diaries and letters to children he does not have or a church that rejects him, after all. Still, this subset of COs would have presumably composed only a miniscule percentage of the demographic at most, and it seems likely that most COs would have felt some sort of pressure to be "manly."

Then again, COs were often known for being relatively unconcerned with what other Britons thought. Another entry in the same autograph book mentioned above touches upon the same sense of stoic resolution as the previous quote, while simultaneously putting on display the streak of rebellious individualism that COs were prone to incorporating as a part of their self-image:

> It matters not how strait the gate
> Nor how charged with punishment the scroll

I am the Master of my Fate
I am the Captain of my Soul.[213]

This verse – or more specifically, the sense of self-assurance and certainty it carries through its rejection of externally-inflicted judgment – suggests another pathway to masculinity available to COs. Rather than attempt to re-establish their claim on traditionally masculine ideals, they could instead reconfigure the 'un-masculine' elements pushed upon them in order to create a representation of masculinity on their own terms. Consider, for example, the oft-discussed trend of young women presenting 'white feathers' to men in public, a gesture performed with the intent of shaming these young men for their failure to enlist in the army. This rarely, if ever, worked as intended. There were some COs who chose to respond to these psychological and physical assaults upon their masculine pride by simply ignoring these women as best they could. H. England claimed that he was offered white feathers "many a time in Leeds," but that he "used to ignore them and walk away. I didn't bother with them, you see."[214]

But other COs, rather than ignoring these women, chose instead to co-opt the white feather and transform the symbol into something with a rather different meaning, instead of allowing it to serve as a rebuke as the women intended. Consider, Howard Cruttenden Marten, who went so far as to title his memoir "White Feather." Rather than connecting the feather in his title with those handed out by scornful young women, Marten prefaced his text with a short description of an interaction between Quakers and Native Americans. According to Marten,

> Tradition tells of an incident in the time of the Pioneer Settlers in America when a company of Quakers, unarmed, awaited the coming of the Indians, whose chief, impressed by this gesture of friendliness, took a white feather, their emblem of courage, which he fixed over the doorway of the house as 'The Indians' Sign of Peace.'[215]

[213] Ibid. This quotation originates from the poem *Invictus* by William Ernest Henley, 1875.
[214] H. England, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, February 1975, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/029, "England, Ernest," Tape #282 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[215] Marten, *White Feather*, 70, TEMP MSS 67, Howard Cruttenden Marten Papers.

This supposed encounter provided Marten with a convenient method of reframing the white feather as a symbol. Fellow CO Ronald Long did not have an alternative point of reference to assign the icon, but he did neatly explain the mindset behind his own decision to reclaim the symbol of the white feather in an interview with Dr. Peter Liddle. Long told the story of being presented with a white feather by an American woman who came to replace him at his job at a railway. Per his description, "She just stuck it on I suppose thinking she had done her duty but I wore it because it was a peace badge and I had no sense of shame in wearing something which was, whatever she thought it meant, I thought it meant something quite different which was true."[216] In this way, Long transformed the derogatory practice into a symbol of pacifistic pride and virtue. Given the context, it seems obvious that Marten was operating under a similar logic when he named his memoir, even if Marten's usage of "White Feather" is presented on the surface as being a gesture towards the early relationship between American Quakers and Indigenous Americans and the text does not directly address the usage of the white feather as a marker of cowardice by young women during the Great War.

Despite efforts by COs to transform the meaning of this symbol, the intent behind the giving out of white feathers is indicative of the very real hostility they faced from their civilian peers. While it is true that the CO testimony quoted throughout this chapter indicates they did find friendly faces in many circles, the popular narrative of ostracization circulated by historians exists for a good reason. Many British citizens, when interviewed after the war and asked about COs, described widespread hostility towards COs. Ted Harrison, who was eleven years old when the war started, captured the prevailing attitude towards COs at the time in the following remarks: "Oh, they were conchies. Awful as the Germans. I don't know how they found out,

[216] James Ronald Long, interview with Dr. Peter Liddle, 1973, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/058, "Long, J. R.," Tape #27 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.

but… it was all the girls who'd treat them rough you know. And the boys were ostracized if they went to school and never had a brother in the army."[217] Harrison also reported witnessing physical violence directed towards pacifists, recalling an incident where COs getting into an automobile after departing from a meeting in a church found their car being overturned by disgruntled members of an assembled crowd.[218] Another man who was a child at the time of the war, Bob Rogers, remembered hearing about a group of COs whose lodgings were destroyed after an angry mob set fire to the building in an act of patriotism-fueled arson.[219] Furthermore, in addition to the assertions made in accounts provided by non-COs, some CO testimony also acknowledged the palpable air of disdain radiating from their fellow Britons. Joseph Hoare claimed, when asked if there was malice towards COs among the general public, that:

> Oh, yes, if you didn't know. If you didn't know about – there were an immense lot. I don't think that I caught direct – I remember two or three other COs at Princetown going up to a church for communal service and being stoned away. Sounds almost incredible, doesn't it? The parson standing on a tombstone, I don't say actively cheering them on, but at any rate encouraging them. Now I remember myself going through the Cathedral at Wakefield, similarly, as I was quite active Church of England in those days, until Wakefield, until Dartmoor at any rate… People drew away. And of course, also some of them – yes, you were liable to hear all kinds of remarks.[220]

In addition to the contempt of strangers, there were a number of COs who also had to contend with the negative reaction of their kinfolk, a harsh reality that may have been particularly difficult for them to come to terms with. Interviewed alongside her CO husband Charles William Hope Gill, Mary Gill claimed that her "husband has rather underemphasized the amount of social ostracism he encounters, which he's forgotten by now, even by his own family.

[217] Ted Harrison, interview by Jon Newman, recording, 1985, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #9555, REEL #92, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Bob Rogers, interview by Jon Newman, recording, August 1st 1984, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue # 9560, REEL #2, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[220] Hoare, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #556, REEL #5.

Wouldn't you agree, darling? That you were rather the black sheep of the family?"[221] In response, he admitted that his decision resulted in the loss of communication between himself and his cousins, and a strained relationship with his sisters.[222] And while Hoare was fortunate to receive the emotional support of his sisters, he had a similarly distant relationship with his own cousins, although Hoare seemed to believe that this may have been the case even in the absence of the war.[223] CO Charles F. Dingle was subjected to an even harsher rejection than Gill or Hoare; in his letter to Pauline Pollard, he noted that his father, a naval engineer, kicked Dingle out when he told his father he was a pacifist.[224] Harold Bing was fortunate enough to not personally suffer rejection from his immediate family. According to his sister, Dorothy Bing, when their father heard about his decision he was "pleased, though he had never preached pacifism to us."[225] Still, Bing apparently had a close friend whose marriage broke down as a result of a disagreement over conscientious objection between the two halves of the couple.[226] These men are merely a handful of the many COs rejected by their family for their ethical position, and similar examples have been documented and discussed by historians such as Bibbings.[227]

The psychological impact of being disowned by their families unsurprisingly varied from CO to CO. While Hoare does not seem to have been phased by the rejection of his cousins, Gill admitted that being made to feel like a black sheep by his family made him "very sad" and his wife Mary claimed that the "mental damage is quite considerable when one is unpopular in one's own family."[228] Similarly, while he did not directly express his feelings on the matter, in the

---

[221] Charles Hope Gill and Mary Gill, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, May 16th 1974, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #487, REEL #6, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Hoare, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #556, REEL #5.
[224] Charles F. Dingle to Pauline Pollard, 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.
[225] Moorehead, *Troublesome People*, 30.
[226] Bing, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #358, REEL #8.
[227] Bibbings, *Telling Tales About Men*, 66-68.
[228] Gill and Gill, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #487, REEL #5.

audio recording of his 1974 interview with the IWM, Frank Merrick sounded as though the fact that his father "deplored" his decision to become a CO still bothered him decades later.[229] In other cases, the degree to which this familial conflict impacted the CO in question is disappointingly unclear. Charles Dingle, whose father disowned him when he joined the FAU, merely remarked during his interview with Dr. Peter Liddle that his father "was very indignant with me for being a conscientious objector and as a matter of fact he turned me out of home to start with. He came round a bit later on when he found what work I was doing but he turned me out."[230] On one hand, the fact that Dingle reiterated his father's decision to 'turn him out' twice in such a short response coupled with the specific acknowledgement that his father only "came round a bit" implies that it was his father's initial reaction, rather than the later reversal, that stuck with him throughout the years. On the other hand, the overall lack of detail in Dingle's description of his father's reaction could be taken as indication that this was merely a minor point of conflict in an otherwise smooth familial relationship, especially given that five years prior to his interview with Dr. Liddle, Dingle informed Pauline Pollard that he "was reconciled with my father after the war, and feel he was impressed with my war time activities."[231]

Ultimately, the landscape of gender politics contemporary to WW1-era Britain played a key role in the socio-political struggles of COs. Although their detractors made considerable effort to demean and belittle these men by calling their masculinity into question and framing them as deviants or cowards when compared to soldiers, the COs, in their typical stubborn fashion, refused to surrender their cultivated sense of masculinity. Rather than allowing their opponents to define them, they reclaimed and reshaped the idealized masculine forms inherited

[229] Frank Merrick, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #381, REEL #1.
[230] Charles F. Dingle, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, September 1977, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/021, "Dingle, Charles F.,"Tape #478 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[231] Charles F. Dingle to Pauline Pollard, March 12th, 1972, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.

from Victorian England in order to cast their choices in a positive light. While this allowed them to fend off the assault on their masculinity made by politicians, journalists and strangers on the street it was not quite enough to quell, resolve, or allow them to entirely shrug off conflict within their families. The scorn of strangers was something most COs were able to dismiss easily enough, but for a number of pacifists, the broken bonds with their immediate loved ones were never fully mended. For COs like Gill, Dingle and Merrick, the wounds dealt to their closest interpersonal relationships by the First World War would remain as life-long scars.

Chapter 7: CO Experiences of and Perspectives on 1918-1945

When the Great War finally ended on a fateful November day in 1918, it was as much of a joyous occasion for COs as it was for the rest of their fellow Britons. The cheerful energy of the day is neatly captured by the opening remarks of CO Eric Beavon's diary entry for that day, which reads:

> "Peace at length!" Such a scene at the factory as I shall long remember. At eleven o'clock, when the guns were fired and bells blown, all ceased work. The girls rushed hither & thither with flushed, animated faces and laughter and excitement verging on hysterics. They stuck red, white & blue ribbons in their blouses and tied the same around their hair. Flags were stuck all over the factory… Later in the day, looking up and down the street, scarcely a man or woman was visible who was not totally drunk.[232]

But while Beavon optimistically highlighted the expected significance that day would hold within his memory, the euphoric atmosphere of November 11th, 1918 was merely a single bright spot at the end of an otherwise dark shroud. The considerable impact made by the war as a whole on European society cannot be overstated, and it would forever leave a mark on all those who had borne witness to the horrific conflict. This included the COs, as despite having understood the terrible nature of the bloodshed from the start and making considerable efforts to extract themselves from the perilous trajectory of the nation, they remained entangled within the systems created by the conflict long after it ended. The testimony provided by COs in later decades suggests that, for the period between the First World War and the Second World War many COs faced lesser consequences for their actions than the conventional narratives purport. Furthermore, while the latter conflict was certainly a notable event in their personal histories, to the same extent that it impacted all British citizens, Britain's WW1 COs were less involved in WW2 than one might expect.

---

[232] Eric Armson Beavon, handwritten diary, "November 1918 to March 1919," LIDDLE/WW1/CO/007, "Beavon, Eric Armson," Peter Liddle Collection.

In the First World War's aftermath, the most obvious and immediate consequence of the conflict on COs was their continued imprisonment. A large percentage of those COs who had gone to prison rather than accept alternative service remained behind bars for months after the guns had fallen silent. Norman Gaudie, for example, remained imprisoned at Maidstone until April 1919, a full five months after the armistice between Great Britain and Germany came into effect.[233] Jack Foister found himself in identical circumstances to Gaudie.[234] In fact, April 1919 seems to mark the return to freedom for the majority of imprisoned COs. Absolutist Henry Smith described his release in March 1919, permitted on medical grounds related to an eye issue, as being "a little before the general release."[235] Smith's reference to "the general release" is somewhat ambiguous. He may have been suggesting that most COs were released from prison at that time, or, on a more general note, referring to the fact that most British soldiers were demobilized in Spring 1919. In either scenario, whether Smith's early release constituted an instance of good luck or bad luck is debatable, given it came as a result of poor physical health, but fellow CO James Landers was certainly unlucky. Landers had to wait even longer than Foister and Gaudie for his freedom, as he remained behind bars at Wormwood Scrubs until June 18th, 1919.[236]

How did COs feel about this extended detainment? For some, like Phillip Radley, it was an unexpected and disappointing development. He admitted in a 1974 interview that he had expected he would be released when the war was over and thus, when Armistice Day came and he remained imprisoned, it "was in a way, probably, as difficult a time as I knew."[237] And while

[233] Norman Gaudie, untitled notes, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/038, "Gaudie, Norman," Peter Liddle Collection.
[234] Jack Foister, interview by Liddle, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/031, "Foister, Jack, "Tape #388 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[235] Henry Smith, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, October 1978,LIDDLE/WW1/CO/087, "Smith, Henry," Tape #610 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[236] James Landers, untitled notes, 1979, 10, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/053, "Landers, James," Peter Liddle Collection.
[237] Phillip Radley, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #642, REEL #7.

Radley was not personally among their number, this caused some COs to go to great lengths to make their disdain for the situation very clear to their captors, as documented in Ann Kramer's *Conscientious Objectors of the First World War.* Kramer focuses on acts of disobedience and rebellion undertaken by COs, and as she notes, in response to their prolonged jail time, "At Wandsworth socialist and anarchist COs, infuriated by the delay in release, and led by flamboyant anarchist Guy Aldred, stepped up their protests and a full-scale riot broke out. Other much smaller demonstrations occurred in Leicester, Leeds, Pentonville, Liverpool, Newcastle and Preston prisons."[238]

In contrast to these passionate firebrands, other COs seem to have had no particularly strong grudge against the government for keeping them imprisoned beyond the war's end. Although one might expect that most COs would express dissatisfaction with the length of the period between the supposed end of the First World War and their eventual release from incarceration, there is a fair amount of commentary given by COs that displayed a startlingly casual attitude regarding the circumstances. In his recollection, Landers offers only the succinct observation that "The War came to an end, but I was kept in prison until protest resulted in my release on 18th June, 1919, and others."[239] Foister, Gaudie and Smith were similarly brief when discussing this period in their own notes and interviews.[240] Frank Merrick retroactively described his hope that he would be released by Christmas as "naive," and astutely offered his own theory as to why COs experienced this delay, suggesting that "the reason was a lot of the soldiers who weren't dearmed would have been very angry if conscientious objectors had been released when they were still kept soldiering."[241] Although he does not mention it directly, Merrick's remarks

[238] Ann Kramer, *Conscientious Objectors of the First World War,* 150.
[239] Ibid.
[240] Foister, interview by Liddle, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/031, Tape #388 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection; Gaudie, untitled notes, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/038, "Gaudie, Norman," Peter Liddle Collection.; Smith, interview by Liddle, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/087, "Smith, Henry," Tape #610 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[241] Frank Merrick, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #381, REEL #3.

serve as a reminder of a fact that Landers either forgot or never fully understood. Contrary to Lander's assertion that "The War came to an end" in November 1918, the Armistice Day treaty did not actually mark the end of the First World War, merely a ceasefire. Peace would not be formally achieved until the Treaty of Versaille was signed on June 28th of the following year. Taking this fact into account, Landers' release on June 18th still technically came before the war ended.

The collection of letters written by Eric Pritchard Southall from Walton Gaol in Liverpool to his mother provide a glimpse into the mind of a non-protesting CO during this time of extreme uncertainty, and they suggest that the stoicism on display in retrospective accounts from COs may not reflect their feelings at the time with full accuracy. The first relevant extract was penned on November 7th, 1918. In an impressive display of predictive prowess, Southall accurately anticipated the delay in his release from prison. He wrote that "If the war should crumple up (as I suppose is on the cards) I feel that we absolutists will be starting on the most trying part of our imprisonment. There will always be the plausible hope of speedy release; but with our present administration I do not feel too hopeful on the subject."[242] Southall's pragmatic attitude here, while vindicated by the manner in which events played out, is reflective of the general tone that colours his commentary on his prolonged imprisonment throughout the following months, although he clearly became more upset with the situation as it dragged on. For example, on November 21st, 1918, Southall wrote that he could "fix no dates – neither earliest nor latest – for my discharge; in no event do I mean to worry overmuch – not if I can help it – and as yet I am certainly serene and very well in health."[243] Southall was able to remain resilient throughout

[242] Eric Pritchard Southall to his mother, November 7th, 1918, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/090, "Southall, Eric Pritchard," Peter Liddle Collection.
[243] Ibid., November 21st 1918.

November and December, describing himself as “amused and cheerful, not wetting my midnight pillow with salt tears or cooling my porridge with sighs.”[244]

But by the new year, Southall began to adopt something of a more dour tone regarding his circumstances. On January 30th, 1919, he admitted “I wish it was release and not snow I expected!”[245] In February Southall claimed he had rallied and regained his good spirits, albeit while confessing that “Relapses are always possible and I shall kick if I miss another May.”[246] Thankfully, Southall would not have to resort to kicking, as he was finally granted his freedom on April 9th, 1919, which apparently came just “in time to avert a nervous breakdown” according to comments included at the foot of the page in the typed extracts from his letters.[247] There is evidence to suggest that this remark presumably came from Southall himself, circa 1983.[248]

After they were finally released from prison, COs still faced numerous difficulties stemming from their decision to object to the war, although those difficulties varied in terms of their actual impact on COs’ lives. Many scholars have written about the social stigmatization and legal ramifications that COs faced in post-war British society. Kramer, for instance, is one of the numerous academics who have turned their attention towards the civil disenfranchisement of COs that occurred as part of the 1917 Representation of the People Bill, which stripped all COs besides members of the Non-Combat Corps of the right to vote in British elections for five years after the war, or August 1926.[249] Of course, Kramer also feels that this amounted to “the least of

[244] Ibid., December 18th 1918.
[245] Ibid., January 30th, 1919.
[246] Ibid., February 13th, 1919.
[247] LIDDLE/WW1/CO/090, “Southall, Eric Pritchard,” Peter Liddle Collection.
[248] See Eric Pritchard Southall, “The Wakefield Experiment September 1918: Memorandum by Eric P. Southall,” 1, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/090, “Southall, Eric Pritchard,” Peter Liddle Collection.
[249] Ann Kramer, *Conscientious Objectors of the First World War,* 153-154.

their worries. Poor health, financial hardship and difficulties in finding a job were far more pressing concerns."[250]

Kramer is correct in her assessment that this was a minor concern for COs, but this was not merely for the reasons that she listed. Rather, it seems that this particular piece of legislation was rarely enforced. As part of his interviews with COs, Dr. Peter Liddle frequently asked them about how they were personally impacted by the Representation of the People Bill. Their responses were unexpected. Alfred William Evans reported that he had been aware of the law, but that it had not prevented him from exercising his right to vote.[251] William Sloan Cormack asserted that "that vote business, no vote for five years was all nonsense, I voted at the first election after the war."[252] Other COs did not even know what Liddle was talking about when he first brought it up, such as H. England.[253] Two of the few COs who reported that they were actively disqualified from voting were brothers Leonard and Roland Payne. But ironically, according to these two, they had not even attempted to vote. The Payne brothers told Liddle that

> We were disqualified for so many years but they hadn't noticed we were disqualified but we didn't approve of the man who was putting up for Parliament at the time. He was a man who had been rather bitter at conscientious objectors and we didn't vote. Well, they noticed that we hadn't voted. Then they realized that we should have been disqualified and I think the conservative brought the question up. The conservative office in Leicestershire put in a claim against us and we were disqualified for 5 years.[254]

This, then, was apparently an act of law so comically ineffective that it actually impacted those who were too apathetic to bother breaking it to a greater degree than it impacted those who

---

[250] Ibid., 154.
[251] Alfred William Evans, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, May, 1973, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/030, "Evans, Alfred William" Tape #82 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[252] Dr. William Cormack, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, August, 1972, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/022, "William Cormack," Tape #60 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[253] H. England, interview by Liddle, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/029, "England, Ernest," Tape #282 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[254] Len and Roland Payne, interview by Liddle, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/070, "Payne, Leonard Joseph," Tape #44 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.

actively sought to subvert it. While the passing of this law is certainly indicative of official government attitudes towards COs, it also suggests that these attitudes could be performative in nature, rather than necessarily stemming from passionately held beliefs.

The attitude of potential employers towards COs, however, was far less performative. The stigma against COs that had been cultivated throughout the conflict among British civilians posed a heavy obstacle for the newly-freed pacifists as they began to search for work. As CO Mark Henry Chambers Hayler put it in his 1974 interview with the IWM

> your chances of getting a job was very remote indeed when you came out. That was part of the price you paid. I got many a job, and then the last move ruled me out entirely. They would say 'Oh, what did you do in the Great War?' Well, that was the end of it. Don't need to go any further than that. There were no more questions ever asked, you see.[255]

Furthermore, the difficulty that COs faced in finding employment was intensified by the general lack of jobs available in the post-war British economy, a fact that CO Walter Griffin stressed in his interview with Dr. Peter Liddle when asked about his post-war job search. Griffin claimed that "One must not forget that there were notices up outside factories where they may have a vacancy, only ex servicemen need apply… but even ex servicemen very often couldn't get employment in any case. So we conscientious objectors obviously wouldn't get very much opportunity at all for employment."[256] Griffin's anecdotal observations about the state of the British economy at this time are supported by administrative data compiled by the Central Statistical Office later in the 1990s, which shows that the unemployment rate in the United Kingdom between November 1919 and January 1920 fluctuated between 5.4-6.1%, and while it averaged out to 3.9% overall in 1920, the average rose to 16.9% in 1921.[257] This drastic increase

---

[255] Mark Henry Chambers Hayler, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, 1974, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #357, REEL #27, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[256] Walter George Griffin, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, November 1978, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/041, "Griffin, Walter George," Tape #552 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[257] James Denman & Paul McDonald, "Unemployment Statistics from 1881 to the Present Day," *Labour Market Trends*, January 1996, 6.

was the result of the National Insurance Act of 1920, which came into effect in November and brought the employment situation of "the majority of manual workers, together with a large proportion of non-manual workers" to the attention of the government, suggesting that this high rate of unemployment had probably been overlooked, rather than absent, in the data collected between November 1919 and November 1920.[258]

Still, despite the overall high unemployment rate and the fact that they were heavily disadvantaged in their competition with returning soldiers over what scant jobs were available, some COs reported experiencing only a minor struggle in their search for steady work. Fred Murfin was able to leverage a reference from his pre-war employer in the printing industry into another position within the same field, and while that job itself was short-lived, he only found himself unemployed for six weeks during "the time of the slump" before another opportunity came his way.[259] While Murfin's experience represents something of an outlier among COs who spent time in prison, testimony from members of the FAU suggests that they faced little difficulty in securing work. Ernest E. Dodd, who spent the war working on ambulance ships and trains, recalled that while he did not return to his pre-war post, he "got another job without much difficulty."[260] Edward Addison, who spent time as both a member of the FAU and the War Victims Relief Committee, asserted that he did not face any problems finding work as a result of his wartime experiences "because I was in agriculture."[261] The relative simplicity of finding employment for FAU members in comparison to those who spent the whole war in prison or who took up work on the Home Office Scheme suggests that they did not suffer the same degree of ostracization by the British public after the war.

---

[258] Ibid, 8.
[259] Fred Murfin, *Prisoners for Peace*, 16, TEMP MSS 722, *Prisoners for Peace.*
[260] Ernest E. Dodd, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, June 1978, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/025, "Dodd, Ernest E.," Tape #516 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.
[261] Edward Addison, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, March 1978, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/FAU/001, "Addison, E.," Tape #517, (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.

Although many COs sought a return to normalcy and attempted to assimilate themselves into the general populace when the war ended, there were also those who believed that their crusade for peace was not yet finished. Rather than returning to their pre-war lives, these individuals continued, in one form or another, their campaign against the violence which had claimed so many lives over the length of the conflict. Many of these men were Quakers who left England in order to pursue a more peaceful world in alignment with their beliefs. John Brocklesby, for instance, became a missionary in Africa, working under the banner of the Friends Foreign Missionary Association.[262] George Frederick Dutch stayed in Poland after the war ended, engaged in relief work.[263] Particularly impressive were the exploits of Corder Catchpool, who spent time in Germany from 1919-1921 helping to feed children, then returned to Germany in 1931 and "worked for reconciliation among Germany, England and France; he sought to reduce the severity of the Versailles Treaty" before later assisting those persecuted by the Nazis in fleeing the country.[264] Still, even among COs, these men were unique in the depth of their commitment to creating the conditions necessary for a sustained peace. As Mark Hayler complained to Dr. Peter Liddle in 1976, "I found that when the war was over or when the men were dispersed that they sank back. Far too many of them. They didn't maintain the peace movement and today it is a job to even maintain the peace movement."[265]

Although a failure to 'maintain the peace movement' hardly places responsibility for the outbreak of the Second World War upon the shoulders of Britain's WW1 COs, the beginning of another global conflict admittedly called the significance of their ideological stand into question. After all, their staunch devotion to the anti-war movement had not kept the nations of Europe

[262] Brocklesby, *Escape from Paganism*, 70, TEMP MSS 412, John Brocklesby Papers.
[263] George Dutch, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #356, REEL #7, #8 & #9.
[264] Corder Catchpool, *On Two Fronts: Letters of a Conscientious Objector*, (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1972), 10-11.
[265] Hayler, interview by Liddle, LIDDLE/WW1/CO/044, "Hayler, Mark H C," Tape #348 (transcript), Peter Liddle Collection.

from taking up arms against one another yet again. The message they had hoped to send had gone unheeded. Two decades after they first refused the order to fight for their country, and finding their homeland plunged into another war, how did these men view the prospect of another great war?

Some former COs took a slightly different stance in WW2 than they had in WW1. When asked about the Second World War during his 1989 interview with the IWM, politically-motivated CO and Independent Labour Party member William Hodge described it as "different altogether than the one before, I think" and admitted that "something had to be done about Hitler, no doubt about that."[266] And yet, when the interviewer asked Hodge whether he would have joined the army if he had been young enough to fight in the Second World War, Hodge struggled to articulate a clear response, replying:

> Well I was beyond joining an army by that time but, uh, no… I thought Hitler– realizing that Hitler represented the worst in the world. And in that sense to say – I didn't. I mean, hope for victory against him sort of style, but my God, and that means knowing that human beings are – no context, no reason one way or the other sort of style…[267]

Another CO, Lewis Maclachlan, claimed that his attitude towards pacifism in the Second World War was different than in the First World War "because I had grown up. I was taking a more responsible attitude." He later elaborated on that point by remarking that "in the Second World War I was thinking more in terms of the church and the community and what we ought to do, and perhaps my fierce pacifism of the First World War may have been tempered a little, I don't know."[268]

---

[266] William Hodge, interview by Lyn E. Smith, recording, October 30th 1989, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #11033, REEL #2, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[267] Ibid,.
[268] Lewis Maclachlan, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, July 30th, 1974, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #565, REEL #5, Imperial War Museum, London, England.

There are a few factors to take into account when considering the ways that Hodge and Maclachlan described their relationships with the Second World War. The first, which was acknowledged in Hodge's response to his interviewer, is that the vast majority of WW1 COs did not truly face the possibility of conscription in the Second World War. As previously mentioned, the minimum age for conscription in WW1 in Britain was 18 years of age. Thus, even if a CO had been 18 years old in 1919 when the war ended, they would have been 38 in 1939 when the Second World War broke out. While the National Service Act of 1939 did render all British men aged 18 to 41 at that time eligible to be called up for service, this initially meant only men born in a specific three-year window would have been eligible for conscription in both the First and Second World Wars. Admittedly, the age range of men eligible for conscription was later increased to men aged 17-51, theoretically increasing the pool of former WW1 COs eligible for conscription in WW2.

In practice, however, men were called up in age groups, as shown in an article published in *The Guardian* on January 2nd 1940, that warned men from the ages of 19-27 that they were likely to be called up that year.[269] According to military historian George Forty, only a small number of men above the age of 41 were ever conscripted, and 45 was the upper limit, although unfortunately Forty did not provide a source to show how he arrived at this conclusion and it must therefore be taken with a healthy dose of skepticism.[270] Still, Hodge and his interviewer certainly treated the notion that Hodge was too old to have faced conscription in the Second World War as a foregone conclusion, as did another CO, Percy Leonard, in a similar interview,[271]

---

[269] "Another 2,000,000 men to register" *Guardian*, January 2nd, 1940, https://www.theguardian.com/century/1940-1949/Story/0,,128184,00.html, retrieved February 29th 2024.
[270] George Forty, *British Army Handbook, 1939-1945* (Phoenix Mill, Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1998), 6.
[271] Leonard, interview with Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #382, REEL #5.

suggesting that few, if any, WW1 COs were faced with the prospect of being conscripted a second time.

The second key factor to consider is the social climate surrounding the two world wars in Great Britain at the time Hodge and Maclachlan gave their interviews. By the time Maclachlan spoke to the IWM in 1974, "Oh! What A Lovely War" had been entertaining British audiences for more than a decade. Hodge's interview was conducted on October 30th, 1989, just as *Blackadder Goes Forth* was hitting British televisions for the first time and a mere three days before the infamous final episode would send its unlucky protagonists over the top to their near-certain demise. Both men were probably highly aware of the transformation of the First World War within the British cultural consciousness that had transpired over the intervening decades, a cultural shift that largely vindicated the stand they had taken against the war. In fact, it is possible that this shift in attitude was one of the reasons so many COs happily supplied interviews to the IWM and Dr. Liddle in the 1970s & 80s, since their distaste for the First World War no longer marked them as black sheep among their fellow Britons. They may have felt as though their countrymen were finally prepared to listen to what they had been saying all along.

Public opinion on the Second World War, however, was an entirely different matter. Indeed, as Adrian Gregory observes in the conclusion to *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, the general feeling of senselessness that characterizes the modern British perception of the First World War is partially, arguably even primarily, driven by the sense of "obvious moral superiority" attributed to the Second World War due to recognition of the sheer reprehensibility of the Nazi regime.[272] Although Gregory made that observation in 2008, this viewpoint was equally prevalent in the 1970s and 1980s. Perhaps it was this attitude that

---

[272] Adrian Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 294-295.

informed Dr. Peter Liddle's choice of words when he asked CO William Sloan Cormack "You think that conscientious objection to service against Hitler's Nazi Germany was still defenceable?" during their 1972 interview.[273]

Indeed, if taken at face value, Hodge's reference to his own perspective during the Second World War demonstrates that this belief that Nazi Germany was an uniquely evil foe was already developing during the conflict itself. But whether or not it *can* be taken at face value is a tricky question. After all, at the onset of the war, the average Briton had no idea of the crimes against humanity that were to be committed over the next few years as part of the Holocaust. How could they? And why, then, would they believe Hitler, and the Germany he represented, to be a uniquely intense form of evil? Daniel Todman has argued that Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement, regardless of any other failings, successfully cultivated an atmosphere wherein "by summer 1939, any failure of compromise had to be laid at the German dictator's door… Hitler's evident determination to have a war aroused a deep anger that came from the same place as popular royalism."[274] British anger at Hitler during the lead-up to the war stemmed from national pride, but this was not a new or unfamiliar sentiment. In fact, Todman asserts that Hitler was "a rather more traditional sort of enemy: the villainous, jumped-up foreign aristocrat who was breaking promises, acting unfairly, laughing at Britain and trying to take over the world."[275] Perhaps Hitler's clear enthusiasm for warfare was enough to alter Hodge's sensibilities and convince him that Hitler made Germany a more dangerous and reprehensible foe than it had been two decades prior and thereby justified the war. But it seems more likely that retrospective

[273] William Cormack Sloan, interview by Dr. Peter Liddle, August 1972, Liddle/WW1/CO/022, "Cormack, William Sloan," Tape #60 (transcript), Dr. Peter Liddle Collection.
[274] Daniel Todman, *Britain's War: into Battle, 1937-1941*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 2016), 187.
[275] Ibid,.

knowledge of the Holocaust, and the unfathomable loss of life that it entailed, anachronistically intensified Hodge's recollection of his feelings at the time.

Viewed in light of these facts, the inability of Hodge and Maclachlan to condemn the Second World War in their retrospective interviews with the same wholehearted conviction that they and other COs rejected the First World War is hardly surprising. It was merely honest. They had a greater degree of distance from the war, and were not faced with the same life-defining problem of whether to serve their country or to follow their own principles at great expense to their own well-being. Their fellow CO Walter Manthorpe addressed precisely this reality when speaking to the IWM, noting that "the Second World War didn't affect me in the same way, because I wasn't of a military age and the same consequences didn't come up."[276] Furthermore, the eventual widespread recognition of the Nazi crimes against humanity meant it was much harder for these men to argue, in their old age, that no war was worth fighting.

Some WW1 COs found that the Second World War had an even greater impact on their pacifistic tendencies than Hodge and Maclachlan, to the extent that they abandoned their anti-war stance altogether in the face of the latter conflict. In the First World War, Harold Holttum was a member of the FAU who spent the war assisting Belgian refugees in Birmingham. Yet in the Second World War he joined the Warwickshire Home Guard in Coventry. Holttum claimed to have made this decision after hearing radio broadcasts of Hitler giving speeches, which led him to conclude that the German dictator was "obviously mad and he's got to be stopped. And that was that, as far as we were concerned."[277] Still, Holttum's paradigm shift was never entirely completed. Ultimately, when he reflected on the two wars in 1988, he admitted to

[276] Walter Frederic Manthorpe, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, February 18th, 1974,Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #659, REEL #6, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[277] Harold Holttum, interview by Lyn. E. Smith, recording, October 23rd, 1988, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #10459, REEL #2, Imperial War Museum, London, England.

his interviewer that he still did not "know which [stance] was right. I did what I thought was right at the time. That's all I know."[278]

The transformation of Archibald Fenner Brockway's ideals was arguably even more significant than Holttum's change of opinion. Although Brockway had been a key figure in the anti-war movement during the First World War, serving as a member of the ILP and playing a key role in the formation of the NCF, he would later break away from his personal philosophy of pacifism in the aftermath of the conflict. Brockway's departure from pacifism came early, prompted by the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War rather than the Second World War, and followed his realization that he "wanted them [the Spanish anarchists] to win. And I thought I couldn't want them to win without doing something to help them win. That meant I could no longer be a complete pacifist."[279] Holttum, Hodge and Maclachlan's varying degrees of movement away from pacifism was the result of being confronted with the Nazi regime's war in Europe, which seemed to represent such an active threat to European lives that it may have justified a defensive war. But Brockway's decision to abandon pacifism was instead rooted in a change of perception that recontextualized war as a valid method to achieving a specific ideological outcome. Abandoning the ideology of pacifism did not necessarily mean that Brockway abandoned the anti-war movement entirely. As he noted, "though I was tremendously anti-Hitler and couldn't oppose the Second World War as I did the First, I remained Chairman of the Central Board of Conscientious Objectors, because I believe in the validity of conscience so much."[280]

---

[278] Ibid., REEL #4.
[279] Archibald Fenner Brockway, interview by Margaret A. Brooks, recording, March 27th, 1974, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #476, REEL #2, Imperial War Museum, London, England.
[280] Ibid., REEL #4.

Brockway was far from the only WW1 CO to leverage their experiences in the prior conflict to assist, even to shape, the Second World War's CO movement. Percy Leonard, for instance, made appearances at tribunals for WW2 COs, and proudly reported in an interview that "in every case where I appeared for them, I got them off."[281] Mark Henry Chambers Hayler took up similar work. During the Second World War, Hayler was the chairman of the Croydon branch of the Peace Pledge Union assisting WW2 COs with preparing them for their tribunals. According to Hayler, not only did he assist these men with the paperwork element of their applications, but he also regularly attended the tribunals themselves, although he only recalled appearing as a character witness on one occasion.[282] Hayler also, unlike many of his WW1 CO peers, was briefly faced with at least a small degree of consequences for his continued pacifism during the Second World War. Hayler refused to participate in fire-watching and was fined £5, which he refused to pay, although a sympathetic official chose to pay the fine himself rather than levy higher penalties against Hayler.[283]

In addition to providing specific, material assistance to the next generation of COs once the war broke out, Britain's WW1 COs had served as an inspiration for their younger peers. A number of WW2 COs were the children or other younger relatives of those who had objected two decades before. Kenneth Fletcher Wray, for instance, was an objector in the Second World War who had had two elder brothers who were WW1 COs. Wray felt that their decisions "set some pattern to my life, too."[284] And even though Holttum abandoned his pacifist beliefs in the Second World War, his son, John, took after Holttum's earlier stance when he came of conscription age in 1945 and became a CO, although Holttum could not wholly recall whether

[281] Leonard, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #382, REEL #5.
[282] Hayler, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #356, REEL #21.
[283] Ibid., REEL #13.
[284] Wray, Kenneth Fletcher. interview by Lyn E. Smith, recording, September 9th, 1980, Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #4696, REEL #1, Imperial War Museum, London, England.

John actually faced a tribunal before the war in Europe came to a close.[285] Socialist CO Jack Sadler raised his daughter Dorothy to share his pacifist beliefs. When British women were eventually conscripted for war work in 1941 she, as a member of the Newcastle War Resisters refused to register.[286] Albert Laverack, a CO who eventually regretted his decision to participate in the Home Office Scheme in the First World War, decided to harden his resolve and take the staunch absolutist position in the Second World War alongside his family. As Laverack later told Pauline Pollard in his correspondence with her some decades later, the family "had a bad time. Our daughter was court tried and our son was sent to prison but we did not give in."[287]

Ultimately, there can be no argument that the First World War did not have lasting consequences on many of the COs who took up a stand against it – but the severity of those consequences is debatable. Many of those who were imprisoned suffered an additional delay of nearly half a year in resuming their lives. Such a span of time probably felt considerable to men of a relatively young demographic who had already spent years imprisoned. But the loss of an additional five or six months probably did not drastically alter the course of their lives. Being officially barred from voting may have kept some COs from full participation in the democratic system, but testimony suggests that many COs were totally unimpacted by this policy. COs may have had difficulty finding work once the war wrapped up, but so too did plenty of British men who found themselves hunting for jobs in a depressed economy. Perhaps it was this lack of any unique long-term consequences that allowed so many COs to develop an apparent sense of distance from their rebellion during the two-decade gap between the wars. Whatever the reasons may be, by the time that the Second World War came about, Britain's WW1 COs were no longer

[285] Holttum, interview by Smith, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #10459, REEL #4.
[286] "Sadler Story (1985)," Amber Current Affairs Unit, Amber Film & Photography Collective, 1985, video, 22:00, https://www.amber-online.com/collection/sadler-story-1985.
[287] Albert Laverack to Pauline Pollard, February 9th 1971, TEMP MSS 454, Pauline Pollard Correspondence.

the engine driving the anti-war movement. Some played a part, certainly, as minor participants in dissident actions or as advocates, supporters and inspirations for the next generation of anti-war visionaries, but they did not rally under the banner of conscientious objection with anything approaching the same degree of zeal as they had when Britain had tried to requisition their bodies to serve as cogs in its great war machine back in 1916.

Conclusions: CO Assessments of British Society Post-1945 & Beyond

Information on the lives and activities of Britain's WW1 COs in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War is, unfortunately, not in abundance. With the exception of those few who were public figures such as Lord Fenner Brockway or diplomat and olympian Philip Noel-Baker, most COs were "ordinary" men who led relatively ordinary lives after the war and consequently did not create much of a visible footprint in the historical record. In particular, the period from 1945 to the 1970s is a blind spot regarding Britain's WW1 COs, since it predates the major efforts to record their story for posterity made by historical record-keepers through projects such as the interviews conducted by the IWM and Dr. Liddle. Exacerbating this problem is the unfortunate case of the Pearce Register of WW1 Conscientious Objectors, which is a tragic demonstration of the inherent riskiness that historians face when relying on digital databases of evidence. This ambitious project was the work of Dr. Cyril Pearce, who described the project as a "database of CO histories" compiled from "scattered, incomplete and fragmentary" evidence that nevertheless told the stories of more than 17,000 COs.[288] The Pearce Register was made available to the public on May 15, 2015, in collaboration with the Imperial War Museums as part of their "Lives of the First World War" website. Naturally, this database represented the most comprehensive and useful resource imaginable for any historian concerned with Britain's WW1 COs, although how thoroughly this project explored their lives after the war itself is unclear.

Unfortunately, after less than a decade at the time of writing, the Pearce Register has seemingly disappeared from the internet – while a scattered number of COs still have entries on the aforementioned IWM website, they are not collected and collated as part of any central, searchable database. These remaining entries are also flawed and incomplete, despite how

[288] Pearce, Cyril, "Uncovering the history of Britain's war resisters," https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/blogs/uncovering-history-britains-war-resisters, last modified October 11, 2021.

promising they appear at first glance. For example, the entry for FAU member John Wilfred Harvey has a fairly extensive timeline that tracks his life from his birth to his death, including his employment and education before and after the war. According to this timeline, Harvey found employment at the University of Leeds from 1932-1954 and eventually passed away in 1967.[289] However, attempting to click on the hyperlinks that promise sources for that information produces only a blank pop-up. Thus, the few entries from the Pearce Register that do remain available on this site provide, at best, leads on the lives of COs that must be confirmed through other independent sources. (In the case of Harvey, the IWM timeline is corroborated by the inventory description for documents belonging to his family that were eventually donated to the University of Leeds.)[290]

Harvey's death in 1967 also shows another complicating factor that renders research into the post-WW2 lives of WW1 COs difficult, which is the fact that the population of WW1 COs naturally began to dwindle as their age started to catch up with them. Among those who had been sent to France, for example, Norman Gaudie passed away in either 1954 or 1955 as a result of his asthma[291] and a search of British probate records suggests that Robert Armstrong Lown also passed away in 1954. Because so much of the surviving retrospective testimony from WW1 COs originates from the interviews conducted by the IWM and Dr. Liddle in the 1970s, these testimonies really only capture the experiences and perspectives of those COs who were still living a decade-and-a-half after the Second World War, and therefore had a clear understanding

[289] Imperial War Museums, "John Wilfred Harvey," Lives of the First World War, https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/lifestory/1587671, accessed April 10th, 2024.
[290] "Papers relating to the Harvey Family of Leeds," University of Leeds Special Collections, https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/7818, accessed April 10th, 2024.
[291] Durham County Council, "Norman Gaudie (1887-1955)," Durham at War Project, accessed April 3rd, 2024, https://www.durhamatwar.org.uk/story/11294; Peace Pledge Union, "NORMAN GAUDIE 1887-1954," The Men Who Said No: Conscientious Objectors 1916-1919, accessed April 3rd, 2024, https://www.menwhosaidno.org/Sentenced/gaudie_norman.html.

of that conflict's social and political consequences. This may have meant that hindsight coloured their perspectives to an even greater extent than it would have influenced the perspectives of COs who passed away at an earlier date.

This dissertation has already briefly discussed how British society's evolving attitudes towards the First and Second World Wars in the early days of the latter half of the 20th century may have impacted the fashion in which British WW1 COs viewed and verbalized their experiences in their retrospective accounts. But these shifting social paradigms are not merely tools for recontextualizing the past – they can simultaneously serve as blueprints for building a different kind of future. While the bulk of this work has focused on the ways that COs viewed the dramatic experiences of their youth when asked to recollect them in the 1970s and 1980s, it seems prudent to take a brief look at what they expected for the future, and what factors fostered those expectations.

Fortunately, this is a question that those who laboured to capture the CO's stories thought, on at least a few occasions, to ask. As was usual for this group of philosophically-diverse dissidents, COs varied wildly in their opinions about the future of armed conflict and peacemaking. Harold Holttum, for example, when asked by Lyn. E. Smith in 1988 how he viewed "the situation today, you know with war and peace, do you feel optimistic or pessimistic when you look at the world?" Holttum responded that he believed the only thing preventing another world war from breaking out was the existence of the atomic bomb. In an impressive display of long-term geopolitical analysis, he specifically predicted that "so far as minor wars are concerned, such as for instance are going on between the Jews and the Arabs in Palestine, I don't think that the atom bomb, unless and until someone makes one out there, which God forbid, I don't think that it'll make any difference."[292] Other COs, unlike Holttum, were optimistic about

[292] Holttum, interview by Smith, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #10459, REEL #4.

the long-term prospects of pacifism. When Margaret A. Brooks asked Charles Hope Gill what he thought "of the hope for pacifism in the years to come?" in his 1974 IWM interview, Gill responded in a vaguely idealistic fashion, stating "Well, I still implicitly believe in it, but ultimately it will be accepted. I'm not saying when or how or anything like that, one simply can't."[293] When faced with a similar question, "Do you have hope for the future?" in his IWM interview that same year, Alfred William Evans responded in a characteristically energetic fashion by offering his views on how human society might ultimately overcome its negative tendencies:

> Yes. I think now we're passing through a very bad phase. I think most of our evils have come from the death of principle. All the various scandals with which [society] is now afflicted come from the fact that in our society, the profit-motive has become the dominant thing, how much we can get. But that's not the way of responsibility, and to say that if they set to work to appreciate the situation, they must get back to that condition of things. Jesuits have got it lined up marvelously. "What did it profit the man if he gained the whole world and suffered the loss of his own soul?" He's dead right. And we want to get away from the sentimental Jesus. Hard-task Master Jesus Christ.[294]

The three unique answers these three men gave to what was more or less the same question regarding the potential for a lasting peace are, of course, consistent with their individual personalities. It is hardly surprising that Holttum, previously noted as having been willing to join the Home Guard in the Second World War due to his extreme distaste for Hitler, viewed war as an inevitability. Equally unsurprising is the ambivalent response of Gill, whose wife had to coax him into admitting the depth of his familial ostracization, or the religious firebrand attitude displayed by Evans, who ardently condemned Saint Paul. Still, it is worth examining the broader social context in which each man had the question posed to him and considering how that context may have influenced their responses.

---

[293] Gill and Gill, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #487, REEL #6.
[294] Evans, interview by Brooks, IWM Sound Archive, Catalogue #489, REEL #8. The section in quotation marks is Evan's approximation of Mark, Chapter 8, Verse 36.

From the end of the Second World War until the early 1990s, the Cold War cast a shadow, impossible to ignore, across the entire globe. The detonation of atomic bombs in Japan in 1945 had demonstrated to the world that warfare and international conflict had to be navigated with a previously unimaginable level of weaponry (in terms of sheer destructive capabilities) in mind. Thus, while Britain may not have been as deeply enmeshed in the nuclear stand-off with the Eastern Bloc as their American allies were, the British public was certainly aware of the monumental stakes of the Cold War. The radical political movements that sprang up in Britain in response to Cold War tensions had members from a wide variety of backgrounds, including "artists, civil servants, clergy, musicians, politicians, trade unionists and students."[295] These individuals formed organizations to protest against nuclear weapons and nuclear warfare, such as the Socialist Campaign for Multilateral Disarmament, which was chaired by former WW1 CO Phillip Noel-Baker.[296] In late 1962, this group engaged in an advertising campaign meant to advocate for multilateral disarmament in Nottingham and shortly thereafter attempted to gauge the effectiveness of their messaging by surveying locals of the area alongside a control group from Bradford. However, the timing of this campaign muddied the relevancy of the survey results. As Christopher R. Hill observes in *Peace and Power in Cold War Britain: Media, Movements and Democracy C. 1945-68*:

> Whatever the impact of the campaign, it was complicated by the outbreak of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which dominated the news. Perhaps it was because of the successful resolution of this crisis that one of the results of the survey turned out to be the opposite of what had been expected: the proportion of people who believed that nuclear war would occur during their lifetime dropped by about 10 percent in both samples.[297]

[295] Christopher R. Hill, *Peace and Power in Cold War Britain : Media, Movements and Democracy, C.1945-68*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 1-2, https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474279376
[296] Ibid., 183.
[297] Ibid., 185.

All three men – Holttum, Hope Gill, and Evans – were recounting their experiences at least a decade after the American government had successfully managed the Cuban Missile Crisis and avoided the potential outbreak of a nuclear war. This was one of several positive occurrences that may have set the stage for Hope Gill and Evan's belief that humankind was on its way to a long-term peace. Another one of those occurrences may have been the British reaction to the Vietnam War, as well as the eventual developments of that conflict. Although Britain was not directly involved in the war in Vietnam, Britain's citizens were acutely aware of the conflict. According to Nick Thomas, by 1968 newspaper articles covering protests in England against the war were a common feature and could run for multiple pages.[298] Of course, it is important not to overstate the intensity of British interest in the war. As Thomas also observes, British protests against the war were always smaller in scope and less violent than protests in other Western nations, and rapidly lost momentum in the early 1970s compared to the 1960s.[299] Still, they were reflective of the general British attitude towards the war. According to Ben Clements, who studied opinion poll datasets from 1960-1969 Britain, "the British public was consistent in its rejection of troops being committed to the Vietnam War… it clearly prioritised efforts to seek peace over privileging support for the US.[300] Given that the United States eventually withdrew its troops from Vietnam by 1973 and Hope Gill and Evans were interviewed by the IWM in 1974, it seems probable that the two COs were, whether consciously or unconsciously, keeping both the prevalence and overall success of anti-Vietnam War protests in mind as they considered the future of human society and the likelihood of a lasting peace.

---

[298] Nick Thomas, "Protests Against the Vietnam War in 1960s Britain: The Relationship between Protesters and the Press," *Contemporary British History* 22, no. 3, 2008, 338, https://doi.org/10.1080/13619460701256192.
[299] Ibid., 349-50.
[300] Ben Clements, "British Public Opinion Towards the Vietnam War and UK-US Relations During the 1964-70 Labour Governments." International History Review 43, no. 4, 2021, 755-56, https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2020.1828140.

Holttum, however, was interviewed in 1988, with a whole new decade's worth of geopolitical developments potentially influencing his outlook. Holttum himself made reference to the long-running conflict in the Middle East between Israel and Palestine, but there is one significant conflict that involved Britain directly which likely intensified his pessimism: the Falklands War in 1982, fought against Argentina over disputed territory in the South Atlantic. The Falklands War was a relatively brief conflict with a small death toll when compared to either of the world wars or the Vietnam War, spanning only 10 weeks and resulting in less than 1000 overall casualties. Nevertheless, it had a strong impact on Britain. As historian Helen Parr argues, the Falklands War "altered the mood in the country… the Falklands victory seemed to override, at least temporarily, a more traditional, conservative attitude towards the use of military force" among British politicians.[301] Thus Holttum, interviewed in 1988, had been shown just six years prior that his country had not managed to shake off their militaristic impulses. Great Britain's government still viewed violence as an acceptable means of protecting and securing its international interests. Great Britain's citizens not only tacitly permitted their government to resort to such measures, but actively turned out in droves to demonstrate their approval. Resistance to the war from British citizens was minimal; Parr argues that while there was a protest in Hyde Park that May, it was "overshadowed by reports of the supportive crowds on the docks at Portsmouth when the fleet had set sail and returned."[302] Thus, Holttum's cynical outlook on pacifism's future and the likelihood of continual warfare among humankind seems depressingly realistic in the social climate of 1980s Britain, even before one takes into account Holttum's personal experiences.

[301] Helen Parr, "Remembering the Falklands War in Britain: From Division to Conviction?" Journal of War and Culture Studies 15, no. 3, 2022, 268, https://doi.org/10.1080/17526272.2022.2078543.
[302] Ibid., 271.

Born in 1896, Harold Holttum was in his nineties when he spoke to the IWM in 1988. That interview seemingly serves as the final major piece of British WW1 CO testimony ever documented, at least from a chronological perspective, as no other source stemming from a later date was identified during the course of my research. While this does not mean that Holttum's perspectives hold any greater authority or wisdom than those of his peers, it does mean he had, for better or worse, the "final word" in the collective discourse that embodies the cultural memory of British COs and the last message that they were able to impart to those who inherited their world.

In this context, Holttum's story becomes a bitter pill to swallow for anyone who looks at the experiences of Britain's WW1 COs with the hopes of eventually forging a world without war. After all, over the course of his lifetime, Holttum bore witness to nearly a century of on-again off-again British warfare, and no amount of resistance from those who wished for peace had been able to prevent it. He and his peers, alternativist and absolutist alike, were imprisoned, mocked and emasculated by the rest of British society when they took their stand all those years ago, even if the degree of that mistreatment varied and they found occasional bastions of support or, at least, spaces free from outright contempt. Certainly, there was some degree of vindication in the fact that Britain eventually came to view the First World War as a senseless waste of human life, but that was merely in the wake of a "better" war fought for a "nobler" cause, not as a result of the CO's stand in WW1. Even Holttum himself was swayed to this manner of thinking. And no matter how drastically the world changed throughout the 20th century in terms of technology, culture and social paradigms, war remained a near-constant presence, while anti-war movements ebbed and flowed with inconsistent size and strength. And as of June 2024, all the protests in the world, no matter how passionate, have not yet been able to stem the

recently intensified flow of blood in Gaza, a place where Holttum accurately foresaw a protracted conflict nearly forty years ago. War persists as a stubborn, ugly fixture in the house of humanity, and it seems that no degree of effort will ever be sufficient to rip it from the walls.

So why did Britain's WW1 COs matter? What meaning can be found in their struggle, their suffering, and their story? If war is inevitable, if human beings will repeatedly choose to commit horrible violence against one another in the name of whatever reasons we can rationalize to ourselves, if we choose to stain our hands with blood again and again and again and again, why does it matter if a small handful of men who are already dead refused to participate in the bloodshed?

It matters because, to put it simply, we learn from history. And, to rewrite an old cliche, those who write history are victors.

And Britain's COs wrote their own histories.

They wrote their history when they refused to be defined in any terms but their own, holding onto their individuality and standing firm in their boundaries. Alternativists and absolutists, Quakers and Church of England and Roman Catholics and Socialists, these men could not be compelled to violate the edicts of their own moral codes, nor could they be silenced. They wrote their history when they earned the respect of the spiritual leaders, legal officers and military officials who held power and authority over them, and when they wrote their history when they refused to cower before that same authority in the face of violence or even the threat of death. They wrote their history when they held onto their own sense of masculinity, and when they refused to let the reaction of their families to their choices change their decision. They wrote their history when they followed their hearts a second time, during another war, by acting in

whatever capacity felt right to them under these new circumstances and by helping those who followed in their footsteps.

Most importantly, they wrote their history when they shared it with others throughout the rest of their lives, enshrining their collective memory in the archives and giving their stories a life that would endure beyond their own span of time on Earth. In doing so, they passed on a powerful message. These men, so fiercely protective of their right to self-determination, were united in their belief that one has the right to follow their own moral compasses as the ultimate authority, and that nobody should be able to take that away from someone else. They felt that the decision of whether or not to take up arms should be left up to the individual, not decided by the state or the pressures of the general public. Even if war cannot, as a whole, be eliminated, it should only be waged by those who do of their own volition. Blood should only stain the hands of the willing.

Only time can tell whether their message will be heeded. Certainly, for a time, it was, and the positive outcomes of their efforts were plainly apparent. Although conscription returned to Britain in WW2, the influence of WW1's COs was palpable. Their struggle had resulted in a conscientious objection "process [that] had become both easier and more acceptable."[303] Furthermore, in the wake of the Second World War, Britain became the first of the "four major European powers" from that conflict to end conscription, a decision the country made in 1960.[304] That does not mean, however, that the matter is permanently settled.

In fact, Britain's youth may need to be particularly vigilant as to the matter of conscription at present, lest the message of Britain's WW1 COs fall upon newly-deafened ears. In January 2024, General Patrick Sanders, the chief of staff for the British army, proposed "that

[303] Ellsworth-Jones, *We Will Not Fight*, 254.
[304] Ibid., 263.

the UK should form a 'citizen army'" if conflict broke out between NATO and Russia.[305] And although it is not quite the same as outright conscription, in May 2024 Rishi Sunak, seeking re-election as Prime Minister of the UK, announced his plans to enact a policy of "mandatory national service" if the Conservative Party won the election that year. That policy came in the form of a choice for 18-year-olds "between a full-time placement in the armed forces or volunteering in their community."[306] But while Sunak ultimately lost that election, and while the choice between military service and civil service during peacetime is still less dramatic than what was asked of British citizens in 1916, the very fact that this was a matter for debate in British policy highlights the ultimately precarious nature of societal reforms. Hard-fought victories won by civil dissent must be acknowledged and safeguarded by those who come after the dissenters, or the privileges over which those battles were fought become questions for debate once more as the recognition of what was sacrificed for them in the first place fades from a society's collective memory. The fight for the right not to fight is, ironically, a battle that never truly ends.

---

[305] Cécile Ducourtieux, "Debate grows on the revival of conscription in the UK," *Le Monde,* February 2nd, 2024, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/02/02/debate-grows-on-the-revival-of-conscription-in-the-uk_6488174_4.html

[306] Al Jazeera Staff, "UK's Sunak eyes national service: What is it and which countries have it?" *Al Jazeera*, May 28, 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/28/uks-sunak-eyes-national-service-what-is-it-and-which-countries-have-it.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

"Arnold S. Rowntree Papers." Collection. TEMP MSS 977. Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London, England.

Bing, Harold. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. May 16th, 1974. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #358. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Brockway, Archibald Fenner. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. March 27th, 1974. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #476. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Cadbury, Rachel Eveline. Interview with Lyn E. Smith. Recording. October 28th, 1987. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #10038. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Catchpool, Corder. *On Two Fronts; Letters of a Conscientious Objector*. New York: Garland Pub., 1972.

"Cornelius Barritt Papers." Collection. TEMP MSS 62. Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London, England.

"Correspondence between Pauline Pollard and former World War 1 Conscientious Objectors." Collection. TEMP MSS 454. Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London, England.

Dutch, George Frederick. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. April 25th, 1976. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #356. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Dutch, George Frederick. "Private Papers of G F Dutch." Imperial War Museum Private Papers,

Document #7651. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Evans, Alfred William. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. May 15th, 1974. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #489. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Fox, Lloyd Howard. Interview by Lyn E. Smith. Recording. March 25th, 1988. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #10173. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Gill, Charles Hope and Mary Gill. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. May 16th, 1974. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #487. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Graham, John. *Conscience and Conscription: A History, 1916-1919*. England: G. Allen & Unwin LTD., 1922.

Grant, Donald. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. November 4th, 1975. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #711. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Griffin, Walter. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. June 25th, 1987. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #9790. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Harrison, Ted. Interview by Jon Newman. Recording. 1985. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #9555. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Hayler, Mark Henry Chambers. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. 1974. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #357. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Hoare, Joseph Edward. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. July 29th, 1974. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #556. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Hodge, William. Interview by Lyn E. Smith. Recording. October 30th, 1989. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #11033. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Holtum, Harold. Interview by Lyn E. Smith. Recording. October 23rd, 1988. Imperial War

Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #10459. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

"Howard Cruttenden Marten Papers." Collection. TEMP MSS 67, Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London, England.

"Information about the treatment of conscientious objectors in prison." Collection. TEMP MSS 977/1/7. Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London, England.

"John Brocklesby Papers." Collection. TEMP MSS 412. Library of the Society of Friends, Friends House, London, England.

Leonard, Percy Albert. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. July 19th, 1976. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #382. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Littleboy, Wilfred Ernest. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. June 25th, 1974. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #485. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Maclachlan, Lewis. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. July 30th, 1974. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #565. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Manthorpe, Walter Frederic. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. February 18th, 1974. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #659. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Marten, Howard Cruttenden. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. August 5th, 1974. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #383. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Merrick, Frank. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. March 15th, 1974. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #381. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Murfin, Fred. *Prisoners for Peace*. Unpublished manuscript. 1965. TEMP MSS 722, Library of

the Society of Friends. Friends House, London, England.

Nevinson, Henry W.. "The conscientious objector." *Atlantic Monthly* 103. November 1916. https://cdn.theatlantic.com/media/archives/1916/11/118-5/132300274.pdf.

"Papers relating to the Harvey Family of Leeds. University of Leeds Special Collections. https://explore.library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-explore/7818

Parliament of Great Britain. "Military Service Act, 1916." Adopted January 27th, 1916. https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1916/104/pdfs/ukpga_19160104_en.pdf.

"Peter Liddle Collection." Collection. University of Leeds Special Collections, University of Leeds, Leeds, England.

Pollard, Pauline. "Conscientious Objection in the First World War." *The Friend*, February 4th, 1972.

Radley, Phillip. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. May 25th, 1974. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #642. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Rogers, Bob. Interview by Jon Newman. Recording. August 1st, 1984. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #9560. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Winsten, Stephen Samuel. Interview by Margaret A. Brooks. Recording. June 29th, 1976. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #784. Imperial War Museum. London, England.

Wray, Kenneth Fletcher. Interview by Lyn E. Smith. Recording. September 9th, 1980. Imperial War Museum Sound Archive, Catalogue #4696. Imperial War Museum, London, England.

Secondary Sources

Abrams, Lynn. “Memory as both source and subject of study: The transformations of oral history.” In *Writing the History of Memory*, 89-110. Edited by Stefan Berger and Bill Niven. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Al Jazeera Staff, “UK’s Sunak eyes national service: What is it and which countries have it?” *Al Jazeera*, May 28, 2024. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/5/28/uks-sunak-eyes-national-service-what-is-it-and-which-countries-have-it.

“Another 2,000,000 men to register.” *Guardian*, January 2nd, 1940. https://www.theguardian.com/century/1940-1949/Story/0,,128184,00.html. Accessed February 29th, 2024.

Bailey, Victor. “English Prisons, Penal Culture, and the Abatement of Imprisonment, 1895–1922.” In *The Journal of British Studies* 36, no. 3, 285–324. 1997. https://doi.org/10.1086/386138.

Berger, Stefan and Bill Niven. “Writing the history of national memory.” In *Writing the History of Memory*, 135-156. Edited by Stefan Berger and Bill Niven. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Bet-El, Ilana. *Conscripts: Lost Legions of the Great War*. Phoenix Mill, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1999.

Bibbings, Lois. “Images of Manliness: The Portrayal of Soldiers and Conscientious Objectors in The Great War.” *Social & Legal Studies* 12, no. 3, 335-358. 2003. https://doi.org/10.1177/09646639030123003.

Bibbings, Lois. *Telling Tales about Men: Conceptions of Conscientious Objectors to Military*

Service during the First World War. Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2011.

Bond, Brian. *The Unquiet Western Front: Britain's Role in Literature and History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Bradshaw, Peter."All Quiet on the Western Front review – anti-war nightmare of bloodshed and chaos." In *Guardian*, October 12th, 2022. Accessed July 17th, 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/oct/12/all-quiet-on-the-western-front-review-anti-war-nightmare-of-bloodshed-and-chaos.

Brock, Peter. "Prison Samizdat of British Conscientious Objectors in Two World Wars." In *Against the Draft: Essays on Conscientious Objection from the Radical Reformation to the Second World War*. 222-242. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2006. https://doi-org.qe2a-proxy.mun.ca/10.3138/9781442627215.

These Strange Criminals: An Anthology of Prison Memoirs by Conscientious Objectors from the Great War to the Cold War. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 2004.

Clements, Ben. "British Public Opinion Towards the Vietnam War and UK-US Relations During the 1964-70 Labour Governments." *International History Review* 43, no. 4 (2021): 736–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/07075332.2020.1828140.

"David Cameron makes moving speech as lights go out to mark WW1 centenary." *Standard*, August 4th, 2014. https://www.standard.co.uk/news/uk/david-cameron-makes-moving-speech-as-lights-go-out-to-mark-ww1-centenary-9648074.html.

Denman, James and Paul McDonald. "Unemployment Statistics from 1811 to the Present Day." *Labour Market Trends,* January 1996, 5-18.

Ducourtieux, Cécile. “Debate grows on the revival of conscription in the UK,” *Le Monde,* February 2nd, 2024. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2024/02/02/debate-grows-on-the-revival-of-conscription-in-the-uk_6488174_4.html

Duncan, Robert. *Objectors & Resisters: Opposition to Conscription and War in Scotland 1914-18*. London: Common Print. 2015.

Durham County Council. “Norman Gaudie (1887-1955).” Durham at War Project. Accessed April 3rd, 2024. https://www.durhamatwar.org.uk/story/11294

Eirug, Aled. *The Opposition to the Great War in Wales, 1914-1918*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press. 2018.

Ellsworth-Jones, Will. *We Will Not Fight: The Untold Story of the First World War's Conscientious Objectors.* London: Aurum Press Limited, 2008.

Fletcher, Anthony. “Patriotism, the Great War and the Decline of Victorian Manliness” *History (London) 99*, no. 334 (2014): 40–72. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-229X.12044.

Forty, George. *British Army Handbook, 1939-1945*. Phoenix Mill, Thrupp, Stroud, Gloucestershire: Sutton, 1998.

Fulbrook, Mary. “History writing and ‘collective memory’.” In *Writing the History of Memory*, 65-88. Edited by Stefan Berger & Bill Niven. London: Bloomsbury. 2014.

Fussell, Paul. *The Great War and Modern Memory*. 1975. Reprint, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Goodall, Felicity. *A Question of Conscience.* United Kingdom: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1997.

Gregory, Adrian. *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

Gregory, Adrian. *The Silence of Memory: Armistice Day, 1919-1946*. London: Bloomsbury, 1994.

Hartman, Kabi. "Male Pacifists in British Women's World War I Novels: Toward an 'Enlightened Civilisation'." *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920,* 58, no. 4. (2015): 536-50.

Hill, Christopher R. *Peace and Power in Cold War Britain: Media, Movements and Democracy, c.1945-68*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474279376.

Hodgson, Max. "Pathologising 'Refusal': Prison, Health and Conscientious Objectors During the First World War." *Social History of Medicine: the Journal of the Society for the Social History of Medicine* 35 no. 3, 972-995. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. https://doi.org/10.1093/shm/hkac015.

Ide, Wendy. "All Quiet on the Western Front review – extraordinarily potent German first world war drama. " *Guardian*, October 15th, 2022. Accessed July 17th, 2023. https://www.theguardian.com/film/2022/oct/15/all-quiet-on-the-western-front-review-extraordinarily-potent-german-first-world-war-drama.

Imperial War Museums. "John Wilifred Harvey." Lives of the First World War. https://livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/lifestory/1587671

Kennedy, Thomas C. "Public Opinion and the Conscientious Objector, 1915-1919." In *Journal of British Studies* 12, no. 2, 1973, 105-119. http://www.jstor.org/stable/175277.

Kramer, Ann. *Conscientious Objectors of the First World War: A Determined Resistance*. South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword Social History. 2013.

Madigan, Edward. *Faith Under Fire: Anglican Army Chaplains and The Great War.* Hampshire:

Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

Manderson, Lenore, Elizabeth Bennett and Sari Andajani-Sutjahjo. "The Social Dynamics of the Interview: Age, Class and Gender." *Qualitative Health Research* 16., no. 10 2006): 1317-34. https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732306294512.

Marrin, Albert. *The Last Crusade: The Church of England in the First World War*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1974.

Millman, Brock. *Managing Domestic Dissent in First World War Britain*. London: Frank Cass, 2000.

Moorehead, Caroline. *Troublesome People: Enemies of War, 1916-1986.* London: Hamilton, 1987.

Owen, Wilfred. "Anthem for Doomed Youth." In *Poetry of the First World War: An Anthology.* Edited by Tim Kendall. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Palfreeman, Linda. "The Friends' Ambulance Unit in the First World War." *Religions (Basel, Switzerland)* 9, no. 5, 165–79. 2018. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9050165.

Parr, Helen. "Remembering the Falklands War in Britain: From Division to Conviction?" *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 15, no. 3 (2022): 266–83. https://doi.org/10.1080/17526272.2022.2078543.

Peace Pledge Union. "GEORGE FREDRICK DUTCH 1894 - 1976." The Men Who Said No: Conscientious Objectors 1916-1919. Accessed April 12th, 2023. https://menwhosaidno.org/men/men_files/d/dutch_gf.html.

Peace Pledge Union. "NORMAN GAUDIE 1887-1954." The Men Who Said No: Conscientious Objectors 1916-1919. Accessed April 3rd, 2024. https://www.menwhosaidno.org/Sentenced/gaudie_norman.html.

Pearce, Cyril. "Rethinking the British Anti-War Movement 1914-1918: Notes from a Local Study." *Quaker Studies* 7, no. 1, 30-55. 2002.

Pennell, Catriona. *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland*. Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2012.

Power, Ed. "Netflix's German-language All Quiet on the Western Front is a haunting revelation." *Telegram*, January 19th, 2023. Accessed July 17th, 2023. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/films/0/quiet-western-front-netflix-review-eerily-beautiful-new-take

Roper, Michael. "Re-remembering the Soldier Hero: the Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War." *History Workshop* 2000, no. 50 (2000): 181-204. https://doi.org/10.1093/hwj/2000.50.181.

"Sadler Story (1985)." Amber Current Affairs Unit. Amber Film & Photography Collective. 1985. Video, 22:00. https://www.amber-online.com/collection/sadler-story-1985.

Sheffield, Gary. *Forgotten Victory: The First World War: Myths and Realities.* Sharpe Books, 2018. Kindle.

Silbey, David. *The British Working Class and Enthusiasm for War, 1914-1916*. London: Frank Cass, 2005.

Smith, Leonard V. "Paul Fussell's The Great War and Modern Memory: Twenty-Five Years Later." *History and Theory* 40, no. 2 (2001): 241–60. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2678033.

Stottor, William. "'All Quiet on the Western Front' is a Harrowing Depiction of War: Review."

Independent, October 31st, 2022. Accessed July 17th, 2023. https://www.indiependent.co.uk/all-quiet-on-the-western-front-is-a-harrowing-depiction-of-war-review.

Taylor, David. *Memory, Narrative and The Great War: Rifleman Patrick MacGill and the Construction of Wartime Experience*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013.

Thomas, Nick. "Protests Against the Vietnam War in 1960s Britain: The Relationship between Protesters and the Press." *Contemporary British History* 22, no. 3 (2008): 335–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/13619460701256192.

Todman, Daniel. *Britain's War: into Battle, 1937-1941*. Oxford: Oxford University Press Incorporated, 2016.

Todman, Daniel. *The Great War: Myth and Memory*. Hambledon and London: London and New York, 2005.

Wallace, Angus. "A Community of Consent: Conscientious Objectors on the North Yorkshire Moors and the North East Coast During the First World War." *Northern History* 61 (1): 94–113. 2023. doi:10.1080/0078172X.2023.2272833.

Weller, Ken. *'Don't be a soldier!' The Radical Anti-War Movement in North London 1914-1918*. London: Journeyman Press Limited. 1985.

Willis, Liz. Review of *Objection Overruled: Conscription and Conscience in the First World War,* by David Boulton. *Medicine, Conflict and Survival* 30, no. 4, 309–12. 2014. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27017863.

Winter, Jay. Introduction to *The Great War and Modern Memory.* By Paul Fussell. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Winter, J. M. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: the Great War in European Cultural History*.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.